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THE IMPACT OF META-FACEBOOK ADVERTISING & INSTAGRAM ADVERTISING ON BRAND EQUITY, BRAND PARITY AND CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISION IN PAKISTANI MARKET

Anum Choudry

Institute of Business Management and Administrative Sciences, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: annu.choudry@gmail.com

Prof. Dr. Abou Bakar

Professor, Institute of Business Management and Administrative Sciences, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: aboubakar02@hotmail.com

Dr. Kalsoom Akhtar

Lecturer, Institute of Business Management and Administrative Sciences, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: kalsoom.akhtar@iub.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

Social media has revolutionized the way companies market their products and interact with customers through creative digital platforms. Social media has changed the landscape of marketing and given companies the opportunity to interact with consumers through engaging digital channels. This study is set to explore the influence of Meta/Facebook advertising and Instagram advertising on the brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase decision in the Pakistani market. It will explore the connection between the social media advertising activities and the perception of brands and buying intentions of consumers. It focuses on the role of content, brand communication and digital marketing strategies in the search of adding value to a brand and competitive positioning.

The quantitative approach to research was used to analyze the relationship between the variables mentioned, i.e. Meta/Facebook advertising, Instagram advertising, brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase decision. The proposed relationships are tested by using statistical analysis of data collected from Pakistani social media users. This study is designed to measure the contribution of Facebook and Instagram Ad to positively influencing the brand equity and purchasing intention and to measure the contribution of brand equity and brand parity for influencing consumers' preference among brands, so that an effective Facebook /instagram ad can stimulate the desire for buying the ad brand to its target audience. The results provide valuable guidance for marketers and business owners to develop effective social media marketing strategies, brand reinforcement, and boosting customer engagement in Pakistan's e-commerce market.

Keywords: *Meta-Facebook Advertising, Instagram Advertising, Brand Equity, Brand Parity and Consumer Purchase Decision.*

1. Introduction:

Social media digital advertising has turned out as a requisite strategic instrument in the efforts by organizations to shape consumer perceptions and choice of purchases in the modern markets (Vinerean, 2017). In the sphere of business and management sciences, social media advertising is becoming more accepted as the method of promotion and also as a long-term brand-building tool (Trachuk et al., 2021). Facebook and Instagram as meta-owned platforms have become key

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sources of communication with the brand, as they are used by a large number of people, provide an interactive environment and have advanced technologies of advertising (Mick, 2023). Through such platforms, firms can combine content, engagement and targeting approaches in the manner that has a direct influence on how consumers assess brands, shape preferences and make a purchasing decision. Strategically, Facebook and Instagram offer organizations with ability to influence key brand relevant variables such as brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase decisions in both the developed and emerging economies, including Pakistan (Ahmed et al., 2023).

Brand equity refers to the general value that a brand adds to a product or service in the minds of consumers including brand awareness, brand perceived quality, brand association as well as brand loyalty (Shariq, 2018). Good brand equity may trigger higher levels of consumer trust, positive attitudes and greater willingness to pay premium and eventually result in better purchase intentions. Brand parity on the other hand is the extent to which consumers expect competing brands to be similar or interchangeable in a product line (Winzar et al., 2018). Consumers constantly being bombarded with different messages by different brands in a digital advertising environment, brand equity and minimization of brand parity has become more challenging (Sharma & Ganguly, 2025). Facebook and Instagram are examples of social media that can affect these because of the following factors: personalized content, taking advantage of the engagement metrics and providing interactive experiences which can shape perceptions and decision-making of the consumer (Oruç & Aydın, 2022).

The purchase decisions by consumers in digital markets are influenced by a mixture of cognitive, emotional as well as, social factors. Interaction with brand content in the social media does not only strengthen brand awareness but also influences attitudes and trust which in turn persuades purchase intentions (Poturak & Softić, 2019). Nevertheless, where several brands take similar direction in advertising, brand parity may increase resulting in more pronounced differentiation and consumer making a purchase decision that is based more on price or convenience and less on brand preference (Turunç & Karayalçın, 2024). Regarding the situation in Pakistan, where the usage of social media is gaining momentum in the area, such as retail, fashion, telecommunications and fast-moving consumer goods, it is vital to comprehend the impact of the usage of the Meta/Facebook and Instagram ads on brand equity, brand parity and consumer behavioral changes (Ahmed et al., 2019). Simultaneously, the dynamics apply on a universal level, with brands in developed and emerging economies encountering comparable issues that touch on the matter of digital convergence, competition and consumer engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2022).

2.0 Background of the Study:

Digital communication technologies and internet-based platforms have revolutionized the way that businesses communicate with their customers, leading to a significant transformation of the modern business environment. The social media is now one of the most effective marketing communication and customer engagement tools. Increased use of digital platforms to market products, build brand image and enhance customer relationships.Increased use of digital platforms for marketing products, brand image and customer relationship. As consumers have spent much of their time on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, social media advertising has become increasingly popular. It has been reported that social media marketing

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has facilitated communication between business firms and customers as it has given them direct communication opportunity with the customers and that communication is interactive and personalized as well (Dwivedi et al., 2021). As such, businesses have increasingly been focusing on improving market performance and consumer engagement by investing in social media advertising strategies. Internet usage and the rise of smart phone technology globally have had a strong link with the development of digital marketing. Consumers have increasingly relied on digital platforms for communication, entertainment, information sharing and online shopping activities. Technological improvement and making the internet easier and cheaper to access has led to an increasing number of people using the internet. Digital reports suggest that there are billions of users of social media apps around the world and Facebook and Instagram continue to be popular choices (DataReportal, 2024). This trend has been noticed by businesses and they have now moved from traditional advertising methods to social media platforms to market their products. The appeal of digital advertising is that it has provided cost-effective advertising opportunities, systems for targeting customers and providing trackable results of the ad campaign. This means that social media ads are an integral part of any business strategy these days.

Facebook has been a leader in the social networking space across the world, which is why Meta/Facebook advertising has been one of the most influential types of digital marketing. Facebook, like many other social media platforms, has become a popular resource for businesses to get the word out to the public about their products, services, and brands. Facebook ads have been around for a long time and contain sponsored posts, video ads, and carousel ads as well as personalized ad campaigns targeting certain segments of the audience based on their demographics and behavior. The researchers have mentioned that Facebook advertising has positively impacted customer engagement due to the consumers' active interaction with advertisements through commenting, ‘liking,' sharing, and reacting (Alalwan et al., 2020). Due to the interactive aspect of this environment, companies have been able to create more emotional bonds with consumers and enhance customer loyalty. Along with that, Facebook ads have also given businesses sophisticated analytical functions that have enabled marketers to gauge the reaction of their customers and enhance the advertising performance. Instagram advertising is also now playing a big role in the contemporary marketing strategies since Instagram is a social media site that has developed into being a visual media platform and has gained millions of users globally. Consumers, particularly younger generations have preferred Instagram because of its image-based and video-based communication features. The visual nature of Instagram's storytelling and creative content has gained consumer attention that has significantly impacted consumer perceptions, and the platform is no longer just for sharing photographs, it is now a medium for advertising (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Businesses can make a more impactful emotional connection with consumer through Instagram ads, reels, influencers partnership and stories. Instagram ads are becoming a more effective way to increase customer engagement, boost brand visibility, and drive sales.

The rise in the popularity of social media advertising has changed consumer behavior and purchasing processes. Before buying, consumers have more and more relied on information on the internet, reviews and social media communication from other consumers. Consumers today are more informed and are increasingly connected with digital technology, which has led to a shift in traditional buying habits. Users have been looking for product suggestions, ratings,

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reviews and feedback from social media platforms to make decisions about the products and services they want to buy. Social media ads have proven to positively impact consumer attitudes and purchase intentions due to the instant access to product information and customer experiences it offers (Hajli et al., 2020). Thus, social media advertising plays a pivotal role in influencing the purchase decision-making process in e-marketplaces. Social media advertising has also gained a lot of importance in the field of brand development due to the fact that companies have come to consider it an essential initiative for building up a powerful brand in a competitive market. Brand equity is one of the most crucial marketing concepts as it has been a representation of the value and strength of a brand in the consumers' minds. Brand equity has encompassed aspects like brand awareness, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand associations. This study has recommended that the social media advertising has contributed greatly towards the improvement of brand equity, as interactive communication and customer engagement has created a sense of trust and emotional attachment among consumers towards the brand (Yadav & Rahman, 2018). As a result, companies have invested much in their digital advertising campaigns to boost brand awareness and build positive perceptions of the brand.

Social media advertising is now a critical strategic element in organizations that wish to manipulate the perceptions, attitudes and buying behavior of the consumer amid the current digital age (Moedeen et al., 2024). The platforms within the Meta umbrella, especially Facebook and Instagram, have shifted the communication of the brand to a more interactive, personalized and visual form. Social media marketing advertising to organizations with the aim of enhancing brand performance, long-term equity and competitive advantage is of significant importance in both emerging and mature markets (Cao et al., 2018). Brand equity and brand parity is the power of the effectiveness of social media advertising. The quality and strength of the brand in consumer's mind is defined as brand equity and dimensions of the brand equity are as follows: brand awareness, quality of brand, brand association and brand loyalty (Shariq, 2018). The brand equity thus not only builds consumer preference and loyalty but also a sustainable competitive advantage to the organization. The opposite of brand parity is how much similarities or substitutes are seen by the consumer among the different brands of the same product category (Voleti et al., 2015). In the digital advertising space where consumers are constantly bombarded with a large number of messages concerning a particular brand, it has been trickier to retain high brand equity without risking a rise in brand parity (Bala & Verma, 2018). While social media campaigns, when done correctly, can help to boost the differentiation of a brand and its strength, a number of brands may be sending the same message, thereby causing brand parity, which may negatively impact consumer choice on price or convenience, but not on preference (Cawsey & Rowley, 2016).

