

Exploring the Influences of Social Media Advertising of Purchase Intention on Purchase Intention: A Test of Electronic Word of Mouth as a Mediator in Pakistan

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Abstract

The research aimed at analysis of the impacts of Social media advertising in creating the positive E-WOM of fast food purchase intentions for consumers in Pakistan. The objectives of the research are to evaluate the relationships of social media advertising with electronic word of mouth and purchase intention of fast food in Pakistan. The sample size of this particular research is around 384 consumers which are decided as per the guidance of Krejcie and Morgan (1970), but only 340 received survey questionnaire are included in the research. Moreover, the regression and correlation analysis are applied to analyze the collected data. The findings of the research validated the stated assumptions that SMA has a significant and positive relationship with both electronic word of mouth and purchases intention. Future research implications of the study increase the ability to manage electronic word of mouth of the fast food brands successfully with right content and generating positive attitudes to affect the purchase intentions of the consumers of fast food in Pakistan. So that, electronic word of mouth content can create information on social media that can influence purchase intentions of fast food consumers.

Keywords: Social media advertising, Electronic word of mouth and Purchase intention

Introduction

The term social networking is used as an umbrella which includes a number of different ideas of social media. At most of the time it gets hard to fit the subjects of social media either site or application in the meaning of social media definition. The word of social media is frequently used as a synonym with the social networks including LinkedIn, Facebook, and Google+ and so on. Certainly, the concept of social media is not restricted with the few; however, it also integrates the range of blogging, social news, micro blogging, online shopping reviews, forums, online ratings and book markings (Grahl, 2016). Social networking is established on the internet applications and platforms that engage users in communication which might be concluded by sharing information, comments, pictures, messages, or different sorts of communications (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016). The key part of the social networking platforms are usually user profiles like LinkedIn, Facebook, twitter, Google+(Cite 2012). These are the most commonly used types of the social media that are highly referred when social media terminology is consider. The power of the internet had an immense amount of influence in the business sector over the past 20 years. The search mechanism for goods and services has changed due to the internet for consumers. The knowledge sharing mechanism has moved beyond someone's personal circle (friends and family) due to word of mouth communication on the internet (Ong, 2012). According to (Gupta and Aurora 2017) and (Wang, 2013), personal computers have been replaced by mobile applications after the boom of smart phone purchases. It has become evident that approximately 60% of the customers purchase something after going through online reviews (Robson, 2012).

Research Problem

Service sector is one of the fastest growing sectors globally and fast food and service industry is the leading sectors in this category. The rapid evolution of fast food brands in recent decades in Asian countries is largely due to the rapid progress of industrial sectors and increasing purchasing powers of consumers. Pakistan is also considered a leading emerging economy of south Asia with large potential for fast food industries growth. The increasing population and more youth population bring revolution in lifestyles and ways of consumption in urban areas of the country. Therefore, large number of foreign fast food brands such as MacDonald, KFC, Hardees, Burger King, and Pizza Hut entered in the urban centers of the country. Similarly, the local eateries and fast food outlets are also growing with the passage of time and due to the fast changes in the eating habits of consumers. Home deliveries and take away become popular purchasing powers for fast food outlets and women started saving time and energy from avoiding home prepared dinners. However, the research addressed the issues faced by the marketers of fast food chains on social media in Pakistan to influence final consumers. The change in cultural and social settings in Pakistan and lack of previous researches on creation of E-WoM in consumers in Pakistan played a vital role in finalization of topic of this research. Moreover, the high expansion rate of fast food industry and increasing prevalence of social media in consumer decision making in Pakistan has increased the significance of this research. The research problem of this study is investigated how E-WoM generated on social media has significant impacts on purchase intention of fast food consumers and to find effective strategies to target and address social media users to generate positive word of mouth for fast food products.

Definitions of Variables

The conceptual model selected to answer the above raised questions is based on the following variables.

