



NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

**CUSTOMER TRUST AFFECTS SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING
AND ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION: CASE STUDY OF
NORTH CYPRUS**

M.A. THESIS

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Nicosia

February, 2025

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MASTER THESIS

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Declaration

I hereby declare that all information, documents, analysis, and results in this thesis have been collected and presented according to the academic rules and ethical guidelines of the Institute of Graduate Studies, Near East University. I also declare that as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced information and data that are not original to this study.

Nfamara Sylla

...../01/2025

Day/Month/Year

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Nfamara Sylla

Abstract

Customer Trust Affects Social Media Marketing And Online Purchase

Intention: Case Study Of North Cyprus

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Social media marketing affects positively consumer online purchase intention in several ways such as their behaviors toward the brand and perceived value and trust. This study aims to study the correlation between social media marketing, customer trust, and online purchase intention in the North Cyprus market. The population size of the study area is 390,745 in 2024. Social media Consumers from North Cyprus make up the study's population. The study's Ideal sample size was 300. The researcher distributed 300, returned 290, and valid for analysis was 164, which makes the response rate 55%. The study used non-probability purposive (convenience sampling techniques) for the administration of the research instrument to the respondents. The study used questionnaires for the collection of data. Employing correlation and regression analyses, the findings reveal mediated positive correlations between SMM and OPI ($p < 0.05$) and stronger correlations between OPI and CT, emphasizing the importance of trust and targeted marketing strategies. Regression analysis further highlights that SMM explains 10.7% of the variance in OPI, with CT having a greater impact ($p < 0.05$) compared to SMM and it has mediation to increase the relationship between social media marketing and online purchase intention. The study underscores the dual role of SMM in enhancing purchase intentions and fostering customer trust. Businesses are encouraged to adopt integrated strategies that leverage social media for trust-building and targeted engagement to improve consumer behavior outcomes. These findings highlight the strategic significance of social media marketing and customer trust in shaping online purchase intentions in competitive digital marketplaces.

Key Words: customer trust, customer satisfaction, north Cyprus market, social media marketing,

Özet

Sosyal Medya Pazarlamasının Çevrimiçi Satın Alma Niyeti Üzerindeki Etkileri:

Kuzey Kıbrıs Örneği Çalışması

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Sosyal medya pazarlaması, tüketicinin çevrimiçi satın alma niyetini, markaya yönelik davranışları, algılanan değer ve güven gibi çeşitli yollarla olumlu yönde etkilemektedir. Bu çalışma, Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta sosyal medya pazarlaması, müşteri güveni ve çevrimiçi satın alma niyeti arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma alanının 2024 yılı nüfus büyüklüğü 390.745'tir. Araştırmanın evrenini Kuzey Kıbrıs'taki sosyal medya tüketicileri oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın ideal örneklem büyüklüğü 300'dür. Araştırmacı 300'e dağıtılmıştır, geri dönüş 290 ve analiz için geçerli olan 164, yani yanıt oranı %55'tir. Araştırmada, araştırma aracının katılımcılara uygulanması için olasılık dışı amaçlı (kolay örnekleme teknikleri) kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada veri toplamak amacıyla anketler kullanılmıştır. Korelasyon ve regresyon analizleri kullanılarak elde edilen bulgular, SMM ile OPI arasında orta düzeyde pozitif korelasyonlar ($p < 0,05$) ve OPI ile CT arasında daha güçlü korelasyonlar ortaya çıkararak güven ve hedeflenen pazarlama stratejilerinin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Regresyon analizi ayrıca SMM'nin OPI'deki varyansın %10,7'sini açıkladığını, CT'nin SMM'ye kıyasla daha büyük bir etkiye ($p < 0,05$) sahip olduğunu ve sosyal medya pazarlaması ile çevrimiçi satın alma niyeti arasındaki ilişkiyi artırmaya aracılık ettiğini vurgulamaktadır. Çalışma, SMM'nin satın alma niyetlerini artırma ve müşteri güvenini artırmadaki ikili rolünün altını çiziyor. İşletmelerin, tüketici davranışı sonuçlarını iyileştirmek amacıyla güven oluşturma ve hedefe yönelik katılım için sosyal medyayı kullanan entegre stratejiler benimsemeleri teşvik edilmektedir. Bu bulgular, rekabetçi dijital pazarlarda çevrimiçi satın alma niyetlerini şekillendirmede sosyal medya pazarlamasının ve müşteri güveninin stratejik önemini vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: müşteri güveni, müşteri memnuniyeti, kuzey kıbrıs pazarı, sosyal medya pazarlaması,

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List of Abbreviations

COVID-19	Coronavirus diseases
PEB	Pro-environmental behaviours
SMEB	Social Media Engagement behavior
SMM	Social Media Marketing
UGT	Uses and Gratification

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Background

Every person is a social being. The environment, technology, health, social interactions, and a variety of other factors often have an impact on people's regular behaviors and reactions. There is a lot that consumers can learn from this occurrence. Their contact with the social environment greatly influences their consuming and purchasing behaviors. To leverage a larger portion of customer behavior, impulsive purchases, marketers and practitioners would benefit greatly from understanding these aspects (Myers & Twenge, 2019).

Traditional media and social media differ from one another in terms of user response. The emergence of social media has altered this dynamic by lowering the physical and temporal distance between the business and the consumer, enabling interactive engagement between the two. Traditional advertising only permits one form of communication, specifically from the business to the consumer. An exchange between businesses and private social media platforms is known as consumer engagement via social media (Zhang et al., 2021).

New marketing strategies built on social media platforms have emerged as a result of the ongoing expansion of social media's use in the marketing industry. These techniques are classified as social media marketing, which has characteristics that are different from those of traditional marketing. The market regards it highly, and it is growing quickly. Social media marketing is a novel approach to marketing, a burgeoning industry, and a fresh business venture (Sajid, 2016).

Social media marketing is a subset of "marketing" that works well in conjunction with conventional marketing. It is a methodical and purposeful procedure that businesses can use as a long-term plan. Because social media is so accessible, customers may readily view the adverts in social media marketing and make informed purchasing decisions. One of the key elements influencing the growth of the social media industry and consumer spending is internet marketing (Sajid, 2016).

Due to the information in social media advertising being partially hidden, consumers' intentions to engage with the commercials and their thorough information-seeking behavior are closely correlated, which encourages users to click through the ads to obtain more information. Engagement intention is directly tied to information processing and searching. Potential customers will come from a variety of social media users with varied types and levels of interaction intention. In a commercial setting where consumers are socialized, engagement intention will have a stronger influence on their emotive and cognitive processes, influencing how they formulate their purchasing decisions and intentions (Zhang et al., 2022).

Because social media has such a big impact on decision-making, it has completely changed the social environment and turned it into a vital instrument. (Lalicic et al., 2020). During times of crisis, government representatives and law enforcement utilize these channels to share information and remain informed. (Avraham & Ketter, 2016; Mathayomchan et al., 2022; Pachucki et al., 2022). Restoring a favorable image for affected destinations and mitigating the effects of a crisis need the implementation of effective crisis communication methods. Social media's potential to instantly reach large audiences during emergencies, such as the COVID-19 epidemic, makes its role in promoting communication at these times extremely interesting (Avraham, 2021; Barbe et al., 2018; Pachucki et al., 2022). To manage the effects of a crisis and rebuild the good perception of impacted locations, effective crisis communication methods are essential. Given its capacity to instantly reach large audiences, social media's function in promoting communication during emergencies, like as the COVID-19 epidemic, is particularly intriguing.

The majority of marketing scholars have employed the social impact hypothesis extensively to describe how interactions with an external social environment might alter the behavior of focal consumers. According to this view, a person's behavior is influenced by other people in society. (Zhao et al., 2018). It is essential in influencing other people's views and actions toward target consumers. Three processes allow social influence to modify the attitudes and behaviors of focused persons. These consist of internalization, identification, and compliance. This theory has been applied in the past to explain how social media affects consumers' purchases and behavior for various goods and services (Bhukya & Paul, 2023).

For example, Zhao et al. (2018) studied the influence of online reviews on focal consumers' purchasing decisions, and users' ongoing microblog content contributing behaviors (Liu et al., 2020), impulsive buying habits of customers in the context of social commerce, review source and review valence's influence on customers' purchasing decisions in the context of both private and public consumption, Adoption of consumer cloud services, channel interactions, and social network service user behavior Online buying decisions made by customers and the adoption of information in virtual communities (Trenz et al., 2018).

The majority of research on social impact examines how customers' behavior changes in various situations. Take the effect of social influence on luxury consumption in China, for example. Research has been done on the impact of social influence on m-commerce adoption intentions in China and Malaysia (Alzubaidi et al., 2021). Similar to this, audiences' assessments of the poster, the focus brands in China, consumers' intended adoption of high-tech innovations in the context of the United States, pro-environmental behaviors (PEBs) in Saudi Arabia, consumer purchases and psychological actions in India (Balakrishnan et al., 2020). Therefore, to attain the intended behavioral consequence, future research can try to identify a robust framework of information validation. The social influence literature provides ample evidence of how family, friends, peers, and professionals can impact consumers' beliefs and behavior. But the extent of the impact changes depending on the situation and the moment in time. Future research can therefore examine the extent to which a social construct influences the attitudes or actions of focal customers. Likewise, when a customer attempts to modify their conduct to conform to the expectations of others in the community, that customer is considered to be under the influence of norms (Katakam et al., 2021).