In the context of social media dominated markets, the cognitive, emotional and social factors are connected in a complex process that affects the consumer decision making process (Canulli 2024). Content created by the users and influenced by influencers on Facebook and Instagram creates an interaction, creates brand affinity and leads to the buying decision (Singh & Chakrabarti, 2020). However, the effect of brand equity and brand parity are mutual, which makes the impact on consumer decision making processes more complicated and not well understood in today's marketing literature. However, one such analysis of such impacts is an excellent example of how organizations can strategically campaign their social media to maximize their brand performance and convince buyers to purchase their products (Nunis, 2021).

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These dynamics can be explored in the Pakistani market, a very rich empirical setting. Social media has gained a high speed in the country particularly in retail, fashion, telecommunication and fast moving consumer goods (FMCG), all thanks to the global digitization trends and the local consumer behavior trends. The Pakistani consumers interact with brand via Facebook and Instagram to provide an applicable space to explore how social media ads can lead to brand equity, brand parity, and purchase decisions (Bibi et al., 2025). Simultaneously, the phenomena under consideration are of a global interest since the companies all over the world have to face the same issues associated with digital convergence, market saturation and brand differentiation (Thomas, 2020). The finding of this study is therefore a finding which is relevant both in the emerging and advanced market context in the sense that it explores the interaction between Meta/Facebook and Instagram advertising and brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase behavior in Pakistan.

3.0 Problem Statement:

Rapid development of digital communication technologies has changed the marketing environment all over the world, as with the increasing transition of the marketing medium, businesses have adopted communication platforms for social media marketing, including Meta/Facebook and Instagram. Today consumers spend more time on online platforms for communication, entertainment and shopping activities, therefore, organizations have invested heavily in digital marketing strategies to ensure that they remain relevant to consumers. To this end, researchers have claimed that the existence of digital platforms has created a new way of communicating directly and interactively between business and consumers, which has had a significant impact on customer engagement, brand perception and consumer purchasing behaviour (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Meta/Facebook and Instagram ads have hence been regarded as vital instruments in enhancing client interactions and boosting market performance. Most of the earlier studies concentrated on the developed economies and western markets, where the internet has been more developed and stable, and consumer behavior and digital infrastructure have been more advanced and stable (Nam & Kannan, 2020). However, less is known about the economic conditions, cultural values and online consumer behavior in developing countries like Pakistan, which has been vastly different from developed countries (Mick, 2023). While Meta/Facebook and Instagram have become popular places for consumers to communicate, shop and get product information, there are still challenges businesses are having to grasp the impact of such ads on consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions in the Pakistani market. Hence, there was a significant gap in the context of the efficiency of Meta/ Facebook and Instagram ads in Pakistan.

This study has been chosen because social media advertising is a very rapidly expanding phenomena in Pakistan and organizations have begun to increasingly use advertising campaigns on social media platforms namely Meta/Facebook and Instagram to reach their target audience and build strong brand image. Digital advertising strategies have been a continuous tool for businesses in the fashion, cosmetics, electronics, food services and retail sectors to enhance online engagement and sales performance. But even though these are valuable investments in digital marketing, many businesses have remained unsure if the social and search marketing ads on Meta/Facebook and Instagram have been successful in boosting brand equity or driving consumer purchase decisions. The growth of social media as an avenue of information and product suggestions has been reported to have changed the online shopping habits and preferences of consumers in Pakistan (Ahmed et al., 2022). So, the present study has been

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designed to explore the impact of the Meta/Facebook and Instagram advertisements on brand equity, brand parity and consumer buying decision in Pakistan. One primary reason for choosing this subject is that there is a lot of competition between the brands on social media platforms. A lot of promotional stuff has been put before consumers daily, making it more confusing and making it easier for consumers to not distinguish between competing brands. Study findings also suggest that over-exposure to digital ads has led to consumers feeling more similar toward brands, thereby negatively affecting customer loyalty and driving price competition (Elliott et al., 2015). While there is a large body of research that has studied the idea of brand equity, little research has explored the concept of brand parity within the realm of social media advertising. Brand parity has referred to the extent to which consumers have perceived brands as similar in quality and performance. Hence, the current study has attempted to explore the effect of Meta/Facebook and Instagram advertising on the consumer's minds, whether it has enhanced the brand uniqueness or has made the brands more similar.

With this growing trend, the present study has been conducted as organizations are increasingly using social media platforms to boost their relationships with customers and enhance their online engagement. Consumers are engaging with ads via likes, comments, shares and online reviews. Dzreke (2025) has pointed out that Customer Engagement has emerged as one of the key metrics for the success of digital marketing as the customer has demonstrated significant emotional connection and buying intentions. Few studies, however, have investigated the effect of engagement-focused advertisements on brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchasing behavior concurrently on the platforms of Meta/Facebook and Instagram. Thus, the purpose of this study has been to address this empirical gap and investigate the interaction of social media advertising on key brand-related outcomes.

Furthermore, consumer behavior is increasingly influenced by influencer marketing and UGC, which impelled this study. Due to a belief that online reviews, influencer recommendations and peer-generated content are more authentic and reliable than traditional advertising, consumers have increasingly turned to these channels for their trustworthiness and credibility (Lampeitl & Åberg, 2017). Businesses have thus engaged with influencers and sought out opportunities to foster interaction with their customers in order to boost their online visibility and build customer trust. Yet, previous research has offered a partial understanding of the impact of the influencer communication and online engagement on brand equity and purchase decision in the case of Pakistan. Therefore, the present study has been carried out to gain deeper understanding of the impact of modern social marketing aspects on the consumer perception and online shopping behavior. The topic has been chosen as traditional marketing and advertising theories are proving inadequate in explaining the interactive nature of social media platforms. Advertising theories like the AIDA model were created in a setting of one-way communication that involves consumers as uninvolved receivers of information (Lang, 2022). But, the advertising landscape of Meta/Facebook and Instagram has become very interactive as consumers have actively created, shared and discussed online content. Social media marketing has necessitated more flexible and interactive approaches which involve customers and promote digital communication, peer interaction, and engagement (Appel et al., 2020). For this reason, the current research has sought to add to the body of literature by adding the elements of modern social media marketing like customer engagement, communication with influencers, and online interactions into the research model.

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The increasing e-commerce and online shopping activities in Pakistan are another prominent reason for conducting this study. Online shopping has proven to be a convenient and accessible option, offering consumers a range of products. Companies have also increased their digital marketing activities to foster customers' awareness and web sales performance. Researchers found that, consumers have used online advertisements, customer reviews, and online recommendations before making a purchase, and consequently, social media advertising has significantly influenced their purchase intention (Hajli et al., 2020). But, there was a lack of clarity among businesses in Pakistan about the impact of Meta/Facebook and Instagram ads on consumer confidence and buying decisions. Hence, this study has been carried out to find empirical evidence of the role of social media advertising in influencing consumers' purchase decisions in Pakistan. Moreover, with the pandemic, online marketing and the engagement of consumers have become a more crucial part of the marketing strategy, globally. The pandemic has led to a greater time spent online, and more consumers have turned to digital channels to communicate, shop, and seek information over the past year and a half. In an increasingly competitive business world, businesses are adopting online promotions to maintain their customer base. Social media usage and online purchasing have been revealed as a significant change following the pandemic, as consumers have opted for online interactions instead of traditional shopping methods (Sheth, 2020). However, limited research has focused on post-pandemic effects on consumer perceptions, brand equity and purchase decision of Meta/Facebook and Instagram advertising in developing countries like Pakistan. Thus, this study is carried out to fill the gap in this study in the current digital marketing landscape.

4.0 Research Gaps:

Social media advertising is one advertising space that has come into its own in the field of digital advertising research because more and more companies are turning to this medium to reach consumers and build brand connections. The impact of Meta/Facebook advertising and Instagram advertising on the attitude, brand image and purchasing behavior of consumers has been broadly explored in developed economies (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Most of the previous studies have concentrated on western markets, where the digital infrastructure and consumers' life and online habits are more advanced and stable. But limited studies have been carried out in developing countries like Pakistan where the economic conditions, values, internet usage and behaviors of the consumers are quite distinct from the developed countries (Mick 2023). Hence, there has not been much contextual understanding of the impact of Meta (Facebook/Instagram) ads on Pakistanis regarding brand equity, brand parity and purchase decisions.

However, there are fewer studies that have extensively studied the interaction effects of both Meta/Facebook ads and Instagram ads with brand equity and brand parity (Nam & Kannan, 2020). In the marketing literature, there has been a great deal of focus on the concept of brand equity due to the belief that it is a crucial element to enhance customer loyalty and gain a competitive advantage. The researchers have stated that the social media advertisements have positively impacted the brand awareness, perceived quality and customer loyalty (Yadav & Rahman, 2018). However, it is not well researched concept and is not addressed extensively in the academic literature in spite of its increasing significance in the increasingly competitive digital markets. Brand parity is the degree of consumer perception that there are strong similarities in quality and performance between brands. Previous research has neglected to examine the impact of social media ads on consumers' perceptions of brand similarity or

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uniqueness, particularly in online settings where consumers consume a great deal of promotional information on a daily basis (Elliott et al., 2015). It is for this reason that there has been a disconnect in theory on the impact of Meta/Facebook and Instagram ads on brand parity in emerging markets.

Research Objectives of the Study:

This research was focus on following objectives:

1. To observe the influence of Meta/Facebook advertising on brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase decision.
2. To examine the moderating role of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) between advertisements on Meta/Facebook and brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase decision.
3. To observe the influence of Instagram advertising on brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase decision.
4. To examine the moderating role of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) between advertisements on Instagram and brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase decision.

Research Questions:

1. What is the influence of Meta/Facebook advertising on brand equity, brand parity and Consumer purchase decision?
2. What is the moderating role of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) between advertisements on Meta/Facebook and brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase decision?
3. What is influence of Instagram advertising on brand equity, brand parity and consumer Purchase decision?
4. What is the moderating role of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) between advertisements on Instagram and brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase decision?