Social Media Advertising

The activities of present day consumer are found more on internet searching and browsing for required products. This strategy is rapidly expanding globally due to access to large amount of information, convenience and saving time in physical search in market places. The term social media is widely used for online channels and communication media that is designed primarily to exchange and transmit information on personal reference levels (Esu & Anyadigbo, 2014)

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention stands for the inclination of consumers towards any product or service before making the final decision of purchase (Kotler, 2012). Porter (2008) discussed various forces affecting the decisions of purchase and the availability of competitors, substitutes, and new products make the purchase intention of the buyers. Peter and Olson (2008) declared intention to purchase as a plan of purchasing items on the basis of available information and personal liking of consumers. Therefore, marketers aim at increasing the purchase intention of consumers through overusing and promotion activities.

Electronic Word of Mouth

Electronic Word-of-mouth (E-WOM) defined by Litvin et al., (2008: 211) defined as "*all informal communications directed at consumers through internet-based technology related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services or their sellers*". This definition based on the mutual communication of the manufacturers/ traders and consumers and other stakeholders of the brand (Magalhaes and Musallam, 2014). There is various source pronounced for E-WOM such as virtual communities, product reviews, fan clubs, blogs, newsgroups, and companies' websites, e-mail and others. Hennig (2004) asserted that E-WoM played a significant role in forming consumers' perceptions and the purchase intentions for desired products.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the effect of social media advertising on purchase intention.
2. To examine the effect of social media advertising on E-WoM.
3. To examine the effect of E-WoM on purchase intention.
4. To explore the mediation effect of E-WoM on social media advertising and purchase intention relationship.

Research Questions

Following research questions rose from above listed objectives:

1. To what extent the social media advertising effects the purchase intention?
2. To what extent the social media advertising effects the E-WoM?
3. To what extent the E-WoM effects the purchase intention?
4. Does E-WoM mediates the association of social media advertising and purchase intention?

Theoretical Framework

Social Exchange theory (SET)

The social exchange theory is spread over a number of disciplines such as: social psychology, anthropology and management. As suggested by (Cropanzano & Mitchell 2005), social exchange theory take roots from different disciplines, which is why it can be better understood as a family of conceptual models. The theories associated with social life mostly involve social transactions between two or more parties, according to Mitchell, et al (2012). The theory indicates that people are highly eager to take part in compensating practices or activities and disregard individuals that possess expensive concerns. People will have a tendency to convey to each other in light of shared activities with the other individuals (Ellison, et al 2014). It has been observed that entire social media depend on exchange of information by the users as the thoughtfulness of people connections and motivations is significant. (Severi, Ling and Naser moadeli,2014) stated that there are three propositions are precise e consider the framework which are Success proposition that expresses that an activity will likely be rehashed if an individual is compensated for carrying on positively.

Social Media Advertising and Purchase Intention

Consumer behaviour was previously being studied to know the decision making process while selecting a product and challenges faced by the consumers to select a product from a number of options that suit their requirements and best serve their needs. (Furner 2016) suggests that in product selection situation, the consumers must solve the problem of optimization being in the realm of uncertainty about the product's ability to fulfil their requirements. According to uncertainty reduction theory, whenever consumers are faced with such situations they tend to minimise uncertainty and try to gain information about the product or service by observation or active search through other sources like WOM and amend their strategies as per the information received. When the customers tend to entertain themselves by looking for funny quotes or videos on websites and indulge into shopping for the sake of gaining experience and not for achievement of some specific purpose it is said to be Hedonic shopping. Many websites are being made and managed to provide the entertaining environment to the customers making their experience fast paced, full of fun and easy to use. On the basis of these reviews, following assumption is articulated as below:

H1= Social media advertising has a positive impact on purchase intention.

Social Media Advertising and E-WoM

(Schindler and Bickart, 2005) highlights that before the introduction of social media websites E-WoM communication used to take place through various platforms on internet but it was essentially between the strangers and thus the reliability of the information was considered very low. (Park et al.,2007) argues that before social media the consumers were able to find suggestions and recommendations about the products, but they used to remain in doubt the credibility of the information and used to compare number of similar comments to judge the reliability. (Erkan, 2014) explains that the social media websites introduced people through their own identity and thus enable E-WoM among the acquaintances as well as the strangers by the method of online reviews. (Moran and Muzellec, 2014) observe that people are now able to discuss about the brands, services or products with their known people more easily and confidently that is why (Knoll and Proksch,2015) have regarded social media the most suitable platform form for E-WoM. This shows that E-WoM communication influences purchase intentions more on social media as compared with other platforms on internet. On the basis of these reviews, following assumption is articulated as below:

H2= Social media advertising has a positive impact on electronic word of mouth.