Trust has always significantly influenced Consumer behavior toward businesses (Schurr & Ozanne, 1985). In e-commerce transactions, trust is crucial since customers won't shop online if they don't trust the seller. (Kim, et al., 2008). However, because customers cannot directly verify the product, trust difficulties arise when making purchases online (Dachyar & Banjarnahor, 2017). Trust also becomes a problem that needs to be considered by the seller because it is related to consumers in making buying decisions (Murwatiningih & Apriliani, 2013). Because they believe that merchants

can be trusted, customers choose to make purchases online (Putra, Rochman, & Noermijati, 2017). Consumer purchasing decisions will increase with increased trust (Tanjung, Elfa, & Andreas, 2018). Customers are more likely to make a purchase decision if they already have faith in the supplier (Irawan, 2018). Establishing a relationship with customers requires trust (Mittal, 2013).

Marketing managers regularly measure purchase intentions and use the results to inform decisions about both new and existing goods and services. Although they are not perfect predictors of future sales, purchase intentions are associated (Morwitz, 2014). One of the main sources of information used by marketing managers to predict future sales and assess how their actions will affect consumers' purchasing behavior is the expressed intentions of consumers. According to a study conducted by Jamieson and Bass in 1989, between 70 and 90 percent of market research suppliers' clients said they often monitor and use purchase intentions (Mahliza, 2020).

Problem Statement

Social media's rising popularity and power have had a big impact on consumer behavior in a lot of different ways. Comprehending the subtle impacts of social media marketing on online purchase intention is crucial for firms and authorities operating in North Cyprus, a region undergoing swift socio-economic transformations. Social media platforms are dynamic, which begs the question of how they influence people's preferences, buying decisions, and general consumer behavior in this particular geographic and cultural environment.

Aim of the Research

To better understand how social media marketing influences online purchase intention in North Cyprus, this study aims to investigate this relationship. Providing informative data on how social media platforms impact consumer decision-making, purchasing patterns, and brand perceptions is the aim of this research. The research aims to improve understanding of the interaction between social media marketing and online purchase intention in a particular context by focusing on the unique characteristics of the North Cyprus market.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the influence of social media on customers' decision-making process when contemplating the acquisition of goods or services.
2. To determine how social media influences brand choices and market trends in North Cyprus.
3. To evaluate how customer loyalty and social media activity relate to each other in the North Cyprus market.
4. To investigate how social media marketing influences local online purchase intention through the lens of demographic variables.
5. based on the research, offer suggestions to legislators and companies in North Cyprus on how to improve social media customer involvement and marketing planning.
6. To evaluate the Consumer Trust (CT) and Consumer Purchase Intentions (OPI)

Research Significance of Study

Social media is yet another source of impulsive conduct (Chhajet et al., 2015). Malik and Qureshi (2016) claim that this is accomplished by widening the distance between customers' real and ideal selves. Research indicates that when customers have positive perceptions of social media, they are more likely to take their advice and participate in particular activities (Ki and Kim, 2019; Sokolova and Kefi, 2020). Social media improves a brand's equity by making it more relevant through connections to its personas (Gilal et al., 2020; Lee and Kim, 2020). Therefore, to boost the brand's credibility and raise the likelihood that it will impact online purchase intention, there needs to be alignment between the consumers and the brand (Levin, 2019). Our examination of the literature identifies several significant research gaps. First, marketing research generally shows that when an economic crisis strikes, people tend to alter their buying habits.

Research Questions

1. Does social media affect consumer behavior?
2. What role does social media play in purchasing decisions?

3. Does consumer trust have a positive effect on online purchases?

Research Hypothesis

The following are hypothetical theories for the research:

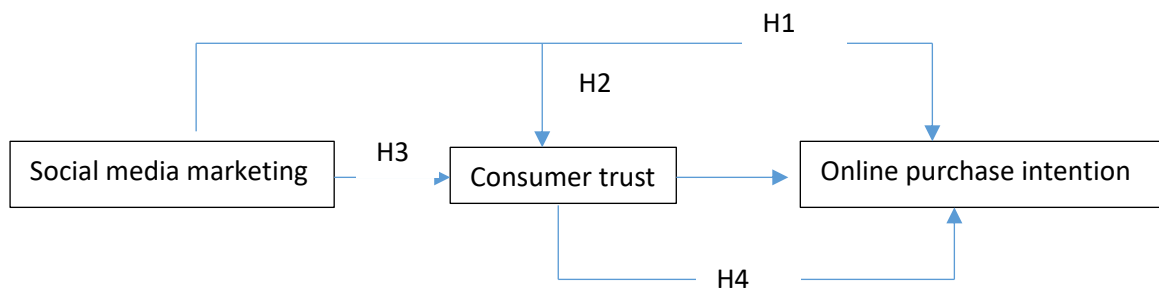
H1: There is positive impact between social media marketing and online purchase intention

H2: There is positive impact between social media marketing and consumer trust

H3: Consumer trust mediates the relationship between social media marketing and online purchase intention

There is a positive correlation between consumer trust and online purchase intention

Hypothetical Method



Limitations: The study focuses exclusively on North Cyprus, a region with unique socio-political and economic characteristics. Therefore, the findings may not apply to other regions or countries with different contexts. Another limitation is the lack of sufficient time to conduct an extensive literature review due to the institutional research timeline.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Social media are platforms for computer-mediated communication that let users interact with one another and generate and share content (Kim et al. 2010). According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media refers to a collection of web-based programs that expand upon the technological and conceptual underpinnings of Web 2.0 to facilitate the production and sharing of user-generated content. Social media can take many different forms, such as social networking sites, photo and video sharing, wikis, weblogs, microblogs, virtual communities, social bookmarking, and other social applications.

Consumer behavior and purchasing decisions are being influenced and altered by social media platforms on a growing scale. The word "traditional mass media" refers to traditional communication channels like TV, radio, newspapers, etc.; the term "social media" refers to internet communication channels. Five steps make up the decision-making process of consumers: identifying the need or problem, gathering information, weighing options, making the purchase, and acting after the purchase.

Given social media's explosive expansion, it's critical to comprehend how social media influences customers' decisions to buy in e-commerce settings. Though some e-commerce sites have begun to integrate social media into their sites to improve user interactions, prior research on social media and service management has not provided much insight into how social media influences consumers' decisions to buy.

According to Huang et al. (2016), they offer users a more comprehensive range of communication functions and a practical portal. Sharing knowledge and ideas with people who share similar interests and needs is one of the key characteristics of social media for individual users. With message boards, social networking sites, blogs, and other platforms, consumers in particular actively generate and disseminate information on businesses, brands, and goods on social media sites. Consumers' purchasing intentions toward a company are positively impacted by social marketing initiatives, according to a 2014 analysis by JD Power and Associates. In a 2014 consumer poll,

71% of respondents said they use social media to research products before making a purchase (Invesp, 2014).

This is due to the perception that social media users are more dependable and trustworthy than random people (Chu and Kim, 2011). An additional finding indicated that 40% of social media users purchase items either in-person or online after seeing them on Pinterest, Facebook, or Twitter (Invesp 2014). As a result, when consumers make selections about what to buy, social media now influences their peers. Peer interactions and online reviews, particularly on social media platforms, have a significant impact on consumers' decision-making, especially in service industries like hospitality and movies. Consumers in service industries mostly depend on social media platforms to comprehend and assess the effectiveness and caliber of certain services. For instance, social media has a major impact on how consumers make decisions in the tourism business, as Hudson and Thal (2013) showed. The majority of service companies, therefore, are aware of the substantial impact that social media has on consumers' purchasing decisions. But the impact of social media on customers' purchasing decisions has not been well-explained by prior information systems (IS) and marketing studies (Trusov et al. 2010; Wang et al. 2012). The purpose of this study is to close this gap in the literature by analyzing how social media affects consumers' decision-making.

Theoretical Framework

Marketing professionals are making significant investments in social media to increase online interaction among target audiences. There is no denying Facebook's increasing dominance in the digital space; in 2017, the social media giant accounted for 23% of all US digital advertising spending. According to eMarketer's 2018 report, Facebook is anticipated to get \$1 out of every \$10 spent on advertising overall, including digital and non-digital. With an average of just 0.07 percent of Facebook fans engaging with a brand's post (Gayomali, 2014) and as many as 61 percent of customers indicating that they do not view social media as a place to interact with companies, the majority of the effort made in digital strategy, however, appears to have been completely lost (Ritson, 2011).

These numbers notwithstanding, consumer-focused social media content keeps growing along with the rise in digital spending. However, unless marketers know how

to properly construct their content to encourage client involvement, these marketing initiatives will fail (Lee et al., 2013). The goal of this article is to present a more comprehensive understanding of how to use social media content to improve consumer engagement. To offer managers direction when creating material for social media, this study examines the various impacts of relational, amusing, remunerative, and informational content on social media engagement behavior (SMEB). With the introduction of social media, the relationship between marketers and customers has evolved, enabling customers to communicate with the company in real-time and on a personal level (Harrigan et al., 2015).