Significance of the Study:

The study has represented the importance and contribution of the research in theoretical, methodological and practical perspectives. The present study has focused on examining the impact of Meta/Facebook advertising and Instagram advertising on brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase decisions in the Pakistani market. As social media platforms have increasing become important marketing tackles for businesses and understanding their influence on consumer perceptions and also purchasing behavior has become essential for the marketers or researchers. Therefore, this study has contributed to the existing literature by addressing important research gaps related to social media advertising, digital consumer behavior and brand management in developing economies such as Pakistan. The significance of this study has been discussed under theoretical, methodological and practical contributions.

Theoretical Contributions:

This research contributes to the literature of digital marketing and consumer behavior by combining key concepts around Meta/Facebook advertising, Instagram advertising, brand equity,

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brand parity with consumer purchase decisions, all in one complete framework. Previous research has largely investigated social media advertising and purchase intentions independently and only a few studies have explored the joint effect of Meta/Facebook advertising, Instagram advertising, brand equity and brand parity in a single model. Hence, the present research was designed to add value to the previous studies by giving a multidimensional analysis of the impact of social media advertising on consumer perceptions and buying behavior in the Pakistani market. Theoretically, the study also adds value to the existing marketing and consumer behavior theories by bringing them to the new digital context. Traditional advertising models (e.g. AIDA) and traditional brand management models have been created primarily for one-way communication channels and have not adequately captured the interactive and participative characteristics of social media. This research brings new dimensions to the conceptual framework of social media marketing including dimensions of the web 2.0 technology such as customer engagement, online interaction, communication with influencers and user generated content. The research offers a more modern framework understanding the influence of digital advertising on consumer behavior in more interactive online settings.

The other noteworthy theoretical contribution of this study is its focus on the brand parity concept, which has been minimally explored in the literature about social media marketing. Previous research has largely centred on brand equity and customer allegiance and loyalty, with little research examining the effect of social media advertising on perceptions of brand similarity. This study aims to fill this theoretical void by investigating whether the use of Meta/Facebook and Instagram advertising contributes to brand uniqueness or to the uniformity of brands in the minds of consumers. Thus, the study adds to the literature by advancing the knowledge about the digital advertising and brand parity in competitive markets. Moreover, the study adds to the existing literature by yielding empirical evidence from the developing economy of Pakistan where social media usage and digital marketing activities has rapidly increased in the past few years. Previous studies have been done in developed countries or in Western world where the consumers' behavior and technological facilities and digital engagement are quite different from Pakistan. Thus, this study contributes to the spread of applicability of digital marketing theories by testing the theories in Pakistan and gives the insights about the effectiveness of social media advertising in developing countries.

Methodological Contributions:

In terms of methodology, this study is significant in that a comprehensive quantitative research approach was implemented to investigate the relationship between advertising on Meta/Facebook and advertising on Instagram, brand equity and brand parity and consumers' purchasing decisions. The study applies the structured statistical analysis techniques in the investigation of direct relationships between variables and empirical evidence on the effectiveness of social media advertising in the Pakistani market. This research method enhances the credibility and validity of the results and effects of digital consumer behavior and digital marketing effectiveness. The study also brings a contribution to the methodology part since it takes into consideration some variables and makes them part of one research framework. This study brings together these constructs in a single analytical approach while previous studies tended to analyze them individually, addressing social media advertising, brand equity, or purchase intentions.

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Practical Contributions:

The research is useful for digital marketing practitioners and policy makers as they help them to understand the online behaviors of consumers in Pakistan. The findings of the study have practical implications in the sense that it leads to more effective and responsible online marketing practices in a country where social media is playing a pivotal role in the digital economy.

Scope of the Study:

The main aim of the current study was to focus mainly on the Pakistani market, specifically the ones who have actively used the Meta/Facebook and Instagram platforms for communication, entertainment and online shopping activities. The study has analyzed the effect of Meta (Facebook) advertising, Instagram advertising, on brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase decision of social media users in Pakistan. In the modern era of digital marketing, Pakistan's businesses have started using social media advertisements to reach out to consumers and perform well in the market, with the intent of this study being to find out how these social media advertisements have affected the perception and buying habits of consumers in Pakistan's market. The study specifically focused on the consumers who had seen advertisements on Meta/Facebook and Instagram and interacted with promotional content online by liking, commenting, sharing and reviewing. This study has been centered around the question of whether or not social media advertising has built up brand value and consumers' trust or increased perceptions of brand similarity in a highly competitive digital environment.

The present study has adopted a cross sectional quantitative research design due to the collection of data from respondents only once during the research process. To gain a comprehensive view of online consumer behavior in Pakistan, the study has also incorporated consumers from varying demographic segments including gender, age, education level and social media usage. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire and data interpretations were made using descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis and moderation analysis. A total of 254 respondents has participated in the study and all 254 responses were complete and usable for final analysis. The size of the samples has not fallen below the minimum size recommended for the statistical analysis conducted in the research. In addition, the demographic profile of the respondents such as age, gender, education and social media use behavior has been subjected to analysis and detailed discussion in Chapter 4 of this study. The research has been focused on delivering useful insights on the efficacy of Meta (Facebook/Instagram) advertising with regards to brand equity and brand parity in the Pakistani market, and its impact on consumer's purchasing decisions.

Social Influence Theory has been used to account for the influence of social interaction, peer communication and group pressure on individuals' attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. The theory has suggested that people often changed their decisions and behaviors because of the opinions, recommendations and actions of others (Kelman, 1958). With the rise of social media, social influence has taken on a new and greater role in digital environments as consumers have increasingly relied on online reviews, peer recommendations and communication from influencers before making purchase decisions. Social influence Theory has helped to understand the impact of social interaction and communication among peers on consumer perception on brands and products in the context of advertising on Meta/Facebook and Instagram.

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Recommendations from influencers, friends, and online communities were more trusted by consumers than traditional advertisements, as they felt that the information was authentic and trustworthy. The impact of social influence on social media on customer engagement, brand trust and online purchasing behavior has been noted by researchers (Erkan & Evans, 2021).

The theory is also highly relevant since the Facebook and Instagram platforms have been promoting users to engage with each other by liking, commenting, sharing, and hosting discussions online. As a result of these forms of electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), consumers have actively communicated their opinions and experiences with products and their brands, affecting brand perceptions and purchasing actions. Positive interactions and influencer marketing online have been reported as enhancing trust and emotional connection of consumers to brands (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Thus, Social Influence Theory has shed light on the role of online communication and peer interaction in influencing consumers' attitudes and behaviors in the social media advertising context.

2.0 Literature Review:

This chapter has presented the review of related literature regarding Meta/Facebook advertising, Instagram advertising, electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase decisions. The chapter has focused on discussing previous national and international studies related to social media advertising and consumer behavior. In addition, relevant theories, conceptual explanations, empirical findings and research gaps have been examined to provide a comprehensive understanding of the study variables. The literature review has also helped in developing the conceptual framework and hypotheses of the study by identifying the relationships among Meta/Facebook advertising, Instagram advertising, brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase decisions in the Pakistani market.

Underpinning Theories:

The present study has been supported by several important theories related to technology adoption, consumer behavior, social interaction and brand management. These theories have provided a theoretical foundation for understanding how Meta/Facebook advertising and Instagram advertising have influenced brand equity, brand parity and consumer purchase decisions in the Pakistani market. The theories discussed in this chapter have explained consumer attitudes, behavioral intentions, technology usage, social influence and brand perceptions in digital marketing environments.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM):

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was developed by Davis (1989) to explain how users accept and use technological systems. The theory has mainly focused on two major factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. According to TAM, individuals have accepted a technology when they believed that the technology was useful and easy to use. Researchers have widely applied TAM in studies related to online shopping, digital marketing and social media usage because consumers have increasingly interacted with technology-based platforms in their daily lives (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). In the context of social media advertising, TAM has explained how consumers have accepted Meta/Facebook and Instagram advertisements based on their usefulness and ease of interaction. Consumers have preferred

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digital advertisements that provided relevant information, convenience and interactive communication features. Researchers have highlighted that perceived usefulness and ease of use have positively influenced consumer engagement and online purchasing behavior in digital environments (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Therefore, TAM has provided a strong theoretical foundation for understanding how Meta/Facebook and Instagram advertising have influenced consumer attitudes and purchase decisions in the Pakistani market.

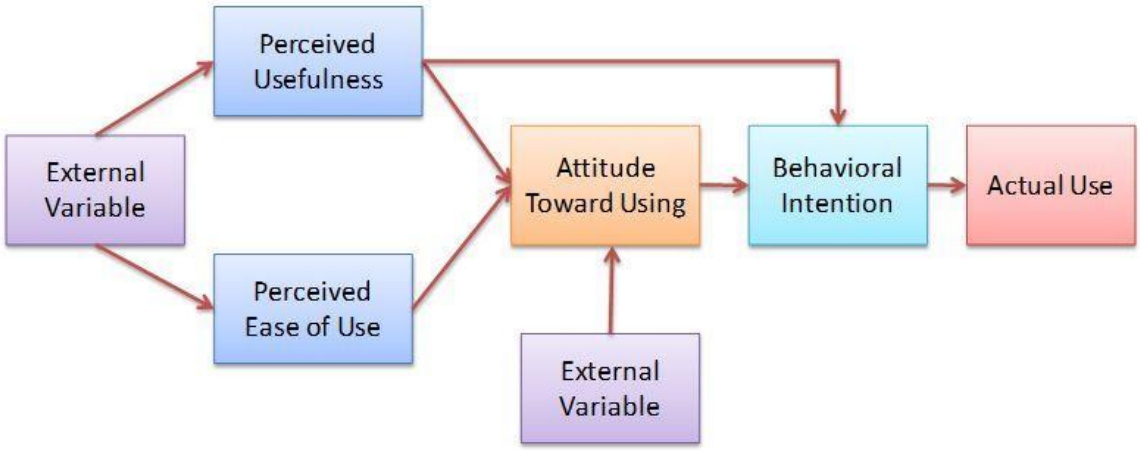


Figure 0.1: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989)

The theory has also been relevant because social media platforms have continuously introduced advanced technological features such as personalized advertising, targeted promotions and interactive content. Consumers have increasingly accepted these technologies because they have improved shopping convenience and product accessibility. Researchers have explained that consumers who perceived social media advertising as informative, easy to access and beneficial were more likely to engage with brands and make purchase decisions (Alalwan et al., 2020). Consequently, TAM has helped explain the role of technology acceptance in shaping consumer behavior toward Meta/Facebook and Instagram advertising.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was proposed by Ajzen (1991) to explain how attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control have influenced human behavior and intentions. According to TPB, individuals have performed a behavior when they had positive attitudes toward the behavior, social support from important people and confidence in their ability to perform the behavior. Researchers have widely applied TPB in studies related to consumer behavior, online purchasing and social media marketing because it has explained how psychological and social factors have influenced decision-making processes (Conner & Armitage, 1998). In social media advertising environments, TPB has explained how consumers' attitudes toward Meta/Facebook and Instagram advertisements have affected their purchasing intentions and online engagement. Consumers who perceived advertisements positively and received social support through online reviews, recommendations and influencer communication were more likely to purchase products and engage with brands. Researchers have reported that

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attitudes toward social media advertisements and online peer influence have significantly affected consumer purchase decisions in digital markets (Hajli et al., 2020).

