

Analyzing the Impact of Social Networking Sites on Online Purchase Intention: Does Brand Attitude Affect the Online Purchase Intention

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ABSTRACT

Social networking has become an essential part of our day-to-day life, especially during the covid-19 pandemic it was on peak. Social media advertising and social networking sites provide information, reviews and feedback on branded products. Therefore, this study explores the impact of social networking sites on the online purchase intention of branded products. This study also explores the mediation role of Brand Attitude on online purchase intentions of branded products. A sample of 380 respondents from the 18 metropolitan cities of India took part in this study, and 350 responses (92.1% response rate) were used for coding, analyzing and testing the hypothesis. SPSS 20 and AMOS 21 were used to analyze the collected data. Finally, the results show that social networking sites affect the online purchase intention of branded products. There is a partial mediation effect of Brand Attitude on online purchase intention. This study advised that companies should keep vigilance and be attentive to the brand's image, communication, feedback and reviews of their products on social networking sites. Negative communication or anti-branding of branded products on social networking sites negatively affects consumers' purchase intention. It is essential and strategically manage negative communication and anti-

branding. Discussion, conclusion and practical implications are provided based on the analyses of the study.

Keywords : Brand Attitude, Online Purchase Intention, Social Networking Site.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are an important activity in our day-to-day life. Approximately 57.6% population of the world uses SNS on an average of 2 hours and 27 minutes per day (October 2021). SNS is an interactive platform where individuals and companies interact. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was exponential growth in engagement in digital technologies and social networking sites. Digital technologies empower consumers, who communicate, influence, follow and become part of the brands. SNS is used in marketing and advertising products/services (Hu et al., 2014). Most consumers use SNS before, during or after shopping (Lay, 2018). 80% of online shoppers visit websites and mobile apps of different brands to update the trend and fashions before purchasing (PwC, 2018). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, online shopping was popular among generation Y and Z, but there has been a significant change in generation X regarding online shopping behavior (Awasthi & Mehta, 2021). Social media advertising and SNS provide information about products, their reviews and feedback. SNS also plays a significant role as a predictor of brand and customer equity (Chae & Ko, 2016). Positive reviews of

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consumers on SNS also create positive influences for purchase brands (Ho-Dac et al., 2013; Hoeffler & Keller, 2003; Dawar & Pillutla, 2000). In the long term, anti-branding also positively impacts brand attitude (Awasthi et al., 2012). Purchase intention should strongly correlate with network and communication or network of emotions, perceptions and behaviors, and attitudes of brands (Percy & Rossiter, 1992). The relationship between experience and credibility of the brand with brand attitude is very strong (Nayeem et al., 2019). The role of brand attitude should also be considered while understanding the impact of SNS on purchase intention (Aaker, 2009).

According to the texts mentioned above, the main focus of the study is to examine the impact and relationship between SNS, online purchase intention and brand attitude of branded products in the Indian context. Another important purpose of the study is to examine the mediating role of brand attitude on the online purchase intention of branded products.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Today, network and communication technology provide various methods to interact with each other. SNS is a very efficient and convenient tool for interaction between consumers, society and companies (Papasolomou & Melanthiou, 2012; Alonso et al., 2013). Consumers can share experiences and reviews of branded products by getting engaged in online activities. Studies showed that increasing social media advertising and

SNS use affects purchase intention. Social media plays an essential role in marketing/selling products by word of mouth (WOM) publicity, in the form of recommendations from family members/friends/relatives/colleagues or network connection circle etc., effectively orienting purchasing behavior.

Brand attitude is the measurement tool of brand image, which includes the Consumer's beliefs and feelings toward the attributes and benefits of the brand (Keller, 2003). Attributes mean descriptive characteristics of the brand name, and benefits denote the value provided by the brand attributes as perceived by consumers (Spears & Singh, 2004)

Positive word-of-mouth publicity has been linked to purchase intention and repurchase of the brand (Soscia, 2007). Emotions and attitudes of consumers affect the brand attitude, which also affects the purchase intention (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). In the long term, negative publicity of a brand also has a positive impact on the brand attitude of a branded product, and there is no effect on purchase intention (Awasthi et al., 2012).

Based on the review and analysis of the above research, the objective of the present study are as follows:

- To analyze the relationship between SNS, brand attitude and online purchase intention of brands.
- To analyze the mediating effect of brand attitude on online purchase intention.