Customers now want to participate in and engage with the organization's distinctive offerings and activities, making business settings more dynamic and interactive (Vivek et al., 2012). As a result, the idea of participation on social media platforms has drawn attention from scholars and practitioners alike (Brodie et al., 2013). Nevertheless, not much research has looked at how engagement is accomplished, despite this interactive way to add value and interact with the company (Brodie et al., 2013; Gummerus et al., 2012). Even though several recent studies have looked at the causes and effects of customer involvement (van Doorn et al., 2010; Gambetti et al., 2012; Leckie et al., 2016), studies that take into account social media activity are just starting to appear (Malthouse et al., 2013), demonstrating the evident necessity for developing theoretical knowledge of the nature of engagement behavior in response to marketing strategies in the context of social media (Sashi, 2012). According to this theoretical development, consumer behavior in response to corporate communication—like Facebook brand posts—must be studied.

Utilizing the uses and gratifications theory (UGT) and the fundamental ideas of persuasion theories like dual processing theory (Kahneman, 2011). The writers provide an empirical demonstration of how these various forms of social media content influence user interaction with the material by utilizing Facebook Insights and related Capture data of twelve wine brands. How social media marketing efforts foster consumer engagement is a prominent area of interest for the Marketing Sciences Institute from 2014 to 2016 and from 2016 to 2018. This study examines this issue. The literature on customer engagement in a social media context is examined in this paper to create a conceptual framework and hypotheses that utilize the theoretical

underpinnings of UGT to develop a classification system for social media content that is arranged based on two primary rational appeals—educational material (De Vries et al., 2012; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013) and remunerative content and two main emotional appeals—entertaining content (De Vries et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2011) and relational content (Muntinga et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2013). Additionally, the conceptual framework and hypotheses explain observed engagement behavior in the social media arena by drawing on dual processing theory to explain the relationship between rational and emotional information.

We employ behavioral data and social media content—branded posts gathered from Facebook Insights and Capture—to test the conceptual approach. The four types of engagement behavior (consuming, liking, sharing, and commenting) and the content types (informational, remunerative, entertaining, and relational) are examined using multivariate linear regression analysis using data collected and categorized through a quantitative content analysis of social media content. The study's findings highlight the differing impacts of appealing messages, both emotional and rational, on users' social media involvement (Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013).

Customer engagement through social media

Customers' online behavior underwent a paradigm shift when social media platforms emerged, changing how they communicate with brands and with one another. Specifically, consumers are now active players who actively create a great deal of content through their online conversations, interactions, and behaviors thanks to social media's interactive features (Malthouse et al., 2013). They used to be passive spectators of information. The notion of customer engagement is fundamental to this change, acknowledging that consumers jointly generate value via these exchanges (Bijmolt et al., 2010). According to Malthau et al. (2013), social media has an impact on how much a customer interacts with a business, and the degree of interaction both influences and is influenced by the business's customer relationship management strategy.

As a result, companies have the task of modifying their relationship marketing tactics to integrate social media and concentrate on increasing consumer involvement. Thus, in the fastest-growing sector of marketing expenditure, this research directly

advances theory and practice. Bowden (2009) described customer engagement as the psychological process via which consumers become more brand loyal. According to Brodie et al. (2011), customer engagement is typified by emotional, cognitive, and behavioral activation states during brand encounters. Behavioral engagement has been the subject of much study from writers, who have described it as behavior other than purchase that stems from motivational drivers (van Doorn et al., 2010).

Beyond simple involvement and participation, customer engagement involves an interactive relationship with an engagement object, like a brand (Brodie et al., 2011); voluntary and discretionary behavior toward the object (Verleye et al., 2014); and more than just the instrumental value gained from brand interactions (Mollen and Wilson, 2010). According to Sawhney et al. (2005), Calder et al. (2009), Brodie et al. (2013), and others, a large portion of the early research on consumer interaction was conducted online. The construct was conceptualized by authors in these contexts (Brodie et al., 2013; Wirtz et al., 2013), measurement scales were empirically validated (Hollebeek et al., 2014), engagement properties, including intensity (Malthouse et al., 2013; Muntinga et al., 2011), and several antecedents were identified.

Although several individual-related elements have been identified in the literature as predisposing to consumer involvement, research has looked at the impact of marketing strategy. According to Malthouse et al. (2016), user-generated content prompts customers to consider a personal objective, hence indicating that customer participation alone does not guarantee engagement. This approach boosts purchase intentions. More research on the impact of social media content shared by the organization is necessary, even if several studies have looked at how social media content affects engagement behavior (Muntinga et al., 2011; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013).

Consumers interact with a variety of items, such as media (Calder et al., 2009), physical goods (Brodie et al., 2011), and events and activities (Vivek et al., 2012). Customers interact with a company through a variety of service interactions and touchpoints, but the main point of interaction is frequently unclear. This study adopts a behavioral viewpoint on engagement in the context of a social media platform (Gummerus et al., 2012; van Doorn et al., 2010) and offers more insight into the behavioral expressions of involvement on that platform. We therefore embrace the

definition of SMEB as "behavioral manifestations of a customer that are motivated by factors other than purchases and have a social media focus" (Dolan et al., 2016).

Customers' creation, contribution, or consumption of brand-related material inside a social network are examples of behavior that indicates social media involvement (Muntinga et al., 2011). From simple measures of engagement, like "liking" a Facebook page, to more advanced forms of engagement that show customer participation in co-creation activities, like writing reviews, the degree of engagement itself varies (Malthouse et al., 2013; Muntinga et al., 2011). The SMEB construct, which has variable degrees of involvement intensity, is the foundation of this study and was introduced by Dolan et al. (2016).

Categorizing social media content: uses and gratifications theory (UGT)

According to Katz and Foulkes (1962), UGT is a method for figuring out why and how people utilize media to fulfill particular requirements. According to Ko et al. (2005), the theory discusses how people select media that meets their needs and enables them to experience satisfaction including increased knowledge, leisure and amusement, social connection, and reward or compensation. UGT, which contends that people actively seek out, identify with, and utilize media to satisfy particular satisfaction needs, was one of the first approaches to take the audience's activity in media choice into account (Ku et al., 2013). Swanson (1987) promoted the need to comprehend the role of message content in UGT research.

According to Smock et al. (2011), early UGT research revealed that audience members seek and find various forms of gratification within media content, which influences the consumption of the content. A UGT perspective has also been utilized to predict specific behaviors that arise from consumers' motivations for using social media sites. In social media, a brand's overt objective is to draw in viewers by offering them satisfaction or value through its content. To increase consumer engagement, content must be created in a way that benefits each particular user (Malthouse et al., 2013). Concepts derived from the theoretical foundations of UGT, including the need for amusement, social connection, information sharing and seeking, and the desire for compensation or reward, have all been studied.

Because of this, UGT offers a framework for comprehending why people use social media to look for a particular kind of material. Using the theoretical underpinnings of UGT, this study develops a classification of social media content that is arranged according to two main emotional appeals (entertainment; De Vries et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2013) and two main rational appeals (informative content; De Vries et al., 2012; Cvijikj and Michahelles, 2013). The results are shown in Table II. These four content categories are anticipated to satisfy consumer motivations for using social media, following UGT, leading to expressions of the active and passive SME Boutlined previously.

Social media gives customers the ability to get specialized information, product details, or reviews from people in their networks. Social media helps with competitive intelligence by facilitating the exchange and collection of knowledge and information (Vuori and Va'isa'nen 2009). Customers can participate in social interactions about items by "liking" and commenting on certain types of social media advertising, which spreads the word to their social networks. (Interactive Advertising Bureau, 2009). According to several studies, social media commitment and social interaction linkages are essential components of social media (Hutter et al. 2013; Phang et al. 2013; Wang and Chiang 2009). While someone with a conflict of interest can falsify user-generated content on social media, a lot of people think that reviews can be relied upon since they are based on independent, real-life experiences (Stephen and Toubia 2010). According to earlier IS and marketing research, people view the information provided on social media as more reliable and convincing than information from traditional media, including TV commercials and personal sales (Cheung and Thadani 2012; Chu and Kim 2011). Social media is a crucial component of customer decision-making in the e-commerce space and acts as a potent word-of-mouth marketing tool for goods and services (Kuan et al. 2014; Phang et al. 2013; Ye et al. 2010).

These days, social media platforms that encourage user contributions and social interactions are commonly used by e-commerce websites to facilitate the online purchase and sale of goods and services. As a result, several e-commerce websites have begun to integrate with social media platforms to enhance user interactions and increase transactional efficiency. Social media commitment and social interaction

linkages have been identified as essential elements of social media by earlier research. (Hutter et al. 2013; Phang et al. 2013). This study investigates the effects of two key components on consumer's purchase decisions in e-commerce settings.