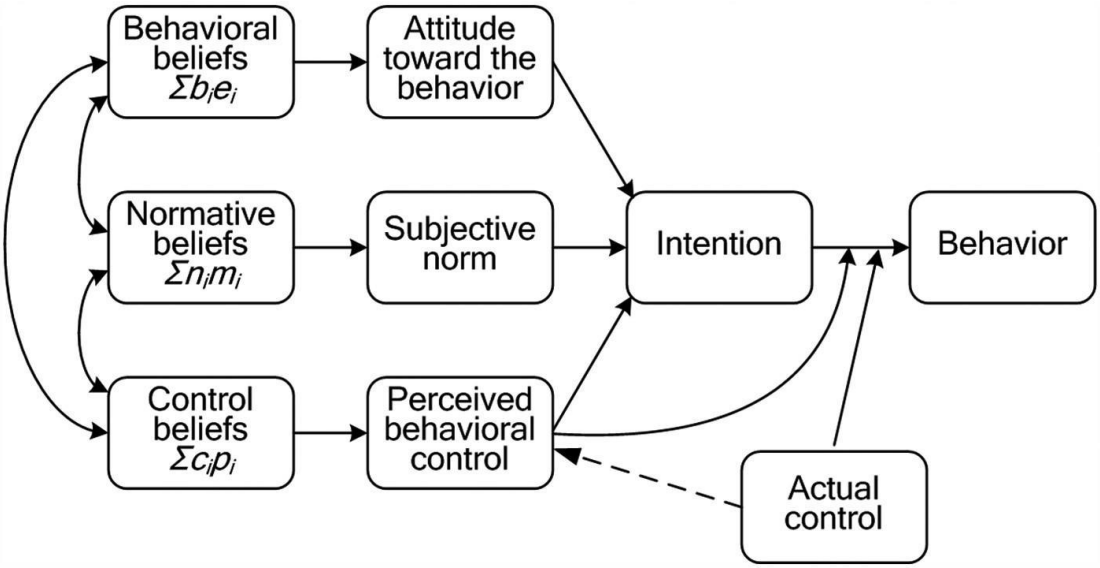


Figure 0.2: Theory of Planned Behaviour developed by Ajzen (1991)

The theory has also emphasized the importance of perceived behavioral control in online purchasing activities. Consumers have preferred online shopping when they believed that digital platforms were easy, secure and convenient to use. Researchers have highlighted that consumers' confidence in using online technologies and social media platforms has positively influenced online purchasing intentions (Wibowo et al., 2021). Therefore, TPB has been important for understanding how attitudes, social influence and behavioral control have shaped consumer responses toward Meta/Facebook and Instagram advertising.

Social Influence Theory:

Social Influence Theory has explained how individuals' attitudes, beliefs and behaviors have been influenced by social interaction, peer communication and group pressure.

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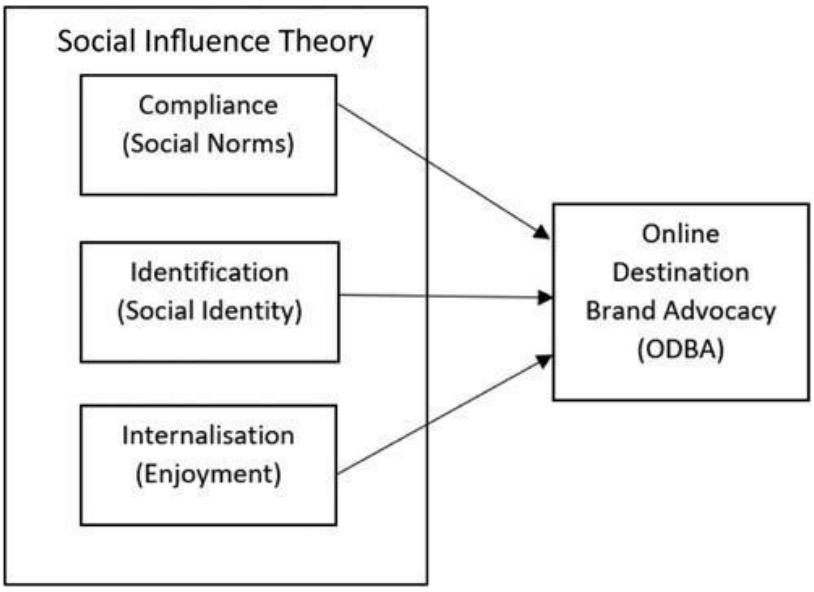


Figure 0.3: Social Influence Theory developed by Kelman (1958)

Researchers have reported that positive online interaction and influencer marketing have strengthened consumer trust and emotional attachment toward brands (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Therefore, Social Influence Theory has provided important insights into how online communication and peer interaction have shaped consumer behavior in social media advertising environments.

Consumer Behavior has focused on understanding how consumers have selected, purchased, used and evaluated products and services based on psychological, social, cultural and economic factors. The theory has explained that consumer behavior was influenced by perceptions, motivations, attitudes, preferences and social interaction (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). Researchers have widely applied consumer behavior theories in marketing research to understand how advertising and promotional activities have influenced purchasing decisions. In social media marketing environments, Consumer Behavior Theory has explained how Meta/Facebook and Instagram advertisements have affected consumers' decision-making processes. Consumers have increasingly relied on social media platforms for product information, online reviews and recommendations before making purchases. Researchers have explained that visually attractive and interactive advertisements on Instagram and Meta/Facebook have significantly influenced consumer attitudes and online buying behavior (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Therefore, Consumer Behavior Theory has provided a useful framework for understanding how digital advertising has shaped consumer perceptions and purchase decisions in the Pakistani market.

Digital Marketing and Social Media Advertising

Digital marketing is an inseparable part of contemporary marketing efforts, which allows brands to appeal to the consumer using digital marketing channels, social media, as well as mobile technologies (Bala & Verma, 2018). Particularly social media advertising has provided opportunities that are interactive, targeted and measurable in strengthening brand equity, diminishing brand parity and influencing consumer buying decisions. It discusses the

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development of digital marketing worldwide, its effect in Pakistan and the influence of social media in consumer behavior (Shiva & Manoharan, 2025). The development of digital marketing has been directly associated with the fast increase in the use of the internet, mobile technologies and social media platforms (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). The internet gave new avenue through which brands can target consumers since the early 1990s, first via the use of static banner advertisement and email marketing and then through dynamic interactive campaigns (Hollis, 2005). These initial digital marketing techniques enabled companies to reach out to a wider audience than those provided by traditional media and formed the basis of more personalized and focused marketing techniques (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015). With the advent of smartphones and mobile applications, digital marketing has been further boosted making the marketer be able to interact with the consumers in real time. Brand communication, especially the use of social media, especially Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn, have been revolutionized to provide an opportunity to engage real time, advertise specific content and make content viral (Jeswani, 2023). These changes have turned marketing into a one-way communication model to interactive, consumer-focused approaches, which improves the visibility of the brand, consumer attitude and the success of advertising campaigns considerably (Kabir, Sultana, Hossain, & Islam, 2025).

Advancement in technology and transformation in consumer behavior is one of the factors that have led to the adoption of digital marketing as opposed to traditional marketing (Bajrami & Qerimi, 2022). As high-speed internet becomes ubiquitous and mobile devices spread, consumers are no longer satisfied with information being readily available and they want to be treated by the brand on a one-on-one basis. Digital marketing enables businesses to invest in fulfilling these expectations because targeted messages are provided depending on the consumer preference, browsing history and engagement patterns (Bharti, Khatri, & Duralia, 2024). Digital platforms offer real-time feedback and analytics unlike traditional media, where a company may have to rely on a wide and one-way communication approach, marketers can continuously optimize a campaign, gauge success and react to new trends (Indriani, Haris, & Nurdin, 2023). Such interactivity can enhance relationships between consumers and can enable the brands to keep up with the rapid, competitive world (Thorbjørnsen, Supphellen, Nysveen, & Egil, 2002).

The social media has presented a radically new paradigm in marketing as it provides a two-way communication and co-creation (Sindhav, 2011). Social media like Facebook and Instagram allow a customer to have a direct interaction with a brand by liking, commenting, sharing and creating content, which provides a participatory space where the audience shapes the brand narrative (Nkegbe & Abor, 2023). Not only do these dynamics boost brand visibility and awareness, but also consumer trust, loyalty and emotional attachment, which provide a firm platform to enhance brand equity and influence the buying behavior. Here, virtual marketing has become more than a supplementary promotion device, to a strategic core element of brand management, especially in a market where social media usage is high (Khurdei, Pushkar, Kuzmenko, Bessarab, & Tregub, 2023).