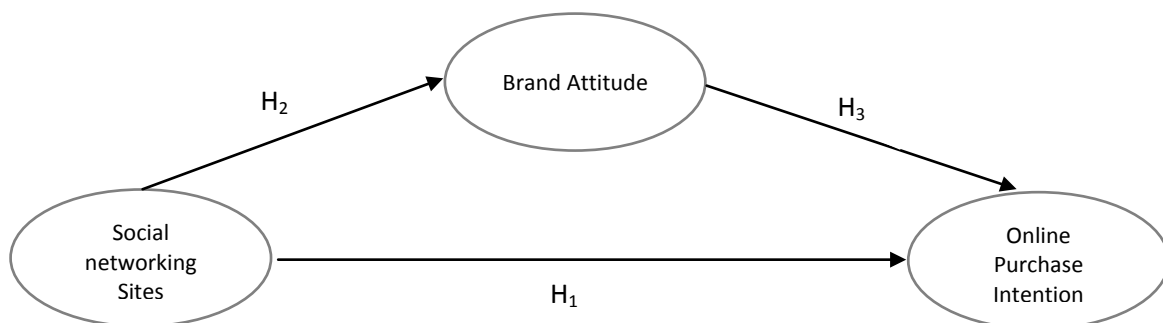


Fig. 1 : Conceptual Model

The SNS effect on the Consumer's purchase intention of branded products was explained (Kolb & Thach, 2016; Dolan et al., 2017), and we focused on the effect of SNS on online purchase intention of branded products. The current conceptual model, as depicted in Figure 1, based on various theories of (SNS, brand attitude and online purchase intention)elaborates on the causal relationship of SNS and brand attitude with the online purchase intention of branded products.

The following hypothesis was formulated;

- H₁: Social networking sites positively and significantly influence online purchase intention.
- H₂: Social networking sites positively and significantly influence brand attitude.
- H₃: Brand attitude positive and significant influences online purchase intention.

3. METHODOLOGY

The effect of SNS on online purchase intention, while mediated by brand attitude, was explored. The quantitative study was conducted by forwarding close-ended

questions with a five-point Likert-type scale (where one stands for strongly disagree and five for strongly agree) questionnaire to selected participants from 18 metropolitan cities of India. The sample consists of individuals 18 years or older who have an SNS account, purchase branded products online, or are planning to purchase within a week or month. The data are collected using stratified sampling and systematic sampling methods. Before all questionnaire distribution, the pilot study was conducted and distributed a questionnaire to 50 participants to test the reliability and validity of all three variables (Social networking sites, brand attitude and online purchase intention) of the study, which fulfilled the requirement of the above 0.70 as advised (Nunnaly, 1978). Subsequently, 330 questionnaires were distributed to the participants, and 350 (a response rate of 92.1%) questionnaires were used for editing, coding, analyzing and testing the developed hypothesis. 30 questionnaires were rejected due to incompleteness, not eligibility. Then, SPSS 20 and AMOS 21 were used to analyze the final data.

4. RESULTS

Table 1 : Respondents' Profile

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	189	54.00
Female	161	46.00
Age		
18 – 35	74	21.14
36 – 55	191	54.57
Above 56	85	24.29
Education		
Senior High School	36	10.29
Diploma	84	24.00

Job	Bachelor	137	39.14
	Masters	93	26.57
	Student	103	29.43
	Private Employee	72	20.57
	Government Employee	84	24.00
	Professional	60	17.14
	Self Employed / Businessman	31	8.86
Income	10000-25000	72	20.57
	25001-50000	101	28.86
	50001-75000	97	27.71
	75001-100000	53	15.14
	Above 100000	27	7.71

4.1 Respondent Demographic Characteristic

The demographic characteristics, including gender, age, education, job and income (per month) of respondents, are shown in Table 1. There 350 respondents were included from the 18 metropolitan cities of India. In total, 54.0% (189) were male, and 46% (161) were female;

54.57% (191) respondents were between the age 20 to 30 years; 65.7% (230) respondents were dominantly bachelor's or master's degree; 44.57% (156) respondents were in jobs; 56.57% (198) respondents were earning Rs. 25,000 to 75,000 per month.

Table 2 : Reliability and Validity Estimate

Factor and items	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (C.R.)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Social networking sites	5	0.852	0.910	0.772
Online Purchase Intention	6	0.881	0.913	0.678
Brand Attitude	5	0.833	0.900	0.750

4.2 Reliability Analysis

The Cronbach's alpha value for all three constructs fell between 0.833 and 0.881, which is more than the advised value of 0.70 to consider satisfactory measures for the

research (Nunnally, 1967). The internal consistency for all three constructs was excellent, and all indicators were used for data collection. AVE of all three constructs was found to be above 0.5. All Composite

Reliability (C.R.) statistics were more than 0.80, indicating the acceptability of internal consistency (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As well as, the Composite Reliability (C.R.) statistic is significantly more than their

respective Average Variance Extracted (AVE) statistic for all three of each construct. Thus, all the constructs meet the prerequisites of convergent reliability and validity (Hair et al., 2010). The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 3 : Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and the Square Root of Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	Mean	S.D.	Social networking sites	Online Purchase Intention	Brand Attitude
Social networking sites	3.36	.576	0.879		
Online Purchase Intention	3.07	.828	0.609	0.823	
Brand Attitude	3.83	.605	0.710	0.635	0.866

All Correlations are Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). The Square Root of AVE for Individual Construct is Diagonal.

