

# Relationship between Social network marketing and Purchase Behavior through Mediation of Brand Image

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**Abstract—** Online social media platforms are important to improve the perception of brands. Therefore, this research examined the Role of social media activities, namely customization, trendiness, and user-generated content, on purchase behaviour through brand image. This study also examined the mediating Role of brand image as well. A cross-sectional research design and quantitative research method was adopted in this research. The data was collected from the customers who prefer online purchasing in UAE using snowball sampling. Researchers received 181 usable questionnaires from the respondents and used PLS-SEM for the analysis. The results show that customization, trendiness, and user-generated content significantly affect brand image. Whereas brand image also has a positive effect on purchase behaviour. Also, the mediating Role of brand image is supported in the present study. The study results provide guidelines for marketers, policymakers, and governments to prefer social media to increase product sales.

**Keywords—** customization, brand image, purchase behaviour, trendiness, user-generated content

## I. INTRODUCTION

Social media is one of the new technologies, and social media marketing is one of the new dimensions and concepts in the marketing field [1]. Presently, marketers around the globe are using social media marketing to create a perception in the customers' minds. The research on the impact of social media on brand selection is new; still, there are few studies discussing the effect of social media on the effect of social media on brand equity [2]. Different approaches explain social media marketing, including e-WOM, customization, trendiness, and entertainment. [59]. From the perspective of online platforms, organizations need to focus on several factors of social media activities, including customization, coherence, interactivity, and convenience among brand activities and information

available online regarding the brand [3]. Interaction among the customers can be created through social media and customization capability for the customers that make it possible to design the services and products meeting the needs and requirements of the customers [4]. With the help of customization, it has become possible for organizations to deal with customers individually and personalize the message according to their needs. The customers can raise questions, and organizations can deal with and answer the queries. Customized services and communication via social media help create differentiation and develop customer loyalty [5]. Therefore, organizations and marketers need to use different platforms of social media so they can send customized messages to support consumers [6].

Trendiness is the ability of social media to provide the latest news. It also includes hot discussion topics regarding the products [7, 8, 60]. Social media provides the ability to get hot discussions and the latest news through different platforms. Consumers use different social media channels to get the latest information as they have an image of trustworthy information. Several researchers suggested that consumers aim to trust the products if they get the information through social media and traditional media are avoided. Also, such information is perceived to be up-to-date and more useful. It is also observed that social media platforms are used to create trendy and hot topics between customers and brands [9].

On the other hand, user-generated content is one of the fastest-growing vehicles to get insight into consumers and their conversations. Social media network sites and brand communities are growing rapidly with time. Therefore, the support to develop user-generated content has increased. The brand-related material is concerned about the increase in the number of brand-related content [10]. There are many opportunities in terms of conveying information to potential customers. If the customers have no link to the brand, this type of communication becomes more effective. Individuals will likely be turned toward the brand as they will develop the trust as they are referred to by the one, they trust. Different digital mediums such as webpages and emails are

used so they can engage the customers through social media. Authenticity of user-generated content creates authenticity of the brands among the customers [11].

One of the important factors of consumer behaviour is brand image. It is also the key factor of market research. Brand image strengthens the relationship between an organization and its customers. Brand equity can be affected by the brand image as the customers release positive signals. Brand image can be used as a hint to purchase the product. Therefore, an image of the brand is important to increase the sales and finances of the organization [12].

The customers' behavior regarding purchasing the product has been studied by several researchers [13]. Presently, a few people around the globe prefer to purchase the product by using online means. Several customers from developing and developed countries prefer social media to buy the products. The interaction between the customers and organizations is transformed through social media. This element also allows interaction with other stakeholders [14]. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of customization, trendiness, and user-generated content on brand image and purchase behaviour among customers who prefer online mediums to buy the products.

## II. LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### A. Brand Image Relationship with Purchase Behavior

Brand image is the key element of brand equity. It has the capability to influence the decision-making capability of the customer. It develops the attitude and preference regarding the brand among the customers. In past studies, brand image is defined as "consumer's perception about brand's tangible and intangible associations" [15]. The brand image that is favorable, strong and unique permits the brand to be strategically positioned and differentiated in the minds of the customers and enhance the brand equity [16].