A number of historical events depict how digital advertising was developed and how it is becoming increasingly sophisticated (F. Rehman et al., 2019). Online marketing became more precise and measurable with Google AdWords being launched in 2000 and allowed the targeting of the audience according to their search behavior (Soni, 2023). All these developments testify

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to the move of the stagnant and non-specific advertising methods to the dynamic and interactive ones, where customer-centricity, engagement and real-time feedback become the focus of marketing performance (Amrita, 2025). Historical development of digital advertising underscores the importance of technology, innovativeness and consumer involvement coming together in order to create the contemporary marketing environment (Jamal & Khan, 2024).

Trends in Digital Marketing and Social Media Use in Pakistan

Pakistan has seen a swift change towards digital marketing that is mainly due to the prevalence of smart phones and mobile first use of internet (Hassan, Iqbal, Malik, & Iqbal, 2017). Social media has played a fundamental role in marketing tactics whereby brands are able to access a wide range of audiences in an interactive way. This increase has enabled companies to adopt targeted and segmented campaigns that can be tracked and modified on the spot which has improved consumer interaction and marketing results (Jeswani, 2023). The mobile-first-consumption trend implies that more and more people start to consume content and advertisements with the smartphones and this opens the opportunities of the personal, interactive campaigns. Brands use influencer marketing, story form and visual content as characteristics of capturing attention and establishing an engagement (Atiq, Abid, Anwar, & Ijaz, 2022). The patterns introduced demonstrate the significance of digital marketing as a highly important factor in increasing brand awareness, consumer engagement and purchase behavior in Pakistan and, therefore, it is a crucial area of research and practice (Athar, 2025).

E-WOM and Brand Parity

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has significantly influenced brand parity because online reviews. E-WOM recommends as peer communication have shaped consumer perceptions regarding similarities and differences among competing brands. Researchers have explained that positive E-WOM has reduced perceptions of brand parity. The consumers have developed stronger trust and emotional attachment toward brands receiving favorable online feedback (Elliott et al., 2015). Consequently, businesses have increasingly relied on customer engagement and online communication strategies to strengthen brand differentiation. The reduce brand similarity perceptions in digital markets. The relationship between E-WOM and brand parity has also been associated with customer experiences and online interaction. Consumers have frequently shared product experiences. The comparisons and recommendations through Meta/Facebook and Instagram platforms, which have influenced how they perceived competing brands. Researchers have highlighted that authentic customer reviews and personalized recommendations have improved brand uniqueness. The consumers have trusted peer-generated information more than traditional advertisements (Erkan & Evans, 2021). Therefore the businesses have focused on positive online engagement to strengthen the consumer perceptions regarding brand differentiation.

Negative E-WOM, on the other hand, has increased perceptions of brand parity. The unfavorable reviews and complaints have weakened emotional attachment or reduced brand uniqueness among consumers. Researchers have explained that consumers who encountered similar negative experiences across competing brands were more likely to perceive brands as interchangeable and lacking distinct value (Buil et al., 2020). Consequently, businesses have monitored customer feedback and online communication to minimize negative E-WOM and maintain strong brand identity in competitive markets. Another important relationship between

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E-WOM and brand parity has been associated with influencer communication and social media engagement. Researchers have highlighted that influencer-generated recommendations and customer interaction have reduced brand parity because consumers have associated positive online communication with unique brand experiences and trustworthiness (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Therefore, E-WOM has become an important factor influencing brand differentiation and consumer perceptions regarding brand uniqueness in digital environments.

E-WOM and Consumer Purchase Decision

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has significantly influenced consumer purchase decisions because consumers have increasingly depended on online reviews, recommendations and peer communication before buying products and services. Researchers have explained that E-WOM has positively affected purchase intentions because consumers have considered online reviews and recommendations more trustworthy and authentic than traditional advertising messages (Hajli et al., 2020). Consumers have frequently searched for customer feedback and online experiences before making purchasing decisions in digital markets. The relationship between E-WOM and consumer purchase decisions has also been associated with customer trust and risk reduction. Consumers have often faced uncertainty regarding product quality, payment security and service reliability in online shopping environments. Researchers have highlighted that positive E-WOM has reduced uncertainty and improved purchase confidence because consumers have trusted peer-generated communication and online reviews (Erkan & Evans, 2021). Therefore, businesses have increasingly encouraged positive customer interaction and online engagement to strengthen consumer trust and purchasing behavior.

Social media platforms such as Meta/Facebook and Instagram have further strengthened the influence of E-WOM on purchase decisions because consumers have actively interacted with reviews, comments, ratings and recommendations shared online. Researchers have explained that customer interaction and social communication have significantly influenced online buying behavior because consumers have relied on peer opinions while evaluating products and services (Wibowo et al., 2021). Consequently, organizations have integrated E-WOM strategies into social media marketing campaigns to improve customer confidence and online purchasing intentions. Another important factor influencing the relationship between E-WOM and consumer purchase decisions has been influencer marketing and online communities. Researchers have highlighted that influencer recommendations and customer-generated content have positively affected consumer attitudes and buying intentions because consumers have perceived influencers and peer communication as credible sources of information (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Therefore, E-WOM has become a powerful determinant of consumer purchase decisions and online shopping behavior in modern digital marketing environments.

E-WOM between Meta/Facebook Advertising and Brand Equity

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has become an important mediating mechanism in digital marketing because consumers have increasingly relied on online reviews, recommendations and peer communication while evaluating products and brands on social media platforms. Researchers have explained that Meta/Facebook advertising has significantly influenced consumer attitudes and online engagement through interactive communication and visual content (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Consumers have actively interacted with advertisements through comments, shares and online discussions, which have strengthened the spread of E-

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WOM in digital environments. Consequently, E-WOM has enhanced the effectiveness of Meta/Facebook advertising by improving customer trust and brand-related perceptions. Previous studies have reported that E-WOM has positively influenced brand equity because consumers have trusted peer-generated communication more than traditional advertising messages. Online customer reviews and recommendations have strengthened brand awareness, perceived quality and customer loyalty in social media environments (Erkan & Evans, 2021). Researchers have also highlighted that positive online interaction has reduced uncertainty and improved emotional attachment toward brands because consumers have perceived E-WOM as authentic and reliable information (Hajli et al., 2020). Therefore, the mediating role of E-WOM between Meta/Facebook advertising and brand equity has become highly significant in understanding consumer behavior in digital markets.

Meta/Facebook advertising has also encouraged consumers to share experiences, opinions and recommendations through social media platforms, which has strengthened online engagement and communication. Researchers have explained that consumers exposed to interactive Facebook advertisements were more likely to participate in online discussions and electronic recommendations regarding products and services (Bilgin, 2018). Consequently, E-WOM has acted as an intermediary mechanism through which Meta/Facebook advertising has strengthened brand equity dimensions such as brand awareness, perceived quality and customer loyalty. Therefore, the present study has proposed that E-WOM significantly mediates the relationship between Meta/Facebook advertising and brand equity in the Pakistani market.

E-WOM between Instagram Advertising and Consumer Purchase Decision

Instagram advertising has become one of the most influential forms of digital marketing because Instagram has provided businesses with opportunities to communicate through visually attractive content, influencer marketing and interactive customer engagement. Researchers have explained that Instagram advertisements have significantly influenced consumer purchase decisions because consumers have actively interacted with visual storytelling, promotional campaigns and influencer recommendations on social media platforms (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Consumers have increasingly depended on online communication and peer interaction while making purchasing decisions in digital environments. Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has also played an important role in influencing consumer purchase decisions because consumers have relied on online reviews, ratings and recommendations before purchasing products and services. Researchers have highlighted that positive E-WOM has reduced uncertainty and strengthened consumer trust because consumers have considered peer-generated communication more credible than traditional advertisements (Erkan & Evans, 2021). Furthermore, influencer communication and customer interaction on Instagram have encouraged consumers to share experiences and recommendations regarding products, which has significantly affected online buying behavior (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

Previous studies have reported that Instagram advertising has indirectly influenced consumer purchase decisions through E-WOM because visually attractive advertisements and influencer-generated content have encouraged online discussions and customer recommendations. Researchers have explained that consumers exposed to Instagram advertisements were more likely to engage in online communication and seek peer opinions before making purchasing decisions (Appel et al., 2020). Consequently, E-WOM has acted as a

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mediating mechanism connecting Instagram advertising with consumer purchase decisions in digital markets. Therefore, the present study has proposed that E-WOM significantly mediates the relationship between Instagram advertising and consumer purchase decision in the Pakistani market.

Role of E-WOM between Instagram Advertising and Consumer Purchase Decision:

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) has become an important moderating factor in digital marketing because consumers have increasingly relied on online reviews, recommendations and peer communication while evaluating brands and advertisements on social media platforms. Researchers have explained that social media advertising on Meta/Facebook and Instagram has significantly influenced consumer perceptions regarding brand uniqueness and similarity in competitive markets (Dwivedi et al., 2021). However, the effectiveness of social media advertising has varied according to the level of customer interaction and online communication. Consequently, E-WOM has strengthened or weakened the relationship between social media advertising and brand parity in digital environments. Previous studies have reported that positive E-WOM has reduced perceptions of brand parity because consumers have developed stronger trust and emotional attachment toward brands receiving favorable online reviews and recommendations (Erkan & Evans, 2021). Researchers have also highlighted that social media users have actively exchanged product experiences, opinions and recommendations through Meta/Facebook and Instagram platforms, which has significantly affected brand-related perceptions. Positive online engagement and customer interaction have strengthened brand uniqueness because consumers have trusted authentic peer-generated communication more than traditional promotional messages (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Consequently, businesses with strong positive E-WOM have been more successful in reducing brand parity and improving customer loyalty in digital markets. The moderating role of E-WOM has therefore become highly important in understanding the relationship between social media advertising and brand parity in the Pakistani market. Consumers who have depended heavily on online reviews and peer recommendations have responded differently to social media advertisements compared to consumers with lower online engagement. Therefore, the present study has proposed that E-WOM significantly moderates the relationship between social media advertising and brand parity in the Pakistani market.