Many studies of marketing and consumer behavior have investigated the impact of social influences on consumers' purchase decisions (Cheung et al. 2009; Lee et al. 2011; Phang et al. 2013; Trusov et al. 2010; Wang et al. 2012). According to social impact theory, an individual's feelings, attitudes, and behaviors can be affected by the presence of others (Latane 1981). Burnkrant and Cousineau (1975) suggested two forms of social influence: informational and normative. Both forms of social influence can affect consumers' attitudes and behaviors because of the real or imagined influence of others (Chu and Kim 2011; Kuan et al. 2014). Normative social influence suggests that people are influenced by group compliance, whereas informational social influence indicates that people are influenced by knowledge and evidence (Bearden et al. 1989). In the context of e-commerce, the effects of normative and informational social influences on consumers' purchase decisions are expected to be relatively strong because many consumers decide to purchase some products based on the comments and 'likes' of their social media contacts. In this sense, the study looks into how social impact affects customers' intentions to visit. Furthermore, trust is generally acknowledged as being essential to online interactions in e-banking and e-commerce, for example. According to numerous studies, a consumer's willingness to assume any possible risk that may be involved in a particular transaction depends on their level of trust in an online vendor (Chiu et al. 2006; Jasperson et al. 2005). In this sense, confidence in an online vendor may be a crucial predictor of consumers' visits and purchase intents in e-commerce contexts.

Related Research

These days, social media and e-commerce are connected. We refer to this as social commerce. E-commerce through social media is a subcategory of social commerce (Wang and Zhang 2012; Zhou et al. 2013). Users can voice their own opinions and experiences and provide information that influences other members' decisions by exchanging product feedback (Kim and Park 2013). Additionally, when they engage in a transaction, they have the option of sharing it or not. If they choose to share it, friends will be able to view and comment on the transaction, together with the transaction record, product link, and reviews, on the social network service pages.

Users' involvement is improved by social media, including blogs, microblogs, and a range of online apps. Transaction records and reviews are shared as links among these social media. The exchange of points and coupons for transactions is encouraged among users. The significance of social media in e-commerce grows as a result of its efficaciousness in disseminating product information and enhancing consumer engagement.

Consumer Buying Behavior towards Online Shopping

These days, people who are too busy to visit the store can just shop online. The last ten years have seen a significant change in the purchasing patterns of customers. Many consumers still prefer the convenience of Internet shopping, even though they still visit traditional establishments. Due to time constraints, many people these days are unable or unable to visit the mall, thus the time savings provided by internet shopping are priceless (Rahman et al., 2018).

Online shopping addiction and its compensating counterpart are examined in the current research (Adamczyk, 2021) in their article titled "Compulsive and compensative buying among online shoppers: An empirical study." An estimate of this type of purchase was made using empirical data gathered from a sample of consumers who were at least 15 years old and stratified by whether or not they used the e-commerce sector. The results shed light on the various factors that influence this type of purchase, such as the frequency of online shopping, the amount spent online compared to offline shopping, the attitudes towards online shopping, and socioeconomic position. The influence of specific factors on online buying behavior: a study concerning the Kottayam district was the subject of an investigation (Georgie, 2021).

(Aldousari, 2016), ascertained the impact of the Theory of Reasoned Actions and the Technology Acceptance Model on consumers' attitudes toward online purchasing was examined in the paper "Determinants of Consumers' attitudes toward online shopping." Prior research has mostly examined the e-commerce behaviors of affluent nations, disregarding the experiences of emerging nations.

Hypotheses Development

Relationship between SMM AND OPI

The relationship between Social Media Marketing (SMM) and online purchase intention has been widely studied in marketing and consumer behavior literature. Social Media Marketing refers to the use of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others for promoting products, services, or brands. Online purchase intention refers to the likelihood or propensity of a consumer to purchase a product or service after being exposed to online marketing stimuli, such as ads or recommendations. Here's a brief overview of how social media marketing can affect online purchase intentions:

Social media marketing plays a significant role in shaping consumer attitudes and perceptions, which in turn influence purchase intentions. When consumers are exposed to engaging and relevant content on social media, such as personalized ads or user-generated content, their likelihood of purchasing increases (Tung, 2016). Social media facilitates direct engagement between brands and consumers, creating a sense of trust and community, which positively impacts purchase intentions (Kumar & Shah, 2020).

Social media marketing helps companies reach a larger audience, increasing visibility and awareness of their products or services. This heightened awareness can positively influence consumers' purchase intentions. According to a study by Kim and Ko (2012), social media marketing enhances brand loyalty and purchase intentions by creating positive perceptions and engagement with consumers.

Social media enables direct interaction between brands and consumers, which fosters stronger relationships. Consumer engagement, which includes liking, sharing, or commenting on posts, has been found to positively impact online purchase intentions (Zhang & Mao, 2016). Engagement on social media is seen as an important factor that shapes consumers' purchase decisions.

Social media marketing relies heavily on user-generated content, reviews, and testimonials. This social proof influences online purchase intentions as consumers tend to trust recommendations and experiences shared by peers or influencers. The influence of peer recommendations is significant, as demonstrated by De Veirman et al. (2017), who found that influencer marketing on social media positively impacts the purchasing behavior of followers.

Social media platforms offer advanced targeting tools that allow advertisers to reach specific audiences based on interests, demographics, and behaviors. This targeted advertising can increase the likelihood of conversion by showing consumers relevant products that align with their preferences. A study by Tuten and Solomon (2017) highlighted that tailored advertisements on social media can effectively lead to higher purchase intentions.

Social media marketing can build an emotional connection between the consumer and the brand. Through engaging content and storytelling, brands can create a sense of trust and loyalty, which, in turn, influences purchase intentions. Emotional appeals are particularly effective in shaping consumer behavior, as shown by the research of Sánchez-Franco et al. (2018). Therefore, the hypothesis has been represented as :

H1: There is positive impact between social media marketing and online purchase intention

Relationship Between SMM AND CT

The relationship between Social Media Marketing (SMM) and customer trust has been a significant area of interest in marketing research, as trust is a crucial factor influencing customer loyalty, engagement, and ultimately, purchasing decisions. Social media marketing strategies that focus on transparency, engagement, and authenticity can foster trust, which in turn enhances customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. With customers, respond to inquiries, and participate in conversations. This type of interaction builds transparency and trust as consumers feel they can connect with the brand on a more personal level. When brands engage meaningfully with customers, it increases their perception of the brand's credibility and reliability (Laroche et al., 2013).

Here's how social media marketing impacts customer trust: Authenticity in social media marketing such as showcasing real customer experiences, sharing behind-the-scenes content, and presenting honest product information helps build trust. Brands that maintain transparency in their communication on social media are more likely to be perceived as trustworthy by consumers (Sweeney & Gabbott, 2017). Social media provides an opportunity for brands to be more transparent in their operations and

communications. When brands use social media to share behind-the-scenes content, authentic stories, and open communication about their products or services, it helps establish a sense of trust with consumers. Consumers tend to trust brands that are open and authentic about their values and operations (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). For instance, when companies share genuine customer testimonials or user-generated content, it builds credibility and trust.

Social media is a platform that allows two-way communication between brands and consumers. When brands actively engage with consumers by responding to comments, addressing concerns, or participating in discussions, it fosters a sense of connection and trust. Timely and helpful responses on social media show that a brand is attentive to its customer's needs, which can increase trust (Luo, 2002). Influencer marketing, which is a common social media marketing strategy, can also affect customer trust. Consumers are more likely to trust a brand when it is recommended by an influencer they trust. According to a study by De Veirman et al. (2017), consumers tend to trust influencers who have a genuine connection with the brand and who communicate authentically. Influencers serve as social proof, demonstrating that others value the brand or product, which can positively affect trust and loyalty.

Consistency is key when building trust on social media. A brand's messaging, tone, and visuals should remain consistent across all posts and interactions. Inconsistent messaging can create confusion and erode trust. Consumers are more likely to trust brands that maintain a steady and predictable presence on social media (Cheng et al., 2013). Regular posting of high-quality, relevant content reinforces a brand's reliability and commitment to its audience. User-generated content (UGC) and online reviews on social media can significantly impact customer trust. When consumers see positive reviews and user-generated content such as photos, videos, and testimonials, they are more likely to trust a brand. Positive experiences shared by real users can act as social proof, validating the quality and reliability of the product or service (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

Brands that connect with customers on an emotional level through storytelling or content that aligns with customers' values tend to foster deeper trust. Social media allows brands to engage in storytelling that can humanize the brand, making it more relatable and trustworthy (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010). Consumers often trust brands

they feel an emotional connection to because they believe these brands understand their needs and values. Social media marketing plays a crucial role in building and maintaining customer trust. The key factors contributing to this relationship include transparency, authentic engagement, social proof, consistent messaging, and emotional connections. By leveraging social media effectively, brands can create trust-building experiences that lead to stronger relationships with customers. Therefore, the hypothesis has been represented as.

H2: There is positive impact between social media marketing and consumer trust

Relationship Between CT AS Mediator Between SMM AND OPI

The relationship between Social Media Marketing (SMM), customer trust, and online purchase intention is a crucial area of study in marketing, as it highlights how trust acts as a mediator between marketing efforts on social media and consumer behavior, specifically their intention to make online purchases. In this context, customer trust serves as an intermediary variable that influences how social media marketing efforts shape consumers' purchase intentions. Some Points on the Relationship: Social Media Marketing and Customer Trust: Social media marketing strategies, such as influencer collaborations, content marketing, and direct brand engagement, often focus on building a relationship of trust with the consumer. When brands maintain transparency, and authenticity, and engage in two-way communication on social media, it positively influences consumer trust (Sweeney & Gabbott, 2017). By sharing consistent and honest content, responding to customer queries, and highlighting customer testimonials or reviews, brands can strengthen their trustworthiness. This increases the likelihood that consumers will trust the brand, which is crucial for encouraging positive purchase behaviors (Laroche et al., 2013).