Researchers recognize that it is important for organizations to form a positive image in the mind of the customers as positive image will shape attitude if the customers positively. It helps the existence of the brands [17]. Scholars believed that purchase intention among the customers is developed because of brand image [18]. Also, it helps to improve the product identification in the minds of the customers [19].

### B. Customization: Relationship with Brand Image

Customization is the level to which services could fulfil the needs of the customers. Most of the brands at the global level rely on the social media so they can convey message to customers in order to persuade them to buy their products or use their services [20]. Customization directs the choice of the customer. On the other hand, customization also has the ability to impact the customer satisfaction [21]. The information available on social media regarding the products must be customized so it can be reached to the customers freely. There is a need to adjust the message so the individual customers can get the message. If the information being provided on media is on the individual basis, then it will have more control over the level of satisfaction of the customers [22]. The tool of social

customization is used by the organizations to develop loyalty among the customers [23].

Customers get interesting information from the customization factor. The information that is available on social media is often posted by the users of the products and services. They express their feelings and thoughts as well. The aim of customization is to provide customized services to the customers. The social media can be used as the key factor to provide customized information regarding the brand based upon the needs of the customers [24]. Therefore, on the basis of platforms of social media, customers get information regarding the products and services of their choice that meets the needs of the customers in terms of product features, attributes and prices [25]. The customization of the brand is altered by social media. The brand image of the organization is shaped on the basis of customization of the product and its information [26].

### C. Trendiness: Relationship with Brand Image

Trendiness in literature is defined as giving the latest information regarding the services and products being used [27]. In the context of social media trendiness is described as the ability of a certain brand to use platforms of social media so they can convey trendy and latest information regarding the brands. Other elements of the social media are also included in trendiness that provides the updated information of the product [28]. The trendiness is based on the information related to the upcoming trends, recommendation, and feedback of the product or organization that can help to develop trust among the customers [29]. It also plays very important Role to develop awareness among the customers. A number of opportunities are created that create value for the customers on the basis of trendiness information [30].

Trendiness is also related to providing latest discussion topics and news on social media. This information can play very important Role to shape the feelings of the customers and attract the customers. In other words, perception of the customers and intentions are positively affected. This trendy information is also used by the consumers to use the products. These customers prefer to stay up to date regarding the organization and product [31].

The motivation of the customers will be positively affected based on trending information regarding the brand from the different platforms of social media. It also encourage them to be updated regarding the knowledge of the products [32]. This trending information can be used to attract the customers and develop positive feelings in the form of intentions and loyalty. Trendiness shows the ability of the organization to develop and spread information that can strengthen the image of the customer [29, 33]. Influence of integration on interactivity in social media luxury brand communities, Journal of Businesses have claimed that trendiness information on social media develops positive image regarding the product and organization. The trends on social media plays key Role to create positive image among the customers mind [34].

*D. User-generated content: Relationship with Brand Image*

User generated content is the information available online that is used, circulated, initiated and created by the users regarding the products and services [35]. As it is consumed, shared and created by the customers therefore, it is perceived that this information will be credible and trustworthy. Therefore, it has the ability to influence the image of the organization among the customers [36]. The trust of the customers is high on the product when they saw the information provided by the immediate user of the product. With the help of user generated content, the opinion of the consumers is freely expressed through online mediums. It is one of the new story telling opportunity for the decision makers of the organizations regarding the brands as compare to the traditional marketing modes [37]. User generated content is the key proof provided by the society regarding the product that it is worthy to buy this product [38]. The information through user generated content is the base to buy the products through online medium. It shapes the image of the products among the customers by affecting the preferences of the brands. With the help of this information, a certain product is selected over the other product [39]. It is important for the marketers to shape the image in the minds of the customer [40]. Because of the emergence of social media tools, user generated content is gaining popularity among the customers, affecting the positioning of the brand among the users. The consumers who are influenced by the user generated content are motivated to buy the products, determining that perception of the customer is influenced brand image [41].