E-WoM and Purchase Intention

(Engel, 1969) and (Trusov,2009) discuss that many kinds of advertising methods can influence consumer behaviour, however, the strong effect WOM has in shaping decisions of the consumers in comparison to other kinds of advertisements is evident in both contemporary and early studies alike. Similar results were obtained in a research conducted relatively recently by (Trusov,2009). (Trusov,2009) has concluded that on the basis of the two studies discussed above, WOM is proved to be the most effective means of spreading information as compared with any other type of tools used for marketing. (Leskovec,2007) claims that as WOM has proved itself to be the most trusted information source by majority of the customers, therefore, it has a major role to play in shaping consumers' purchase preferences and intentions. Another argument supporting this claim states that WOM is so effective that it can even cause change in the decisions by influencing decision-making process of customers. (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006) studied the impact of E-WoM on sales of books by using consumer reviews posed on the websites of Barnesandnoble.com and Amazon.com and found that there is a positive relationship between online reviews and sales of the book. The results showed the similarity between consumer interests and the theme of the forum had a direct effect on purchase intention of consumers Many studies which have been conducted through web platforms have showed that purchase intentions are influenced by E-WoM but it is not limited to online shopping only. On the basis of these reviews, following assumption is articulated as below:

H3= Electronic word of mouth on social media has a positive impact on purchase intention.

Social Media Advertising and Purchase Intention through e-WoM

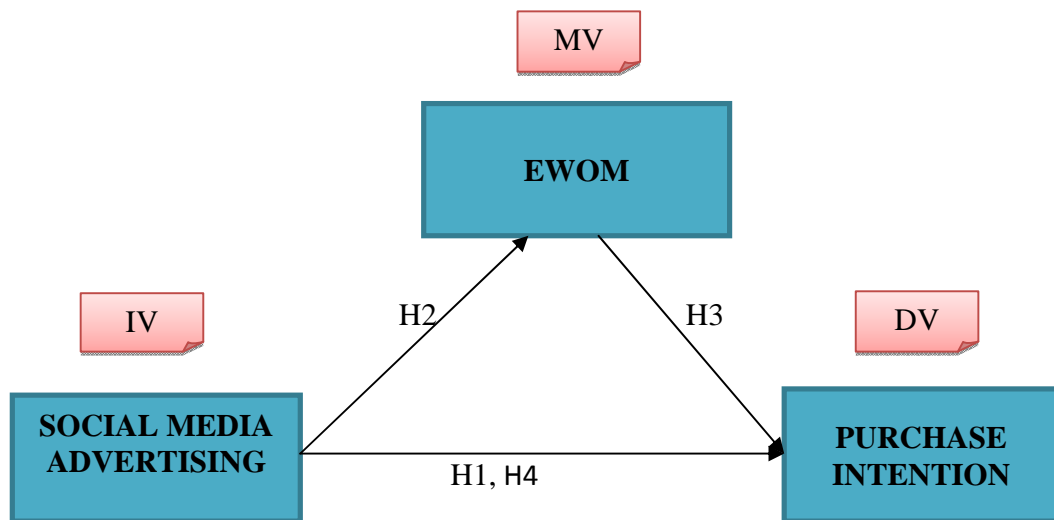
The power of social media word of mouth is increasing to a great extent, as also evident through research. It is surpassing face-to-face (Chen and Li 2009) and (Chen2011) support the above mentioned stance. They strongly believe that electronic word of mouth communication is becoming more and more influential. Customers of a certain brand/product/service share their experiences with other customer. However, a problem that arises for the marketers is that customers tend to share their negative experiences more than their positive experiences with prospective customers. This fact goes in line with Cheng's suggestion that negative comments do not have much of an impact on the consumers and serves as an opportunity to marketers to use those positive reviews as tes-

imonials and bring them under the limelight. On the basis of these reviews, following assumption is articulated as below:

H4=There is a positive mediation effect of E-WoM on relationship of social media advertising and purchase intention.