Trust is an essential mediator in the relationship between social media marketing and online purchase intention. When consumers trust a brand, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the brand, which can influence their intention to purchase. In essence, social media marketing efforts can increase customer trust, and this trust, in turn, enhances the likelihood of a consumer deciding to make a purchase (Hutter et al., 2013). Social media engagement builds trust through consistent interactions, user-generated content, and positive feedback from others. This trust

fosters a sense of credibility and reliability, which is vital for converting online engagement into actual purchasing decisions (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

When customers trust a brand through its social media presence, this trust reduces perceived risk and uncertainty associated with online purchases. As a result, customers feel more comfortable making a purchase, which increases their online purchase intention (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Without trust, even a well-executed social media marketing campaign may fail to result in a significant increase in purchase intention, as consumers would be hesitant to follow through on their purchase. The relationship between social media marketing and online purchase intention is significantly mediated by customer trust. Social media marketing can influence consumer trust, which, in turn, enhances the likelihood of online purchases. Marketers should understand the importance of fostering trust through transparent, authentic, and engaging social media strategies to increase online purchase intentions effectively. Therefore, the hypothesis has been represented as

H3: Consumer trust mediates the relationship between social media marketing and online purchase intention

Relationship Between Customer Trust And Online Purchase Intention

The relationship between customer trust and online purchase intention is well-documented in marketing research, as trust is a fundamental factor that influences a consumer's decision-making process, especially in the online shopping environment. Trust plays a pivotal role in reducing perceived risks and uncertainties associated with online transactions, leading to a greater likelihood of consumers deciding to make a purchase. Online purchases inherently involve a degree of uncertainty and risk due to the lack of physical interaction with products and sellers. Customer trust helps mitigate these risks, making consumers more comfortable with online transactions (Gefen, 2000). When consumers trust an online retailer or platform, they are more likely to develop a positive purchase intention. Trust is built over time through consistent and positive experiences, including secure payment methods, transparent business practices, and reliable customer service. A brand that demonstrates reliability, security, and authenticity is more likely to be trusted, which directly affects the likelihood that customers will intend to make a purchase (Jarvenpaa et al., 2000).

Customer trust directly influences attitudes toward the brand. When consumers trust a company, they are more likely to develop positive perceptions of the brand. This trust can come from factors like previous experiences, reviews from other customers, or a strong reputation in the marketplace. Positive brand perceptions are strongly associated with an increased likelihood of purchase. Consumer trust is also influenced by social factors such as reviews, recommendations, and ratings. Social proof, such as reviews and testimonials from other consumers, can build trust in a brand or product. When a brand has high ratings and positive reviews, it encourages trust among potential customers and increases their willingness to make an online purchase. Customers trust the opinions of their peers and are more likely to buy from brands that others have positively endorsed.

In e-commerce, websites that are easy to navigate, secure, and transparent about their policies (such as return policies, shipping costs, and delivery timelines) help establish trust. A clear, professional website design that ensures security through visible trust signals (such as SSL encryption, secure payment gateways, and trusted logos like “Verified by Visa”) can significantly influence customers’ trust and their intention to purchase online. Trust doesn’t only influence initial purchase intention; it can also impact post-purchase behavior, including repeat buying. When customers trust a brand, they are more likely to make repeat purchases, subscribe to services, or recommend the brand to others. Long-term trust, therefore, builds a loyal customer base and generates consistent purchase intention over time.

Customer trust is one of the most critical factors influencing online purchase intention. Trust reduces perceived risks, enhances brand perceptions, and encourages positive consumer behavior, such as purchasing, repurchasing, and recommending the brand to others. In an online shopping environment where customers cannot physically inspect products, trust becomes even more essential. Brands that effectively build and maintain trust through secure websites, positive reviews, transparent communication, and consistent service will likely see increased purchase intentions and customer loyalty. Therefore, the hypothesis has been represented as,

H4: There is a positive correlation between consumer trust and online purchase intention.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The techniques that will be used to help carry out all of the study's stated goals and objectives are described in this chapter. Target population, instrumentation, instrument validation, study design, data sources, sample and sampling process, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and data analysis method are all included.

Research Design

A cross-sectional survey of consumers in certain areas in North Cyprus was conducted to investigate and understand how social media marketing influences online purchase intention.

Source of Data

This study's data will be acquired from both primary and secondary sources. The data will be gathered primarily through the administration of an online Google form. The secondary sources will be published research articles and journals from various academic databases and websites.

Participants/Population and Sample

the population size of the study area is 390,745 in 2024. Social media Consumers from North Cyprus make up the study's population. The study's Ideal sample size was 400. The researcher distributed 300, returned 290, and valid for analysis was 164, which makes the response rate 55%.

The technique to be deployed in the selection of the participants in the survey is sampled through a non-probability purposive (convenience sampling techniques) for the administration of the research instrument to the respondents; with keen consideration of the availability of the employees. To ensure enough power for the detection of meaningful relationships, mediated-sized correlations with acceptable power, and a robust analysis

Data Collection Tools/Materials

The instrument to be used for the collection of required data is a questionnaire. It helps to cover a wide range and diverse respondents; The questionnaire was designed utilizing a 5-point Likert scale of rank observations: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree, with consumers asked to check the box next to the choice that best matched their own opinions. These were designed in such a way that the researcher could elicit relevant information to the study questions from the respondents. The questionnaire has 25 items with three sections first related to demographical information which has 5 items and the other section has 20 items. SMM has 8 items. All the questionnaires were developed by Umair Manzoor, Sajjad Baig, Muhammad Hashim, and Abdul Sami. << July 2020. *International journal of Entrepreneurial Research* 3(2):41-48

The author uses a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The Cronbach alpha must be 0.7 and above to be reliable. Cronbach Alpha for social media marketing items was 0.827 (good reliability) which means that it was reliable. Consumer trust has 5 items The author uses a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The Cronbach Alpha for these items was: 0.730 (good reliability). OPI has 7 items. The author uses a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The Cronbach Alpha for these items was: 0.717 (good reliability). The Cronbach alpha for the 20 items was 0.858

Table 1 *The Cronbach alpha for research variables*

	Items	Cronbach Alpha
SMM	8	0.827
CT	5	0.730
OPI	7	0.717
Total	20	0.858

Data Analysis Procedures

The research is empirical, descriptive, and inferential. Because of the nature of the data collected, the data will be analyzed descriptively using (frequencies, and percentages); the raw data was converted into percentages to allow the researcher to draw reasonable conclusions based on the information gathered; charts will be used to identify trends and patterns. The following statistical tools will be used to inferentially examine the data to provide answers to the objectives: chi-square test of independence, correlation, and regression linear analysis.

CHAPTER IV

Findings and Comments

Demographic Overview and Univariate Analysis

This demographic information aids in determining how social media marketing (SMM) affects certain populations as shown in Table 3. Based on a 5-point Likert scale, which was measured as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. The Chi-square test was employed to evaluate the significance of associations between demographic characteristics and attitudes toward SMM.

There is no statistically significant difference in attitudes towards SMM between genders, as the p-value exceeds the conventional threshold of 0.05. With 50.6% of the population being male (83 people) and 49.4% being female (81 people), the gender distribution is almost equal. This nearly equal representation is important because it can suggest that replies have a variety of viewpoints, which is essential for research that seeks to identify gender-related patterns or behaviors in the general population. Thus, both male and female respondents appear to share similar levels of agreement regarding SMM, suggesting that gender does not play a critical role in shaping perceptions or effectiveness of social media marketing strategies within this sample.

The age distribution shows that the majority of the sample (64.6%, or 106 people) are between the ages of 26 and 35. This implies that younger adults, who frequently exhibit different social and economic behaviors from older age groups and, most importantly, have a preference for social media, may find the study especially pertinent. A significant focus on younger demographics is suggested by the fact that the 18–25 age group makes up 18.9% of the sample (31 people), whilst the 36–55 age group makes up a smaller portion. The Chi-square statistic for age groups is $\chi^2 = 11.8883$ with a p-value of 0.0645. Although this p-value approaches significance, it does not meet the conventional threshold, implying that while there may be trends suggesting younger individuals are more favorable towards SMM, these results are not statistically conclusive. This could reflect the growing importance of digital platforms among younger demographics, aligning with broader trends observed in social media usage where younger users tend to engage more actively with marketing content.

According to the occupational data, there are no significant differences in attitudes towards SMM based on occupation with a sizable majority being students (82.9%, 136 people). This finding aligns with existing literature suggesting that students and younger individuals are often more receptive to digital marketing strategies due to their familiarity with social media platforms. This information is essential for market research and policy creation aimed at educational institutions or youth services because this group is likely to exhibit distinct social behaviors and spending patterns than employed or retired people. Regarding marital status, just 10.4% (17 people) reported being married, whilst 44.5% (73 people) defined as single. Notably, 42.7% (70 people) selected "prefer not to say," which may be a reflection of social constraints around marital status or privacy concerns; with a Chi-square statistic of $\chi^2 = 11.0263$ and a p-value of 0.0876. Similar to the age group, this suggests a potential trend where marital status may influence perceptions towards SMM, but again does not reach statistical significance. Respondents who prefer not to disclose their marital status represent a substantial portion, which complicates interpretations regarding how marital status might affect engagement with social media marketing.