*From all the above literature, the following hypotheses and framework are developed.*

- H1: Customization has a positive effect on brand image.*
- H2: Trendiness has a positive effect on brand image.*
- H3: User-generated content has a positive effect on brand image.*
- H4: Brand image has a positive effect on Purchase Behavior of consumers.*
- H5: Brand image mediates the relationship between customization and purchase behavior.*
- H6: Brand image mediates the relationship between trendiness and purchase behavior.*
- H7: Brand image mediates the relationship between user generated content and purchase behavior.*

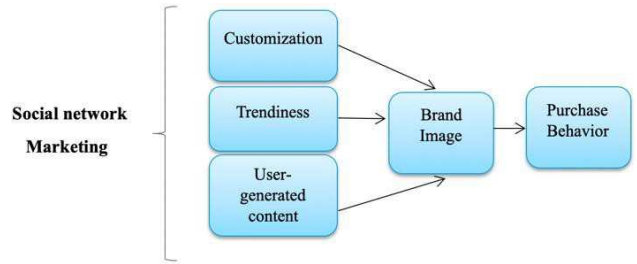


Fig. 1. Theoretical Framework

III. METHODOLOGY

In this study quantitative research method was used. The data was collected in the form of numbers to execute the quantitative method. The data gathered in the form of numbers were analyzed and processed to gain scientific information on the basis of these numbers. [57]. The gathered data in this study was analyzed using SEM approach and PLS software. In this study PLS-SEM approach was used because the model used was based on previous research models. For the analysis of data through PLS-SEM, there are two major steps namely measurement model and structural model [22]. In literature, structural model is also known as inner model and measurement model is also known as outer model. Moreover, causal associative method is used in the study as the study is examining causal relationships among the variables. The questionnaires are used to collect the data from the respondents who prefer to use online medium to purchase products online. The data was collected from 250 respondents by using snowball sampling technique. We received back 181 usable responses from the respondents and were used further for the analysis. [58].

IV. RESULTS

The analysis of the data starts with measurement model analysis. At this stage, internal consistency is examined through reliability and validity of the indicators of every constructs showing that each indicator is showing general constructs [42]. This test is also important to examine the consistency and reliability of the results in different times [43]. In this study composite reliability and Cronbach alpha were used to test the reliability [44] for which the values of both tests must be more than 0.70 [45]. According to values in table 2, this benchmark is achieved.

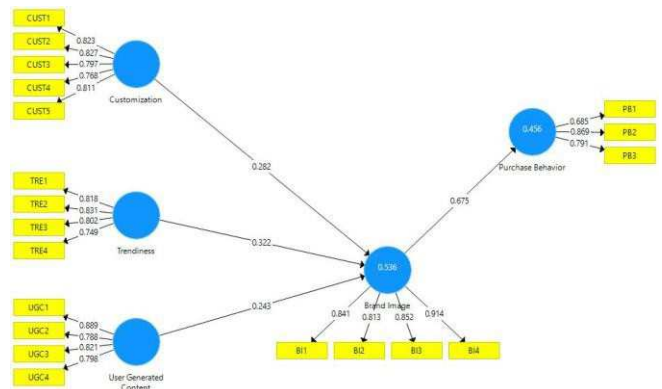


Fig. 2. Measurement Model

Note: UGC= User generated content; TRE= trendiness; CUST= customisation; BI= brand image; PB = purchase behavior

	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>
<b>BI</b>	<b>0.878</b>	<b>0.916</b>	<b>0.732</b>
<b>CUST</b>	<b>0.865</b>	<b>0.902</b>	<b>0.649</b>
<b>PB</b>	<b>0.702</b>	<b>0.827</b>	<b>0.617</b>
<b>TRE</b>	<b>0.812</b>	<b>0.877</b>	<b>0.641</b>
<b>UGC</b>	<b>0.847</b>	<b>0.895</b>	<b>0.680</b>