The Conceptual framework

The above discussed review of literature and introduction of the important variables used in this research provide evidence that the independent variable (IV) of the research is Social Media Advertising (SMA). The dependent variable (DV) of the following conceptual framework is Purchase Intention. E-WoM is acting as a mediating variable (MV) in this framework.



H1: Social media advertising has a positive effect on the purchase intension

H2: Social media advertising has a positive effect on E-WoM.

H3: E-WoM has a positive effect on purchase intension.

H4: There is a positive mediation effect of E-WoM on relationship of social media Advertising and purchase intension.

Methodology

This particular research is based on a quantitative data analysis. It is also important to note that the current research is conducted in a cross sectional manner. For the current research, the use of descriptive methodology remains more appropriate and therefore, it descriptive methodology has been selected. Additionally, the philosophical focus of this particular research is based on the concepts of realism and positivism. The current investigation uses deductive approach as it aligns with the positivism philosophy and nature of research at large. Since the researcher has specific objectives and hypothesis to test, the top-down approach remains suitable as compared to inductive approach. The quantitative method based on survey is chosen to collect the primary data about perceptions of fast food consumers about the various implications of social media advertising and its impact on the purchase intention. The sampling method used in this research is random sampling. The sample size of this particular research is around 384 which are decided as per the guidance of (Kre-

jeie and morgan1970). The primary data collected in this research is analysed with the help of Process Macro highlighted by Professor Andrew Hayes. For mediation process, model four of the Process framework is found suitable. In addition, the use of SPSS software is made for testing the hypothesis and interpreting the quantitative results. The use of statistical techniques like correlation and regression is made for achieving the results.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Factor Analysis.

Variable	Items	KMO and Bartlett's Test	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
SMA	15	.684	3555.794	105	.000
E-WoM	10	.613	1952.378	45	.000
Purchase Intention	4	.566	203.759	6	.000

The above shown results that M+KMO of SMA is the best at .684, the other variables except E-WoM have values of KMO greater than threshold of 0.5. However, the value of E-WoM is also near to the threshold, therefore, it is acceptable. In Bartlett's test, Chi-square values are highly significant, therefore, factor analysis found highly appropriate for this data set. The communalities of the results from component factor matrix. Since all factors loading in component matrices for each variable are above 0.5 threshold values, hence the groups of variables are found significant and appropriate. Hence, all variables are formed with their appropriate components

Table 2. Reliability Analysis

Variables	Variables Symbol	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
Social Media Advertising	SMA	.865	15
E-WoM	E-WoM	.735	10
Purchase Intention	PA	.540	4

Social Media Advertising (SMA) has a reliable Cronbach Alpha of .865. Thus, the individual variables are also found reliable for this study. However, the reliability coefficient for purchase intention was below threshold value at .540, but this is due to the presence of only four items in this variable. The reliability of the instrument increases with the increase in the number of items and sample size (Saunders, et al 2012).

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Social Media Advertising	340	1.60	6.00	4.0804	.99864
E-WoM	340	1.50	6.10	4.1312	.98264
Purchase Intention	340	1.25	6.25	4.0463	1.13678

The standard deviation of three major variables was less than that of 1.0000. However, the standard deviations for purchase intention is more than 1.0000, but the mean value is more than that of the scale mean for variables. Moreover, purchase intention possessed highest range of values from 1.25 to 6.25 in this group. Thus, the inclination of more answers of respondents was towards the agreement with given items in research questionnaire.

Table 4. Correlation Analysis

		SMA	EWOM	PA
SMA	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N			
EWOM	Pearson Correlation	.353**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	340		
PA	Pearson Correlation	.231**	.374**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	340	340	
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Social Media Advertising showed a significant and positive relationship with E-WoM and purchase intention. Similarly, SMA and E-WoM has significant positive correlation of .353. The other significant relationship is found between SMA and purchase intention .231. E-WoM and purchase intention value .374 that also show the significance and correlated relationship. These correlation coefficients are found significant at 0.01 significance level for two tailed test.