Hypothesis Development:

H1: Meta/Facebook advertising has significant positive impact on brand equity.

H2: Meta/Facebook advertising has significant negative impact on brand parity.

H3: Meta/Facebook advertising has positive impact on consumer purchase decision.

H4: Electric Word of mouth has a significant moderator role between the relationship of Meta/Facebook advertising and brand equity.

H5: Electric Word of mouth has a significant moderator role between the relationship of Meta/Facebook advertising and brand parity.

H6: Electric Word of mouth has a significant moderator role between the relationship of Meta/Facebook advertising and consumer purchase decision.

H7: Instagram advertising has significant positive impact on brand equity.

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H8: Instagram advertising has significant negative impact on brand parity.

H9: Instagram advertising has positive impact on consumer purchase decision.

H10: Electric Word of mouth has significant positive impact on brand equity.

H11: Electric Word of mouth has positive impact on consumer purchase decision.

H12: Electric Word of mouth has a significant moderator role between the relationship of Instagram advertising and brand equity.

H13: Electric Word of mouth has a significant moderator role between the relationship of Instagram advertising and brand parity.

H14: Electric Word of mouth has a significant moderator role between the relationship of Instagram advertising and consumer purchase decision.

3.0 Research Methodology:

The chapter presented the research instrument that was used to gather data, and discussed the process used to ensure the instrument's validity and reliability. The operational and measurement of the study variables were explained in detail. This chapter clarified and classified the statistical techniques used in data analysis, which were the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and the Smart Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (SmartPLS-SEM). The descriptive analysis, reliability test, validity test, correlation analysis, regression analysis, measurement model evaluation, structural model evaluation, and test of hypotheses were thoroughly explained. The ethical issues that were observed in the process of doing the research in order to achieve the legitimacy, the correctness and the integrity of the findings were also discussed. In this study, the technique used provided a systematic approach to solving the research problem and effectively solving the research questions.

Research Design:

Research design is a detailed plan that specifies research methods and procedures to be used in a research investigation. It serves as a guiding structure to help guide the researcher to achieve the research goals and to ensure the precision, validity, and reliability of the research. According to Creswell and Creswell (2023), the study design will determine the methodology used to solve research problems and/or test research hypotheses through systematic inquiry. Common research methods include exploratory, descriptive, correlational, explanatory, experimental, and cross section methods. The choice of the study design depends on the nature of the research topic, goals and methodological prerequisites. This study has been designed in quantitative, cross sectional, descriptive correlational and explanatory methodology to find out the impact of Meta/Facebook and Instagram advertisement on Brand Equity, Brand Parity and Consumer buying behavior in Pakistan. The selection of quantitative design was made because it was possible to numerically measure variables and thus be able to statistically test the hypothesis presented. The method adopted was a cross sectional survey design because the data were collected from the respondents at one point in time and not over any period of time. The design was considered to be both economically viable and time efficient while also being appropriate

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for measuring the current perceptions of the social media advertising platforms among consumers.

Research Philosophy

The philosophy of research refers to a set of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge and nature of reality within a research investigation. It provides a foundation to select appropriate research methodologies, strategies and procedures. Saunders et al. (2023) assert that research philosophy directs researchers in comprehending the methodologies for data collection, interpretation, and analysis to derive significant results. The most common philosophical approaches used in social science research are: positivism, interpretivism, and realism. Positivism emphasizes the objective reality and the empirical measurement, and interpretivism focuses on the subjective meanings and personal experiences. Realism has attempted to combine both methods by acknowledging that there is an external reality but that the human being may have different interpretations of it (Bell et al., 2022). This study used positivist research approach because this study was based on analyzing quantitative relationships and correlations among the Meta/Facebook ads, Instagram ads, brand equity, brand parity, and consumer purchase decisions in the Pakistani market. The positivist approach was found to be appropriate because the study had to test hypotheses and find statistically significant correlations among the predetermined factors based on the empirical observation.

Sampling and Sample Size

Sample Size:

Considering the partial responses, 300 questionnaires were sent to the social media users of Southern Punjab. After the data collection process, the questionnaires were checked for missing values, incomplete answers, double entries and inconsistencies in answers. After the screening process 254 valid questionnaires were selected for final analysis. The sample size of 254 respondents exceeded the minimum requirements for SPSS and Smart PLS analyses, and was considered adequate for descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, validity analysis, correlation analysis, regression analysis, mediation analysis and structural equation modeling. Hence, the final sample provided a good basis to examine the impact of Meta/Facebook and Instagram ads on brand equity, brand parity, and consumers' buying decisions in Pakistan.

Methodological Aspect	Description
Research Approach	Quantitative and deductive approach adopted for hypothesis testing and empirical examination of relationships.
Research Design	Causal-explanatory, cross-sectional research design used to examine direct and moderation effects.
Population	Internet users, such as those on Instagram and Meta/Facebook.

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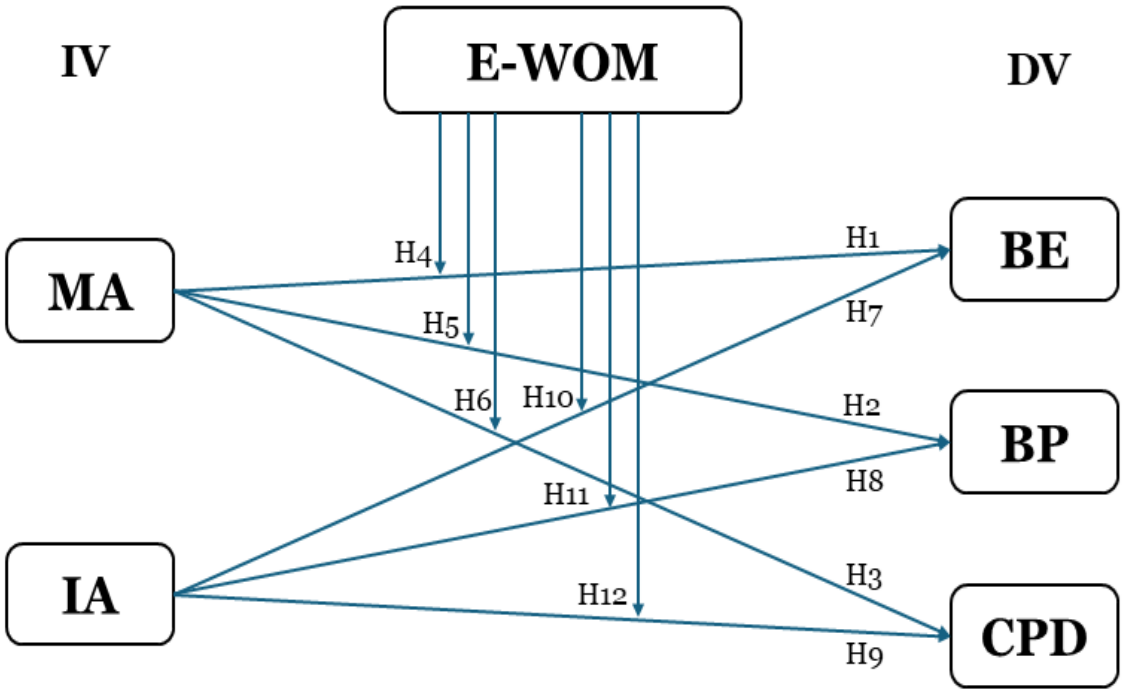
Sampling Technique	Simple Random sampling.
Sample Size	**254** valid respondents, adequate for PLS-SEM analysis.
Data Collection	Structured self-administered questionnaire using validated measurement scales adopted from previous studies.
Pilot Study	Conducted to assess reliability, clarity and suitability of the research instrument before the main survey.
Measurement Instruments	Established and validated scales used to measure all study constructs.
Data Analysis	Smart PLS 4 used for PLS-SEM, including measurement model, structural model and moderation analyses.
Ethical Considerations	Voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity maintained, and data used solely for academic research purposes.

Conceptual Framework of the Study:

The conceptual framework demonstrates how, in the presence of e-WOM moderating variables, Meta/Facebook and Instagram advertising affects consumer purchasing decisions, Brand Equity and Brand Parity. By addressing issues with high brand parity and e-WOM's potential to affect branding, this hybrid framework gives marketers a more comprehensive viewpoint to develop strategies that yield the greatest possible effectiveness.

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No	Variable Name	Definition	Source



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1	**Meta/Facebook Advertising**	Meta/Facebook advertising refers to the paid promotional activities and marketing campaigns conducted through the Facebook platform to influence consumer awareness, attitudes and purchasing behavior.	**Dwivedi et al., (2021)**
2	**Instagram Advertising**	Instagram advertising refers to digital promotional content shared through the Instagram platform to influence consumer perceptions, engagement and buying behavior. Instagram advertisements include stories, reels, influencer promotions, sponsored images and video-based marketing campaigns designed to create visual attraction and emotional connection with consumers.	**Djafarova & Bowes, 2021**
3	**Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)**	Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) refers to online consumer opinions,reviews,recommendations, comments and experiences shared through digital platforms and social media networks regarding products, services, or brands. E-WOM has enabled consumers to exchange information and influence the attitudes and purchasing behavior of other consumers in online environments.	**Erkan & Evans, 2021**
4	**Brand Equity**	Brand equity refers to the value, strength and positive perception of a brand in the minds of consumers.	**Bilgin, 2018**
5	**Brand Parity**	Brand parity refers to the extent to which consumers perceive competing brands within the same product category as similar in quality, performance and features.	**Ghosh, 2024**
	Consumer Purchase Decision	Consumer purchase decision refers to the process through which consumers select, evaluate and finally purchase products or	

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6		services based on available information, preferences and perceptions.	**Wibowo et al., 2021**

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the empirical results of the study and evaluates the proposed relationships among Instagram Advertising, Meta Advertising, Brand Equity, Brand Parity, Consumer Purchase Decision, and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM). The analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS 4. The assessment was undertaken in two major stages. First, the measurement model was examined to evaluate indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Second, the structural model was evaluated to determine the strength and statistical significance of the proposed direct and moderating relationships.