Note: UGC= User generated content; TRE= trendiness; CUST= customization; BI= brand image; PB = purchase behavior

Furthermore, at the stage of measurement model we also examined factor loading of the items as recommended by [46]. The value of factor loading must be more than 0.50 so the items can be retained for further analysis [47]. In this study, table 1 shows that all retained item's values are more than 0.50, thus they are preceded for further analysis. Moreover, convergent validity of the study is examined. According to [48] the value of convergent validity should be more than 0.50. The values of AVE mentioned in table 2 shows the criteria are fulfilled.

	<b>BI</b>	<b>CUST</b>	<b>PB</b>	<b>TRE</b>	<b>UGC</b>
<b>BI1</b>	<b>0.841</b>				
<b>BI2</b>	<b>0.813</b>				
<b>BI3</b>	<b>0.852</b>				
<b>BI4</b>	<b>0.914</b>				
<b>CUST1</b>		<b>0.823</b>			
<b>CUST2</b>		<b>0.827</b>			
<b>CUST3</b>		<b>0.797</b>			
<b>CUST4</b>		<b>0.768</b>			
<b>CUST5</b>		<b>0.811</b>			
<b>PB1</b>			<b>0.685</b>		
<b>PB2</b>			<b>0.869</b>		
<b>PB3</b>			<b>0.791</b>		
<b>TRE1</b>				<b>0.818</b>	
<b>TRE2</b>				<b>0.831</b>	
<b>TRE3</b>				<b>0.802</b>	
<b>TRE4</b>				<b>0.749</b>	
<b>UGC1</b>					<b>0.889</b>
<b>UGC2</b>					<b>0.788</b>
<b>UGC3</b>					<b>0.821</b>
<b>UGC4</b>					<b>0.798</b>
<b>UGC1</b>					<b>0.889</b>
<b>UGC2</b>					<b>0.788</b>
<b>UGC3</b>					<b>0.821</b>

<b>UGC4</b>					<b>0.798</b>
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Note: UGC= User generated content; TRE= trendiness; CUST= customization; BI= brand image; PB = purchase behavior

Later, discriminant validity test was conducted to assure there is difference among the variables of the study [49]. In this study, discriminant validity was conducted in the basis of Fornell and Larker criterion [50,62]. In this criterion, the correlation of the variable must be higher than the remaining constructs of the table. As mentioned in table 3, this criterion is fulfilled in this study. This shows that this proposed model is believed to be fit as measurement model is successfully tested [51]. This led to the testing of proposed hypothesis of the study.

	<b>BI</b>	<b>CUST</b>	<b>PB</b>	<b>TRE</b>	<b>UGC</b>
<b>BI</b>	0.856				
<b>CUST</b>	0.625	0.806			
<b>PB</b>	0.675	0.655	0.786		
<b>TRE</b>	0.657	0.631	0.689	0.801	
<b>UGC</b>	0.613	0.577	0.702	0.646	0.825

Note: UGC= User generated content; TRE= trendiness; CUST= customisation; BI= brand image; PB = purchase behavior

The next step is to test the proposed hypothesis of the research. In present study, bootstrapping method is used [52]. The main purpose of using bootstrapping procedure is to minimize the problems of abnormal data [43, 53]. The values of the results of bootstrapping are important to test the hypothesis testing [54]. The hypothesis of the study is accepted when t- value is more than 1.67 [55]. The results of direct hypothesis of the study are mentioned in table 4. The values show that all proposed hypotheses of the study is supported. Whereas table 5 of the study shows the results of mediation hypothesis. These statistical values show that all mediating hypotheses are supported as well.