Regression Analysis

Linear regression model used to test the stated hypotheses derived from the designed conceptual model

H1: Social Media Advertising has a significant and positive impact on Purchase

The statistical testing of this hypothesis is performed with simple linear regression model, using Enter method as default. The significant coefficient threshold is selected at .05 for accepting the hypothesis.

Table 5. Coefficients

Variable	Coefficient	S..E	T	P	Beta
Constant	1.835	.229			
Social Media Advertising	.542	.054	9.953	.000	.476
R=.476Adj.R²=.224,	R²=.227	F=99.060	P=.000		

Coefficients table represents that t-statistics value is 9.953, higher than the normal distribution threshold of t=2.5. Moreover, positive Beta coefficient value is .476 that shows positive or direct relationship of Purchase intention and SMA. The R- value coefficient is .476 and for R-square, value is .227, therefore, Purchase intention shows high level of positive dependence on SMA is 47.6%. Moreover, high value of F at 99.060 is resulted with significant .000 p-values. The p-value is found much below than the threshold of .05, therefore, the results are significant and regression is found best fit for the relationship. Therefore, in view of the significant values of F, R-square, and t-

statistics in simple regression analysis provide enough evidence that Social Media Advertising (SMA) has a positive and significant impact on Purchase intention for fast food sector in Pakistan. Hence, the hypothesis **H1** is accepted.

H2: Social Media Advertising has a significant and positive impact on E-Wom.

The statistical testing of this hypothesis is performed with simple linear regression model, using Enter method as default. The significant coefficient threshold is selected at .05 for accepting the hypothesis.

Table 6. Coefficients

Variable	Coefficient	S..E	T	P	Beta
Constant	3.496	.222			
Social Media Advertising	.156	.053	2.944	.003	.158
R=.158 Adj.R²=.022	R²=.025	F= 8.670	P=.003		

Coefficients table represents that t-statistics value is 2.944, higher than the normal distribution threshold of $t=2.5$. Moreover, positive Beta coefficient value is .158 that shows positive or direct relationship of E-WoM and SMA. The R value is .158, therefore, E-WoM shows high level of positive dependence on SMA is 15.8%. Moreover, high value of F at 8.670 is resulted with significant .003 p-values. The p-value is found much below than the threshold of .05, therefore, the results are significant and regression is found best fit for the relationship. Therefore, in view of the significant values of F, R-square, and t-statistics in simple regression analysis provide enough evidence that Social Media Advertising (SMA) has a positive and significant impact on E-WoM for fast food sector in Pakistan. Hence, the hypothesis H2 is accepted.

H3: E-WoM has a significant and positive impact on Purchase intention.

Table 7. Coefficients

Variable	Coefficient	S..E	T	P	Beta
Constant	2.691	.256			
E-WOM	.328	.060	5.438	.000	.284
R=.284 Adj.R²=.078	R²=.080	F= 29.572	P=.000		

The above coefficients table represents that t-statistics value is 5.438, higher than the normal distribution threshold of $t=2.5$. Moreover, positive Beta coefficient value is .284 that shows positive or direct relationship of Purchase intention and E-WOM. The R- value coefficient is .284 and for R-square, value is .080, therefore, Purchase intention shows high level of positive dependence on E-WOM is 28.4%. Moreover, high value of F at 29.572 is resulted with significant .000 p-values. The p-value is found much below than the threshold of .05, therefore, the results are significant and regression is found best fit for the relationship. Therefore, in view of the significant values of F, R-square, and t-statistics in simple regression analysis provide enough evidence that E-WoM has a positive and significant impact on Purchase intention for fast food sector in Pakistan. Hence, the hypothesis **H3** is accepted.

H4: E-WoM acts as a mediator between Social Media Advertising and Purchase intention

The use of process model four was selected for mediation. This model allows using block one for independent variables SMA, with the dependent variable Purchase intention. The block two

of linear regression used to add effect of mediator E-WoM, and the significance of R-Square is compared in both models.