Table 3 shows the mean, S.D., coefficient of correlation, and square root of AVE for each construct in diagonal. The minimum mean score is 3.07 for online purchase intention, and the maximum score is 3.83 for brand attitude, indicating that all variables' scores are high (Lopes, 2012). The mean score is more than 3 in case a 5-point Likert scale is considered high, between 2-3 consider moderate and below 2 is treated as a low score. If the standard deviation between 0-1 is acceptable variability within the data set,

which is their in-data set. It shows a significant difference between the respondent's opinions about the studied variables.

The coefficients of correlations above 0.6 show a high correlation between the constructs, and the square root of AVE values, more than the coefficient of correlation between pairs of constructs, shows acceptable discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

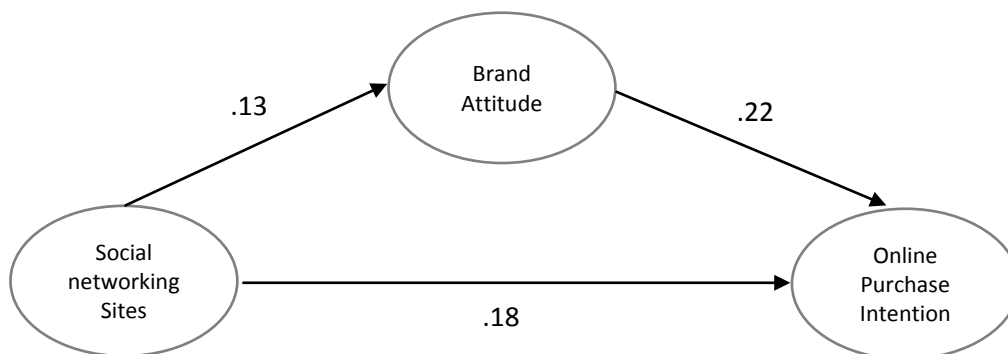


Fig. 2 : Testing Results

Table 4 : Hypotheses Testing Results.

Hypotheses	β	Value	Decision
Social Networking Sites → Online Purchase Intention	0.179	0.001	Supported
Social Networking Sites → Brand Attitude	0.132	0.000	Supported
Brand Attitude → Online Purchase Intention	0.215	0.000	Supported

There is a significant impact of social networking sites on online purchase intention ($\beta = 0.179, \rho = 0.001$), social networking sites on brand attitude ($\beta = 0.132, \rho = 0.000$), brand attitude on online purchase intention ($\beta = 0.215, \rho = 0.000$). Table 4 shows that all three

hypotheses were supported, as the path coefficient was significant at 0.05. It shows that social networking sites and brand attitude explained online purchase intention significantly at 0.05 level.

Table 5 : Mediation Testing Results.

Hypotheses	β	Value	Decision
Social Networking Sites → Online Purchase Intention	0.312	0.001	Supported
Social Networking Sites → Brand Attitude	0.132	0.000	Supported
Brand Attitude → Online Purchase Intention	0.501	0.000	Supported
Social Networking Sites, → Brand Attitude, → Online Purchase Intention	0.256	0.000	Supported

Table 5 shows that brand attitude partially mediates the effect of SNS on online purchase intention. All the relationships were significant during the model's mediating testing role of brand attitude.

5. DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

The analysis showed that all three hypotheses were supported. The association between SNS and online purchase intention showed the strongest relationship ($\beta=0.723, p<0.05$) that SNS are an effective method to communicate feedback, reviews, and scheme of branded products so consumers can quickly motivate and pursue online purchasing. Further, usefulness and subjective norms during the COVID-19 pandemic effective online purchase intention and online shopping (Awasthi & Mehta, 2021). The second

hypothesis supported that SNS also shows a positive and significant effect on brand attitude, and it was consistent with previous studies. The result indicates that brand attitude is influenced by feedback, reviews and comments of consumers, who were sharing and circulated on social networking sites. Social networking sites are essential for communication and interaction with friends, family, and companies using various platforms. They also provide the latest information on trends and fashions, supporting the brand experience and credibility. The third hypothesis supported that brand attitude positively and significantly affects online purchase intention. The result indicates that online purchase intention is influenced by liking, satisfying, pleasing and favoring branded products.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the study, social networking sites influence the online purchase intention of branded products; social networking sites communicate the feedback and reviews of consumers, and the scheme offered by branded products motivates the Consumer to purchase online. It shows the association between SNS and online purchase intention is very strong. Further, social networking sites positively and significantly affect brand attitude. Positive feedbacks and reviews support brand attitude, and negative reviews and feedback adversely affect the brand. Online purchase intention is influenced by liking, satisfaction, pleasing and favouring of branded products which shows the positive and significant effect of brand attitude on online purchase intention.

Overall, companies should keep vigilance of brand image, communication, feedback and reviews of their products on social networking sites. It is essential and strategically manage negative communication and anti-branding. Negative communication or anti-branding of branded products on social networking sites negatively affects consumers' purchase intention.

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