The dataset contained 254 observations. Bootstrapping was conducted using 5,000 bootstrap samples, a two-tailed significance test, a 5% significance level, and percentile bootstrap confidence intervals. The discussion focuses on standardized path coefficients (β), t-statistics, p-values, and 95% confidence intervals.

Two models were considered. The first model assessed the direct influence of Instagram Advertising and Meta Advertising on Brand Equity, Brand Parity, and Consumer Purchase Decision. The second model incorporated E-WOM as a moderator to assess whether E-WOM changes the strength of selected relationships between social media advertising and the outcome variables.

Descriptive Analysis of the Study Constructs

Before examining the structural relationships, descriptive statistics were calculated for the study constructs using their respective measurement items. As the original dataset uses a five-point response scale, a score close to 3 represents a position near the middle of the scale.

Table 4.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Study Constructs

Construct	No. of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Brand Equity	10	2.998	0.757
Brand Parity	6	2.987	0.786
Consumer Purchase Decision	6	3.001	0.770
E-WOM	6	3.016	0.820
Instagram Advertising	12	2.992	0.761
Meta Advertising	9	2.994	0.784

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The results indicate that the average responses for all constructs were concentrated around the midpoint of the measurement scale. E-WOM recorded the highest mean value (M = 3.016), whereas Brand Parity reported the lowest mean (M = 2.987). Nevertheless, the differences between the means were small.

Measurement Model:

The measurement model assessment was conducted before testing the structural relationships. The measurement model was evaluated through outer loadings, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

Indicator Reliability and Outer Loadings

The results showed that the outer loadings of the measurement items were generally satisfactory. The loadings ranged between 0.679 and 0.843 across the six constructs.

Table 4.2 Summary of Outer Loadings

Construct	No. of Items	Minimum Loading	Maximum Loading	Overall Assessment
Brand Equity	10	0.681	0.821	Acceptable
Brand Parity	6	0.693	0.823	Acceptable
Consumer Purchase Decision	6	0.711	0.834	Satisfactory
E-WOM	6	0.729	0.843	Satisfactory
Instagram Advertising	12	0.693	0.839	Acceptable
Meta Advertising	9	0.680	0.806	Acceptable

Most indicators exceeded or approached the preferred loading level of approximately 0.70. Five items were slightly below 0.70: BE-03 (0.681), BE-06 (0.693), BP-05 (0.693), IA-06 (0.693), and MA-06 (0.680). These indicators were retained because their loadings remained reasonably high and the corresponding constructs achieved satisfactory composite reliability and average variance extracted values.

Internal Consistency Reliability and Convergent Validity

Internal consistency reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), while convergent validity was examined using Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

Table 4.3 Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Assessment

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Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Assessment
Brand Equity	0.922	0.935	0.589	Accepted
Brand Parity	0.866	0.900	0.601	Accepted
Consumer Purchase Decision	0.857	0.894	0.585	Accepted
E-WOM	0.887	0.915	0.642	Accepted
Instagram Advertising	0.931	0.941	0.571	Accepted
Meta Advertising	0.916	0.931	0.601	Accepted

All Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.80, ranging from 0.857 for Consumer Purchase Decision to 0.931 for Instagram Advertising. This demonstrates strong internal consistency among the items measuring each construct.

4.3.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity determines whether conceptually different constructs are sufficiently distinct from one another.

Table 4.4 HTMT Discriminant Validity Results

Construct Pair	HTMT
Brand Equity - Brand Parity	0.506
Brand Equity - Consumer Purchase Decision	0.513
Brand Equity - E-WOM	0.138
Brand Equity - Instagram Advertising	0.601
Brand Equity - Meta Advertising	0.567
Brand Parity - Consumer Purchase Decision	0.572
Brand Parity - E-WOM	0.138
Brand Parity - Instagram Advertising	0.573
Brand Parity - Meta Advertising	0.589
Consumer Purchase Decision - E-WOM	0.188
Consumer Purchase Decision - Instagram Advertising	0.617
Consumer Purchase Decision - Meta Advertising	0.524

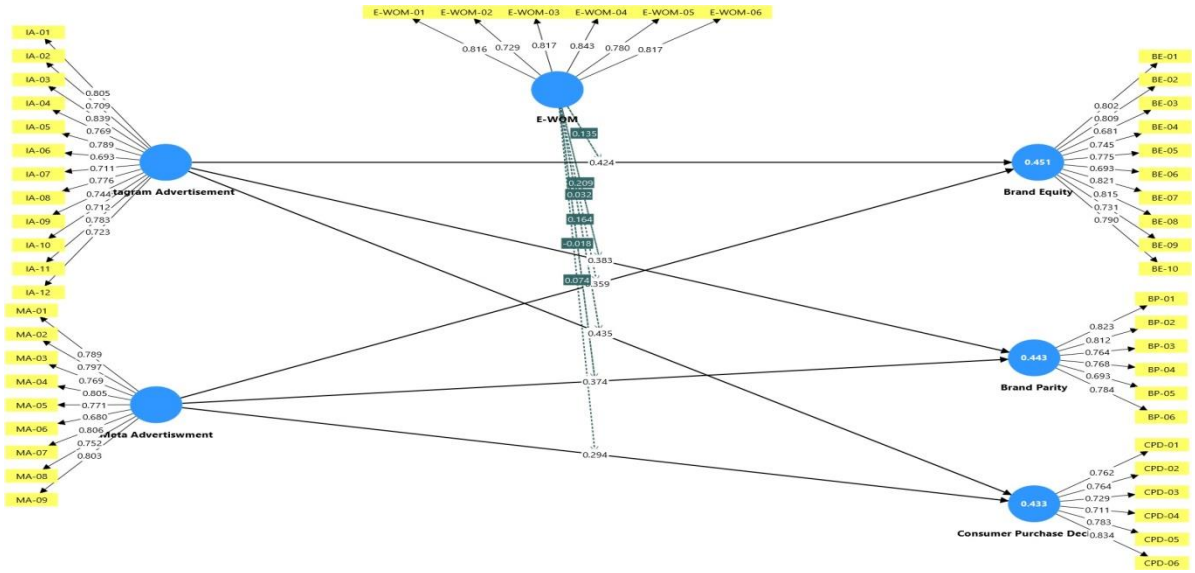
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Construct Pair	HTMT
E-WOM - Instagram Advertising	0.233
E-WOM - Meta Advertising	0.167
Instagram Advertising - Meta Advertising	0.400

All HTMT values were substantially below the conservative threshold of 0.85. The largest HTMT value was 0.617, observed between Instagram Advertising and Consumer Purchase Decision.

Structural Model Assessment

Following establishment of the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the structural relationships were evaluated. The first stage examined the direct influence of Instagram Advertising and Meta Advertising on Brand Equity, Brand Parity, and Consumer Purchase Decision.



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Table 4.5 Direct Path Results

Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	95% CI	Decision
Instagram Advertising -> Brand Equity	0.423	8.252	<0.001	[0.321, 0.520]	Supported
Instagram Advertising -> Brand Parity	0.375	7.372	<0.001	[0.274, 0.478]	Supported
Instagram Advertising -> Consumer Purchase Decision	0.447	9.533	<0.001	[0.357, 0.539]	Supported
Meta Advertising -> Brand Equity	0.367	7.144	<0.001	[0.265, 0.466]	Supported
Meta Advertising -> Brand Parity	0.392	7.694	<0.001	[0.290, 0.489]	Supported
Meta Advertising -> Consumer Purchase Decision	0.306	5.785	<0.001	[0.205, 0.410]	Supported

The results demonstrate that all six direct relationships are positive and statistically significant.

Instagram Advertising has a significant positive influence on Brand Equity ($\beta = 0.423$, $t = 8.252$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, greater exposure to or favourable perceptions of Instagram advertising are associated with stronger Brand Equity. Instagram Advertising also has a significant positive effect on Brand Parity ($\beta = 0.375$, $t = 7.372$, $p < 0.001$). The corresponding confidence interval does not contain zero, further confirming the robustness of this relationship. The largest direct coefficient in the model concerns the relationship between Instagram Advertising and Consumer Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.447$, $t = 9.533$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that Instagram Advertising represents a particularly important predictor of consumers' purchase decisions among the relationships examined.

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Explanatory Power of the Direct Model

Using the construct-level data from the same 254 observations, the explanatory power of the direct model was assessed.

Table Explanatory Power of the Direct Model

Endogenous Construct	R^2
Brand Equity	≈ 0.424
Brand Parity	≈ 0.394
Consumer Purchase Decision	≈ 0.384

Moderating Role of Electronic Word-of-Mouth

The second structural model incorporated E-WOM to determine whether it changes the strength of relationships between social media advertising and the dependent variables. Interaction terms were created between E-WOM and the advertising constructs, and their significance was examined through bootstrapping.

Direct Effect of E-WOM

The results reveal that the direct effects of E-WOM on the three dependent variables are statistically non-significant.

Moderating Effect of E-WOM on Instagram Advertising

The interaction between E-WOM and Instagram Advertising produced significant effects for both Brand Equity and Brand Parity.