According to the location information, the majority of responders are from Lefkosa (28.7%, 47 people) and Gonyeli (37.2%, 61 people), with minor amounts coming from Girne and Magusa. The Chi-square test suggests that geographic location does not significantly impact attitudes toward SMM within this sample. However, it highlights the need for targeted marketing strategies that consider regional preferences and behaviors, as different locations may exhibit varying levels of engagement with social media platforms. This spatial concentration may highlight possible regional differences in attitudes or habits and have an impact on regional studies or services provided in these locations.

In summary, while some demographic factors such as age and marital status show trends toward influencing attitudes about Social Media Marketing, none reached statistical significance in this analysis. The overall findings suggest that within this sample, demographic characteristics do not strongly dictate perceptions of SMM effectiveness. All things considered; this demographic analysis offers insightful information about the traits of the group under study. The results of this study may be especially useful for comprehending trends among younger demographics, as seen by

the balanced gender representation, young adult and student predominance, and other characteristics.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of the Demographic Information

Demographic Information		Frequency (N=164)	(%)
Gender	Male	83	50.6
	Female	81	49.4
	Total	164	100
Age group	18-25	31	18.9
	26-35	106	64.6
	36-45	24	14.6
	46-55	3	1.8
	Total	164	100
Marital Status	Single	73	44.5
	Married	17	10.4
	Divorced	4	2.4
	Prefer not to say	70	42.7
	Total	164	100

Location	Lefkosa	47	28.7
	Nicosia	2	1.2
	Girne	19	11.6
	Gonyeli	61	37.2
	Magusa	6	3.7
	Yenikent	7	4.3
	Hamitkoy	20	12.2
	Iskele	2	1.2
	Total	164	100
Occupation	Student	136	82.9
	Delivery agent	10	6.1
	Tourist	4	2.4
	Others	14	8.5
	Total	164	100

Mean Scores For Each Question

Table 3 Means Scores

Questions (Social Media Marketing)	Mean Scores
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SMM_Q1 I think that social media makes my life easier	3.73
SMM_Q2:I am very enthusiastic to find the description of products on an electronic platform like the internet, email, or web.	3.47
SMM_Q3: I think social media provide accurate and proper knowledge of products and services	3.36
SMM_Q4: Social Media innovates the ways of advertising products or services efficiently.	3.55
SMM_Q5: I like to adopt the way of buying and selling products or services using social media	3.56
SMM_Q6: I think social media marketing inspires me to make a buying decision	3.84
SMM_Q7: I like to spend more time on social media because I like to see what the latest fashion	3.81
SMM_Q8: By using advertising messages via the mobile phone I can demonstrate my innovativeness to my Friends	3.46
Customer Trust (CT)	
CT_Q1: I will probably buy a product on the internet (Soon)	3.51
CT_Q2: I feel capable of finding shopping variety and information on social media websites	3.78
CT_Q3: Social Media marketing keeps me up to date about new products and Services.	3.88
CT_Q4: In general, I am satisfied with the service provided by the internet	3.77
CT_Q5: I am satisfied with social media services for marketing	3.87
Customer Purchase Intention (OPI)	

OPI_Q1: I think shopping on the Internet saves me time	3.79
OPI_Q2: It is a great advantage for me to buy products at any time of the day on the internet	3.83
OPI_Q3: It is more difficult to shop on the internet	3.30
OPI_Q4: I will prefer online shopping only if online prices are lower than the Actual price	3.82
OPI_Q5: A long time is required for the delivery of products and services on the internet	3.59
OPI_Q6: Online shopping is as secure as traditional shopping	3.54
OPI_Q7: The information given about the products and services on the internet is sufficient	3.65

Relative Important Index

The Relative Importance Index (RII) for each item of the SMM, CT, and OPI is a normalized measure that reflects the importance of each item relative to the maximum possible score. The RII is a measure used to rank different factors based on their relative importance in a given context. This analysis highlights the relative priorities of different items based on the RII and helps guide decision-making based on the items that are considered most important by the respondents. It is typically calculated as:

$$RII = \frac{TotalW}{TotalF \times Highest\ Rating}$$

The RII ranges between 0 and 1, where a higher value indicates greater importance or relevance. TotalF is the total frequency, and TotalW is the total weight.

Table 4 Relative Important Index (RII)

Items	Mean score s	Total F	Total W	RII	Rank withi n group	Overall Rank
Social Media Marketing (SMM)						
SMM_Q1 I think that social media makes my life easier	3.73	1840	2460	0.75	3 rd	8 th
SMM_Q2:I am very enthusiastic to find the description of products on an electronic platform like the internet, email, or web.	3.47	1701	2460	0.69	7 th	18 th
SMM_Q3: I think social media provide accurate and proper knowledge of products and services	3.36	1655	2460	0.67	8 th	19 th
SMM_Q4: Social Media innovates the ways of advertising products or services efficiently.	3.55	1730	2460	0.70	5 th	14 th
SMM_Q5: I like to adopt the way of buying and selling products or services using social media	3.56	1774	2460	0.72	4 th	13 th
SMM_Q6: I think social media marketing inspires me to make a buying decision	3.84	1889	2460	0.77	1 st	4 th
SMM_Q7:: I like to spend more time on social media because I	3.81	1860	2460	0.76	2 nd	7 th

like to see what the latest fashion						
SMM_Q8: By using advertising messages via the mobile phone I can demonstrate my innovativeness to my Friends	3.46	1705	2460	0.69	6 th	16 th
Customer Trust (CT)						
CT_Q1: I will probably buy a product on the internet (Soon)	3.51	1717	2460	0.70	5 th	17 th
CT_Q2: I feel capable of finding shopping variety and information on social media websites	3.78	1858	2460	0.76	3 rd	5 th
CT_Q3: Social Media marketing keeps me up to date about new products and Services.	3.88	1904	2460	0.77	2 nd	1 st
CT_Q4: In general, I am satisfied with the service provided by the internet	3.77	1838	2460	0.75	4 th	10 th
CT_Q5: I am satisfied with social media services for marketing	3.87	1920	2460	0.78	1 st	3 rd
Customer Purchase Intention (OPI)						
OPI_Q1: I think shopping on the Internet saves me time	3.79	1888	2460	0.77	1 st	8 th
OPI_Q2: It is a great advantage for me to buy products at any time of the day on the internet	3.83	1882	2460	0.77	2 nd	2 nd
OPI_Q3: It is more difficult to shop on the internet	3.30	1629	2460	0.66	7 th	20 th
OPI_Q4: I will prefer online shopping only if online prices are lower than the Actual price	3.82	1864	2460	0.76	3 rd	6 th
OPI_Q5: A long time is required for the delivery of products and services on the internet	3.59	1752	2460	0.71	5 th	12 th

OPI_Q6: Online shopping is as secure as traditional shopping	3.54	1738	2460	0.71	6 th	15 th
OPI_Q7: The information given about the products and services on the internet is sufficient	3.65	1798	2460	0.73	4 th	11 th

Table 4 above presents the Relative Importance Index (RII) for various social media activities: SMM; CT; and OPI, along with the mean, total frequency (TotalF), total weight (TotalW), RII, and rank. The highest-ranked items, e.g., Social media marketing keep me up to date about new products (CT_Q3), It is a great advantage to buy products at any time of the day on the internet (OPI_Q2), Satisfied on social media services about marketing (CT_Q5), Social media marketing inspires me to make a buying decision (SMM_Q6), and Capable of finding shopping verity and information on the social media websites (CT_Q2) are those that respondents view as top most five important, with high RIIs ranging from 0.76 to 0.77. These items likely represent key factors that should be prioritized for further attention or resource allocation in the context of this study.

Correlation and Regression Analyses

The study aimed to improve the understanding of the interaction between social media marketing and online purchase intention in a particular context by focusing on the unique characteristics of the North Cyprus market. Correlation and regression analyses will be conducted to provide answers to the research hypotheses using the 17 items found to have internal reliability. The table below shows the correlation between social media marketing, online purchase intention, and customer trust.

Table 5 Correlation Between the SMM, OPI, and CT

Correlations			
	SMM	CT	OPI
SMM	1		
CT	.607**	1	
OPI	.327**	.449**	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The information outlined in Table 5 analyses the relationship among the three important variables: customer trust (CT), online purchase intention (OPI), and social media marketing (SMM). Businesses looking to boost consumer engagement and their

marketing tactics must comprehend these relationships. The correlation coefficient (r) and the p-value are provided for each pairwise relationship, allowing for an interpretation of the strength and statistical significance of the associations between the variables. The p-value assesses the statistical significance of the correlation. A small p-value (typically < 0.05) suggests that the correlation is statistically significant, meaning it is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

The correlation coefficient between SMM and OPI is 0.327^{**} , with a p-value of < 0.05 . This positive correlation indicates a mediated relationship, suggesting that as social media marketing efforts increase, so do consumers' intentions to make purchases online. This means that effective SMM tactics can increase online buying intentions, according to the considerable correlation. To increase sales, businesses might think about spending more on focused social media advertising. The results are consistent with previous research that indicates social media platforms have a significant impact on consumer behavior and decision-making. Social media promos, ads, and interesting content can successfully encourage users to go from perusing to buying.