Table 8. Model Summary

	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	.5207	.2712	.9474	62.6944	2.0000	337.0000	.0000
Model							
	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
Constant	.9707	.2928	3.3151	.0010	.3947	1.5466	
SMA	.5035	.0536	9.3909	.0000	.3980	.6089	
EWoM	.2472	.0545	4.5374	.0000	.1400	.3544	

Since the above model summary shows an incline in value of R in presence of E-WoM, therefore, the direct impact of SMA strengthens in presence of E-WoM. The coefficient of SMA also increased to .5035 in presence of E-WoM, as compared to .1556 as shown in previous model summary above. This result is significant at $p=.0000$ and t-statics is also above 2.5 at 9.3909.

Similarly, the positive coefficient of E-WoM at .2472 shows that E-WoM is certainly mediates the relationship of SMA and purchase intention. This coefficient is also found significant at .0000 and t-statistics at 4.5374. Hence, the mediating role of E-WoM is found significant since these regression coefficients are stronger than the individual regression coefficients for SMA (H2) and E-WoM (H3) to define the relationship with purchase intention.

Table 9. Direct and indirect effect of mediator

Direct effect of X on Y					
Effect	se	T	P	LLCI	ULCI
.5035	.0536	9.3909	.0000	.3980	.6089
Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:					
	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	
EWoM	.0385	.0144	.0128	.0702	

The indirect effect is found more significant with all values of Bootstrap are above, no zero is achieved, hence, there is a considerable positive mediation found for E-WoM. The coefficients shown above in the last table is used for conclusion of this result. The value of t-statistics has been changed for both variables SMA and E-WoM as the mediating and independent variable. In above table, positive Beta coefficient is resulted with regression, the impact of SMA become more profound with the presence of E-WoM on purchase intention of fast food. Hence, the hypothesis H4 is accepted since the above analysis provided ample evidence for the change created by E-WoM.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of the research are based on the quantitative data collected and statistical analysis of this data. The research findings revealed that the Social Media advertising (SMA) has a positive and significant impact on the purchase intention and E-WoM for fast food consumers in Pakistan. The validation of proposed conceptual framework is done through survey of 340 consumers of fast food in various cities of Pakistan. The first research question stated that how

do social media influence on purchase intention of fast food consumers in Pakistan. Thus the theoretical framework of social exchange theories is used in this research to answer this question. According to the social exchange theory, the interpersonal relationship on social media enhances the creation of positive and negative word of mouth and this word of mouth determines the intensity of purchase intention in consumer. The detailed investigation of group and individual behaviours within networks shows that the social exchange theory is complemented by network exchange theory to support the formation of a generic structural theory of dependence and power in the networks. In this regard, the results of data analysis clearly indicated in hypothesis H3 testing that there is a significant and positive impact of E-WoM on purchase intention of fast food consumers. Moreover, the mediating effect of E-WoM is finally tested for the question about the relationship between the social media advertising and E-WoM and how this relationship affects purchase intention of fast food consumers in Pakistan. According to the discussed results in previous chapter, it is concluded that E-WoM has a significant impact on the relationship of SMA and purchase intention. The interaction effect of E-WoM and SMA found considerable as it has changed the values of regression coefficient, as reflected in the working of H4. Thus, the hypothesis H4 is accepted since there is ample evidence that the mediating impact of E-WoM is considerable in affecting the purchase intention of fast food consumers in Pakistan.

Future Research Direction

Social media represents a huge opportunity for fast-food chains to market their products through it. The research found that the SMA can increase the ability to manage E-WoM of the fast food brands successfully with right content and generating positive attitudes to affect the purchase intentions of the consumers of fast food in Pakistan. Thus, research findings will be used to create social media advertising that create effective communication between consumers and fast food companies. Marketers at fast-food chains target new consumers and address the active social media activists through interactive contexts and attractive ads based on the emotional and rational content. So that, E-WoM content can create information on social media that can influence purchase intentions of fast food consumers.

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