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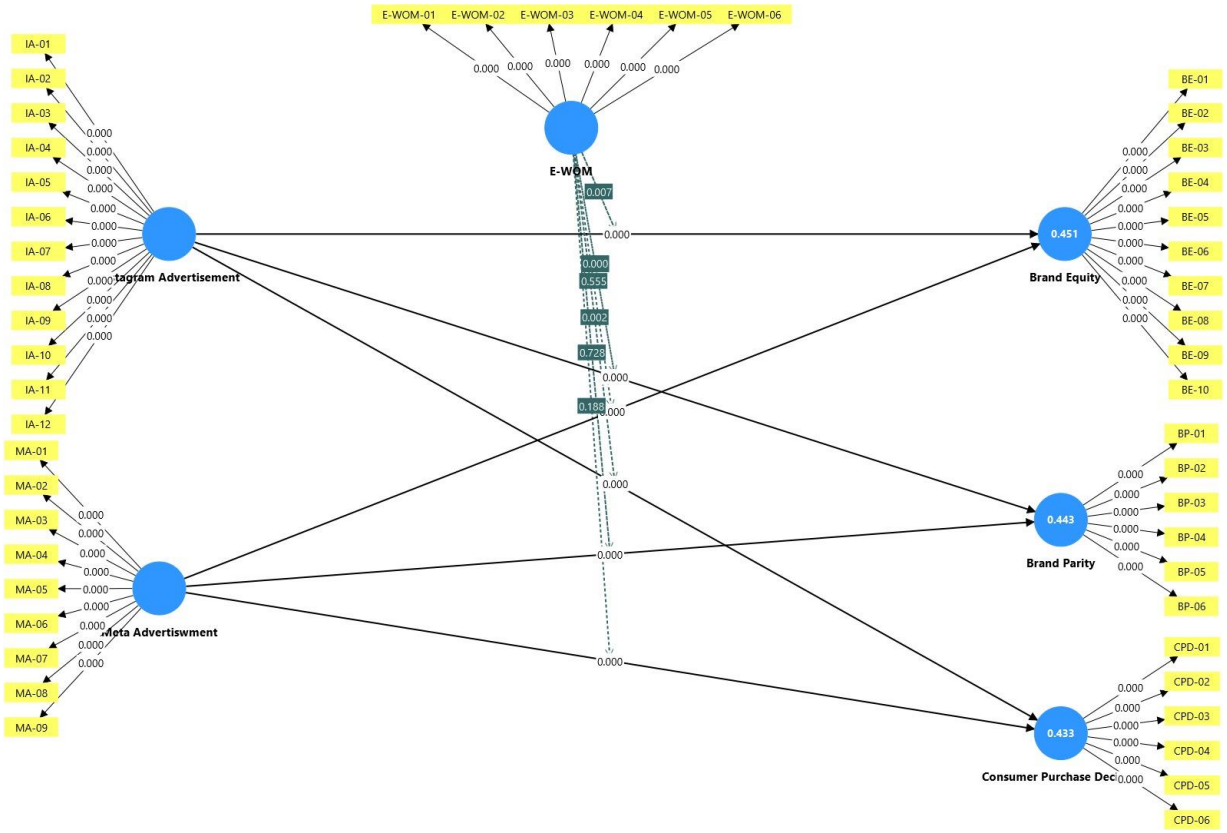


Table 4.8 Moderating Effect of E-WOM on Instagram Advertising

Interaction Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	95% CI	Decision
E-WOM × Instagram Advertising -> Brand Equity	0.135	2.703	0.007	[0.030, 0.225]	Supported
E-WOM × Instagram Advertising -> Brand Parity	0.209	4.031	<0.001	[0.104, 0.304]	Supported

The interaction between E-WOM and Instagram Advertising has a positive and statistically significant effect on Brand Equity (β = 0.135, t = 2.703, p = 0.007). The confidence interval ranges from 0.030 to 0.225 and therefore excludes zero.

provides additional explanatory power, particularly for Brand Parity and Brand Equity.

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4.8 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

The overall results of the structural analysis are summarized in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12 Summary of Structural Relationship Decisions

Proposed Relationship	β	p-value	Decision
Instagram Advertising -> Brand Equity	0.423	<0.001	Supported
Instagram Advertising -> Brand Parity	0.375	<0.001	Supported
Instagram Advertising -> Consumer Purchase Decision	0.447	<0.001	Supported
Meta Advertising -> Brand Equity	0.367	<0.001	Supported
Meta Advertising -> Brand Parity	0.392	<0.001	Supported
Meta Advertising -> Consumer Purchase Decision	0.306	<0.001	Supported
E-WOM -> Brand Equity	-0.001	0.991	Not Supported
E-WOM -> Brand Parity	0.003	0.959	Not Supported
E-WOM -> Consumer Purchase Decision	0.039	0.490	Not Supported
E-WOM × Instagram Advertising -> Brand Equity	0.135	0.007	Supported
E-WOM × Instagram Advertising -> Brand Parity	0.209	<0.001	Supported
E-WOM × Meta Advertising -> Brand Equity	0.032	0.555	Not Supported
E-WOM × Meta Advertising -> Brand Parity	-0.018	0.728	Not Supported
E-WOM × Meta Advertising -> Consumer Purchase Decision	0.126	0.016	Supported

The findings reveal three major patterns. First, Instagram Advertising and Meta Advertising have consistently positive and statistically significant direct effects on all three outcome variables.

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CONCLUSION

The results from the empirical analysis clearly indicate that the use of social media advertising has a substantial impact on the consumers' brand evaluation and purchase intention. Overall, the measurement model exhibited good reliability and validity, meaning that the constructs included in the study were effectively and consistently measured and represented different concepts. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values were within acceptable limits, Average Variance Extracted values were above the recommended value, and the HTMT results were in favor of discriminant validity. The results obtained were adequate for the assessment of the relationships among the structures. From a structural perspective, all six direct relationships between Instagram Advertising and Meta Advertising, and the Brand Equity, Brand Parity, and the Consumer Purchase Decision were positive and statistically significant. The most direct relationship was found to be between Instagram Advertising and Consumer Purchase Decision ($\beta = 0.447$, $p<0.001$), followed by Instagram Advertising and Brand Equity ($\beta = 0.423$, $p<0.001$). Among all the relationships, the highest relationship was observed between Brand Parity and Meta Advertising ($\beta = 0.392$, $p < 0.001$).

The direct effect of E-WOM on Brand Equity, Brand Parity, and Consumer Purchase Decision were not found to be statistically significant. But the interaction analysis revealed that E-WOM had a significant positive interaction effect on certain advertising relationships. Specifically, E-WOM enhanced the relationship between Instagram Advertising and Brand Equity, the relationship between Instagram Advertising and Brand Parity, and the relationship between Meta Advertising and Consumer Purchase Decision. The moderating effect of E-WOM was not significant for the relationships between Meta Advertising and Brand Equity and Brand Parity. Combined, the results suggest that social media advertising is a significant factor in shaping brand-related perceptions and consumer decisions to buy. The two independent variables, Instagram Advertising and Meta Advertising, yielded positive impacts on all three dependent constructs. This trend is consistent and clearly shows that digital advertising exposure and perceived advertising effectiveness are strongly linked with how consumers assess brands and make purchase-related decisions.

Instagram Advertising had a strong correlation with Brand Equity and Consumer Purchase Decision, while Meta Advertising had the strongest correlation with Brand Parity. This means that each social media advertising channel can have a different impact on specific consumer results. Organizations should thus not assume that social media sites operate the same strategic functions in the same way. The results also serve as a proof that the role of E-WOM is not straightforward. Its impact was not noteworthy, but it reinforced a few key advertising partnerships. This means that instead of seeing paid media and consumer generated communication as two separate players, they should be viewed as a unified part of the digital customer experience. Advertising can make people aware and convince them, and E-WOM can confirm, support, or redefine the meaning of the advertising message.

The study's findings therefore suggest that the most effective digital marketing plan will most likely be one which combines platform-specific advertising with an active campaigning of the broader online conversation. Companies that manage advertising quality, brand differentiation, customer experience, reviews, comments, and consumer advocacy could have a better chance of enhancing brand results and/or swaying purchase decisions.

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Theoretical Implications:

The study has some theoretical implications. First, it helps in digital marketing research by establishing that Instagram Advertising and Meta Advertising simultaneously affect several consumer outcomes as opposed to just purchase intentions. The impact on Brand Equity and the Brand Parity are significant and indicate that advertising helps to not only evaluate the brand but also to perceive the brand in comparison to others.

Second, the results confirm the benefits of analysis of platform-specific effects. While Instagram and Meta share a similar digital environment, their path coefficients varied by outcome. Instagram Advertising was more effective in influencing both Brand Equity and Consumer Purchase Decision, while Meta Advertising had a moderate, yet slightly superior direct effect on the Brand Parity. This implies that platform properties can influence how ads are comprehended and the consequences that they can enhance the theoretical understanding of digital marketing results.

Managerial/ Practical implications

For purchase oriented campaigns, focus on Instagram.

- Managers should pay special attention to Instagram as a channel to deploy in their campaign if they are aiming for lead generation, Consumer Purchase Decision or product consideration. This goal is aligned with visual product presentation, short-form video, product demonstration, social proof, creator collaborations and clear calls to action.
- Leveraging Instagram To Create Brand Equity.Creating Brand Equity via Instagram.
- Instagram Advertising shows significant impact on Brand Equity, which means managers should not solely rely the platform to promote for short-term gains. Brand identity, brand consistency, narrative, brand perception, brand values and recognizable creativity should be integrated into campaign design. Uniform branding in advertising messages can aid in building stronger brand associations.

Improve the differentiation in Meta Advertising.

- The relatively strong Pearson correlation between Meta Advertising and Brand Parity indicates a need for managers to think about whether their advertising efforts provide any real differentiation. Campaigns that focus on the same type of common industry claims, promotion and/or similar benefits to the product can lead to consumer perceptions that competing brands are interchangeable. Therefore, in the world of Meta advertising, it is essential to convey unique value propositions and preferences.

Recommendations:

From the empirical findings, certain recommendations are made for organizations, brand managers, digital marketers, and social media practitioners.

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- Create platform specific creative strategies. Organizations need to create Instagram and Meta campaigns that take advantage of the strengths of each platform and not duplicate content. Instagram campaigns should focus on visual engagement, brand imagery, product demonstration and conversion-focused content, and Meta campaigns should target audiences, position the brand against competition and provide informative message content.
- Create a unique and memorable brand. Advertising should be used to convey familiar brand elements and distinctive benefits because advertising plays an important role in two of the key factors that affect Brand Equity and Brand Parity. When using unique visual elements, tone, value statements and brand promises over and over again, there is a risk of being mistaken for other brands.

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