	<b>Beta</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>T value</b>	<b>P Values</b>	
<b>BI -&gt; PB</b>	0.675	0.055	12.283	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Accepted</b>
<b>CUST -&gt; BI</b>	0.282	0.073	3.872	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Accepted</b>
<b>TRE -&gt; BI</b>	0.322	0.066	4.866	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Accepted</b>
<b>UGC -&gt; BI</b>	0.243	0.084	2.897	<b>0.002</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

Note: UGC= User generated content; TRE= trendiness; CUST= customisation; BI= brand image; PB = purchase behavior

In the end of analysis, value of R square is measured to assess the proportion of the variation on the dependent variables caused by independent variables. The value of R square is mentioned in table 6 of the study.

	<b>Beta</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>T value</b>	<b>P Values</b>	

<b>TRE -&gt; BI -&gt; PB</b>	0.217	0.048	4.499	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Accepted</b>
<b>UGC -&gt; BI -&gt; PB</b>	0.164	0.062	2.651	<b>0.004</b>	<b>Accepted</b>
<b>CUST -&gt; BI -&gt; PB</b>	0.190	0.058	3.283	<b>0.001</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

Note: UGC= User generated content; TRE= trendiness; CUST= customisation; BI= brand image; PB = purchase behavior

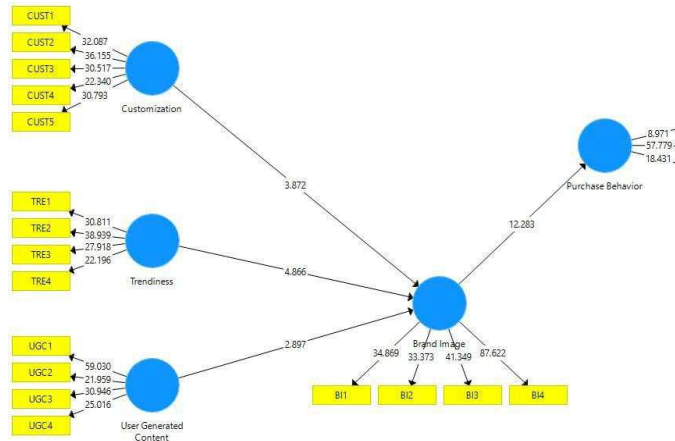


Fig. 3. Structural Model

Note: UGC= User generated content; TRE= trendiness; CUST= customisation; BI= brand image; PB = purchase behavior

	<b>R square</b>
<b>BI</b>	0.536
<b>PB</b>	0.456

Note: UGC= User generated content; TRE= trendiness; CUST= customisation; BI= brand image; PB = purchase behavior

### V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Customers around the globe are moving to use online sources to purchase the products. It is because they gave the ability to get updated information, customized information, and user-generated content through different social media platforms. Therefore, this study was designed to examine the effect of social media activities like customization, user-generated content and trendiness on the behavior of online product buyers through brand image. The study's result shows that trendiness positively affects the brand image. This is because respondents prefer updated information regarding products and brands of the products they prefer. The updated information is used to decide to buy the online brands. In the past, [29] also mentioned the same results in their study.

On the other hand, customers who prefer online mode to buy the products like to have information given by the users in the form of reviews. Therefore, the results of this study show that user-generated content positively affects the brand image. The possible reason for these results can be that the respondents perceive that the reviews and information by the customers are more authentic. These findings are the same as those reported by [41]. In their study, [38] also, customized information has a significant positive effect on the brand image. Such information meets the individual

needs of the customers. Therefore, positive perception is developed in the minds of the customers. This finding is the same as reported by [26] in their study. Likewise, the study's results also support the claim that brand image positively affects the purchase behaviour of online product buyers. The positive perception in the customers' minds shapes the customers' behaviour. Customers always prefer products that have a perception, and customers can easily identify the products they want among the competitors [19,61].

It leads to the mention of a few limitations and future study directions. This research assessed the mediating Role of brand image. It will be interesting if future studies examine the moderation of customer perception in the second stage of the same model. Moreover, the respondents of the study were from the UAE. Future studies can use the same model by getting data from the respondents of African countries. Additionally, future studies can use other statistical tools like AMOS to examine data from similar studies. This research provides guidelines to academicians for their future studies and to online market practitioners in deriving different ways to shape a positive image of their brand.

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