Online Purchase Intention (OPI) and Customer Trust (CT) have a p-value of less than 0.05 and a correlation coefficient of 0.449^{**} . This shows a substantial positive association, indicating that greater customer happiness and trust are linked to higher levels of online purchase intention. The strong correlation emphasizes the importance of building trust through effective customer service, transparent communication, and reliable product information. When customers feel confident in a brand, they are more likely to intend to make purchases. Purchase intentions can be further increased by improving client satisfaction through high-quality goods and services. Since happy customers are more inclined to make repeat purchases, businesses should concentrate on delivering great experiences that build trust.

There is a direct relationship between Social Media Marketing (SMM) and Customer Trust (CT). Since SMM and OPI have a positive correlation with CT, it can be seen that SMM has an indirect impact on customer trust by influencing the intention to make an online purchase. Businesses should utilize an integrated strategy in which social media marketing focuses on developing trust with customers to create long-term connections, in addition to increasing revenue. To strengthen trust through social media, brands should give priority to material that improves customer engagement,

informs customers about products, and resolves their issues. Effective social media strategies can increase consumers' intentions to make online purchases, according to the mediated association shown between SMM and OPI. Additionally, the close relationship between OPI and CT emphasizes how important it is for companies to foster customer satisfaction and trust.

Hypothesis testing

Linear regression analysis is used to predict the value of a variable based on the value of another variable.

SMM: Social Media Marketing (Independent Variable).

CT: Customer Trust (Mediator).

OPI: Online Purchase Intention (Dependent Variable).

Table 6: SMM→ OPI

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change
					F Change	df1	df2	
1	.327 ^a	.107	.101	.107	19.391	1	162	.000

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	278.899	1	278.899	19.391	.000 ^b
	Residual	2330.046	162	14.383		
	Total	2608.945	163			

a. Dependent Variable: OPI

b. Predictors: (Constant), SMM

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	17.300	1.890		9.154	.000	13.568	21.031
	SMM	.286	.065	.327	4.404	.000	.158.449**	.414

a. Dependent Variable: OPI

Model Summary:

- **R = 0.327**: This is the correlation coefficient between the predictor (SMM) and the dependent variable (OPI). It shows a mediated positive relationship between SMM and OPI.
- **R² = 0.107**: This means that 10.7% of the variance in OPI is explained by SMM. While this is relatively low, it indicates that SMM has some level of influence on OPI, but there are likely other factors that contribute to the variation in OPI that are not accounted for by this model.
- **Adjusted R² = 0.101**: This adjusts the R² for the number of predictors in the model, providing a more accurate measure of model fit. It is slightly lower than R² but still indicates a modest relationship.
- **R² Change = 0.107**: The R² change statistic tells us the amount of variance in OPI explained by SMM. Here, it is the same as the total R² change because only one predictor (SMM) is included.
- **F Change = 19.391**: This is the F-statistic for testing the overall significance of the regression model. A significant F-statistic indicates that the model is a good fit, i.e., the relationship between SMM and OPI is statistically significant.
- **Sig. F Change = 0.000**: This p-value is less than 0.05, meaning the regression model is statistically significant. The model explains a meaningful portion of the variance in OPI due to SMM.

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance):

- **Sum of Squares:**
 - **Regression (278.899)**: This is the amount of variance in OPI explained by the predictor (SMM).
 - **Residual (2330.046)**: This is the unexplained variance or error in the model.
 - **Total (2608.945)**: This is the total variance in OPI.
- **F = 19.391**: The F-statistic in the ANOVA table confirms the overall significance of the regression model, showing that the model significantly predicts OPI.
- **Sig. = 0.000**: This p-value is again less than 0.05, indicating that the regression model is significant and that SMM does significantly predict OPI.

Coefficients:

- **Intercept (Constant) = 17.300:** This is the predicted value of OPI when SMM is 0. It indicates that, when no social media marketing is applied, the baseline value of OPI is 17.3.
- **SMM Coefficient = 0.286:** For each one-unit increase in SMM, the OPI is expected to increase by **0.286 units**, holding other factors constant. This suggests a positive relationship between SMM and OPI.
- **Standardized Beta = 0.327:** The standardized coefficient (Beta) indicates the strength of the relationship between SMM and OPI, with a mediated effect (Beta = 0.327). It tells you that for each standard deviation increase in SMM, OPI increases by 0.327 standard deviations.
- **t = 4.404:** The t-statistic for SMM indicates how many standard errors the coefficient is away from zero. Since this value is large and $p < 0.001$, the coefficient for SMM is statistically significant.
- **Sig. = 0.000:** The p-value for SMM is less than 0.05, so SMM is a significant predictor of OPI.
- **95% Confidence Interval for B = [0.158, 0.414]:** This confidence interval means that we are 95% confident that the true value of the coefficient for SMM lies between 0.158 and 0.414. Since the interval does not contain zero, it reinforces that the relationship between SMM and OPI is statistically significant.

Conclusion:

- The regression model suggests that Social Media Marketing (SMM) has a positive and statistically significant effect on OPI.
- The **R² value (0.107)** suggests that SMM explains **10.7%** of the variation in OPI, indicating that while the relationship is significant, other variables likely contribute to the remaining variance in OPI.
- The **coefficient of 0.286** indicates that as SMM increases, OPI tends to increase as well, with a mediated effect size (Beta = 0.327).
- The model as a whole is statistically significant, with a **p-value of 0.000**, confirming that SMM is a meaningful predictor of OPI.

Table 7 SMM and CT

Model Summary									
Model	R	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.607 ^a	.368	2.220	.368	94.407	1	162	.000	

a. Predictors: (Constant), SMM

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	465.078	1	465.078	94.407	.000 ^b
	Residual	798.062	162	4.926		
	Total	1263.140	163			

a. Dependent Variable: CT

b. Predictors: (Constant), SMM

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	8.198	1.106		7.412	.000	6.014	10.382
	SMM	.369	.038	.607	9.716	.000	.294	.444

a. Dependent Variable: CT

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance):

- **Regression Sum of Squares = 465.078:** This represents the amount of variance in **Customer Trust** explained by the predictor **SMM**.
- **Residual Sum of Squares = 798.062:** This represents the variance in Customer Trust that is unexplained by the model (i.e., the error term).
- **Total Sum of Squares = 1263.140:** This is the total variance in Customer Trust, combining both explained and unexplained variance.
- **F = 94.407:** The F-statistic tests if the regression model as a whole is significant. A value this high indicates that the model is highly significant.
- **Sig. = 0.000:** The p-value for the F-test is less than 0.05, indicating that the regression model is statistically significant.

Coefficients:

- **Intercept (Constant) = 8.198:** This represents the predicted value of **Customer Trust (CT)** when **SMM = 0**. It means that even if there is no social media marketing ($SMM = 0$), the baseline level of customer trust is 8.198.
- **SMM Coefficient = 0.369:** This indicates that for each one-unit increase in SMM, Customer Trust (CT) is expected to increase by 0.369 units, holding other factors constant. This suggests that SMM has a positive effect on Customer Trust.
- **Standardized Beta = 0.607:** The standardized coefficient (Beta) represents the strength of the relationship between SMM and CT. A Beta of 0.607 suggests a mediated-to-strong positive relationship, meaning that SMM is a strong predictor of CT.
- **t = 9.716:** The t-statistic for SMM indicates how many standard errors the coefficient is away from zero. Since the t-value is large and the p-value is very small ($p < 0.001$), it indicates that the effect of SMM on CT is statistically significant.
- **Sig. = 0.000:** The p-value for SMM is less than 0.05, indicating that SMM is a statistically significant predictor of Customer Trust.
- **95% Confidence Interval for B = [0.294, 0.444]:** This confidence interval means that we are 95% confident that the true value of the coefficient for SMM lies between 0.294 and 0.444. Since the entire confidence interval is above zero, it reinforces that the effect of SMM on CT is statistically significant.

Conclusion:

- **Social Media Marketing (SMM) has a positive and statistically significant effect on Customer Trust (CT).** The relationship is mediated to strong, with SMM explaining 36.8% of the variance in CT.
- For each unit increase in SMM, customer trust is expected to increase by 0.369 units. This suggests that social media marketing is a key driver of customer trust, which could influence customers' loyalty and engagement with a brand.
- The model is highly significant, as indicated by the p-value of 0.000 in both the F-test and the coefficients' significance. This means the model is useful for predicting CT based on SMM.

In practice, this analysis suggests that businesses can increase customer trust by investing in effective social media marketing strategies, which could have a positive impact on customer behavior and brand loyalty.

Mediated Effect :

Table 8 SMM-CT-OPI

Run MATRIX procedure:

```
***** PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.1
*****

Written by Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D.      www.afhayes.com
Documentation available in Hayes (2022).
www.guilford.com/p/hayes3

*****
*****
Model   : 4
  Y     : OPI
  X     : SMM
  M     : CT

Sample
Size:   164

*****
*****
OUTCOME VARIABLE:
  CT

Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2
p      .6068      .3682      4.9263      94.4071      1.0000      162.0000
.0000

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI
ULCI
constant      8.1979      1.1060      7.4125      .0000      6.0139
10.3818
SMM
      .3688      .0380      9.7163      .0000      .2938
.4437

Standardized coefficients
      coeff
SMM      .6068

Covariance matrix of regression parameter estimates:
      constant      SMM
constant      1.2231      -.0415
SMM      -.0415      .0014

*****
*****
```

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

OPI

Model Summary

	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2
p	.4542	.2063	12.8617	20.9230	2.0000	161.0000
.0000						

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	12.6266	2.0680	6.1058	.0000	8.5428	16.7105
SMM	.0754	.0772	.9768	.3301	-.0770	
.2277						
CT	.5700	.1269	4.4902	.0000	.3193	
.8207						

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
SMM	.0863
CT	.3966

Covariance matrix of regression parameter estimates:

	constant	SMM	CT
constant	4.2765	-.0595	-.1321
SMM	-.0595	.0060	-.0059
CT	-.1321	-.0059	.0161

Test(s) of X by M interaction:

	F	df1	df2	p
	4.8138	1.0000	160.0000	.0297

***** TOTAL EFFECT MODEL

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

OPI

Model Summary

	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2
p	.3270	.1069	14.3830	19.3909	1.0000	162.0000
.0000						

Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI
ULCI					
constant	17.2996	1.8897	9.1545	.0000	13.5679
21.0313					
SMM	.2856	.0648	4.4035	.0000	.1575
.4136					

Standardized coefficients

	coeff
SMM	.3270

Covariance matrix of regression parameter estimates:

	constant	SMM
constant	3.5711	-.1210
SMM	-.1210	.0042

***** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y

Total effect of X on Y

	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
c_cs	.2856	.0648	4.4035	.0000	.1575	.4136
	.3270					

Direct effect of X on Y

	Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
c'_cs	.0754	.0772	.9768	.3301	-.0770	.2277
	.0863					

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
CT	.2102	.0649	.0962	.3535

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
CT	.2407	.0726	.1112	.3984

***** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:
95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:
5000

Model Summary:

- **R = 0.327:** The correlation coefficient between SMM and the outcome variable (Y, presumably related to customer behavior) is mediated, indicating a positive relationship.
- **R² = 0.107:** 10.7% of the variance in the outcome variable is explained by SMM. While this indicates that other factors contribute to the variation in Y, SMM has a statistically significant but mediated effect.
- **Mean Squared Error (MSE) = 14.383:** This is the average squared difference between the observed and predicted values. The lower the MSE, the better the model fits the data. An MSE of 14.383 indicates a mediated error in predicting the outcome.
- **F = 19.3909:** The **F-statistic** tests whether the regression model significantly fits the data. The high F-value (19.39) and p-value = 0.000 indicate that the regression model as a whole is statistically significant.

Coefficients:

- **Intercept (constant) = 17.2996:** This is the predicted value of the outcome variable (Y) when **SMM = 0**. It represents the baseline value of the outcome variable in the absence of SMM.
- **SMM Coefficient = 0.2856:** For every one-unit increase in SMM, the outcome variable is expected to increase by 0.2856 units, holding other factors constant. This suggests a positive relationship between SMM and the outcome variable.
- **Standardized Beta (SMM) = 0.327:** This is the standardized coefficient for SMM, showing the strength of the relationship between SMM and the outcome variable. A mediated effect is indicated by the standardized Beta of 0.327.
- **Standard Error (SE) for SMM = 0.0648:** This represents the standard error of the SMM coefficient, indicating the precision of the estimate. A lower standard error implies a more precise estimation.
- **t = 4.4035 and p = 0.0000:** The **t-statistic** for SMM indicates that the coefficient is statistically significant. The **p-value** of 0.000 is well below the typical threshold of 0.05, confirming that SMM is a significant predictor of the outcome variable.
- **95% Confidence Interval for SMM (LLCI = 0.1575, ULCI = 0.4136):** This interval indicates that, with 95% confidence, the true effect of SMM on the outcome variable lies between 0.1575 and 0.4136. Since the confidence interval does not include zero, this further supports the significance of the relationship between **SMM** and the outcome variable.

Direct Effect:

- **Direct Effect of X (SMM) on Y = 0.0754:** This is the direct effect of SMM on the outcome variable, controlling for Customer Trust (CT). This effect is small but positive.
- **Standard Error for Direct Effect = 0.0772:** The direct effect is relatively imprecise due to a higher standard error compared to the coefficient.
- **t = 0.9768 and p = 0.3301:** The p-value for the direct effect is 0.3301, which is greater than 0.05, indicating that the direct effect of SMM on the outcome variable is not statistically significant after accounting for the mediator (CT).
- **95% Confidence Interval for Direct Effect:** The confidence interval for the direct effect includes zero, suggesting that the direct effect might not be meaningful after considering Customer Trust as a mediator.

Indirect Effect (Mediation Effect):

- **Indirect Effect = 0.2102:** This is the indirect effect of SMM on the outcome variable through the mediator Customer Trust (CT). This effect is statistically significant and indicates that Customer Trust partially mediates the relationship between SMM and the outcome variable.
- **Bootstrapped Confidence Interval for Indirect Effect (BootLLCI = 0.0962, BootULCI = 0.3535):** The bootstrapped confidence interval for the indirect effect does not include zero, which indicates that the indirect effect is statistically significant. This means that Customer Trust plays a significant role in mediating the effect of SMM on the outcome variable.
- **Completely Standardized Indirect Effect = 0.2407:** This is the standardized version of the indirect effect, which allows you to compare the magnitude of this effect relative to other predictors. The value of 0.2407 indicates a mediated mediation effect of **Customer Trust** on the relationship between SMM and the outcome variable.
- **Bootstrapped Confidence Interval for Standardized Indirect Effect (BootLLCI = 0.1112, BootULCI = 0.3984):** Again, the confidence interval for the standardized indirect effect does not include zero, indicating that the mediating effect of CT is significant.

Total Effect:

- **Total Effect of X (SMM) on Y = 0.2856:** This is the overall effect of SMM on the outcome variable, combining both the direct and indirect effects. The total effect of SMM on the outcome variable is significant (with $p < 0.0001$) and positive, suggesting that SMM has a meaningful impact on the outcome.

Conclusion:

- **Social Media Marketing (SMM)** has a mediated positive effect on the outcome variable, and Customer Trust (CT) partially mediates the relationship between SMM and the outcome.
- The **direct effect** of **SMM** on the outcome is not statistically significant when accounting for Customer Trust as a mediator. However, the indirect effect

(mediated by Customer Trust) is significant, suggesting that SMM influences the outcome via its impact on Customer Trust.

- **The total effect of SMM** on the outcome is significant, but most of this effect occurs through the indirect path via Customer Trust.

This analysis indicates that while SMM has a direct effect on Customer Trust, it is the mediated effect through trust that has the stronger influence on the outcome variable. This suggests that businesses can enhance the effectiveness of SMM by focusing on building customer trust, which in turn positively impacts the desired outcome.

Customer Trust and Customer Online Purchase Intention

Table 9 CT-OPI

Model Summary

Model	R	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.449 ^a	.202	3.586	.202	40.903	1	162	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), CT

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	525.939	1	525.939	40.903	.000 ^b
	Residual	2083.006	162	12.858		
	Total	2608.945	163			

a. Dependent Variable: OPI

b. Predictors: (Constant), CT

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta		Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	13.380	1.918		6.974	.000	9.592 17.169
	CT	.645	.101	.449	6.396	.000	.446 .845

a. Dependent Variable: OPI

Model Summary:

- $R = 0.449$: The correlation coefficient (R) between Customer Trust (CT) and OPI is 0.449, indicating a mediated positive relationship between these two variables.
- $R^2 = 0.202$: 20.2% of the variance in OPI can be explained by Customer Trust (CT). This indicates that while CT has a meaningful relationship with OPI, there are other factors not captured by the model that also influence OPI.
- Adjusted $R^2 = 0.197$: The adjusted R^2 takes into account the number of predictors in the model and provides a more accurate measure of how well Customer Trust explains OPI. The value of 0.197 suggests that the model still explains a decent portion of the variance, even after adjusting for complexity.
- Standard Error of the Estimate = 3.586: This is the standard deviation of the residuals (the differences between observed and predicted values). It represents the typical error in predicting OPI from CT. A value of 3.586 indicates a mediated level of prediction error.
- R^2 Change = 0.202: The R^2 change indicates the proportion of variance in OPI explained by Customer Trust. In this case, 20.2% of the variability in OPI is explained by CT.
- F Change = 40.903: The F -statistic tests the overall significance of the regression model. The F -statistic of 40.903 is very high, suggesting that the model is statistically significant.
- Sig. F Change = 0.000: The p -value for the F -test is less than **0.05**, indicating that the regression model is statistically significant.
- This suggests that Customer Trust is a meaningful predictor of OPI.

ANOVA (Analysis of Variance):

- Regression Sum of Squares = 525.939: This represents the amount of variance in OPI explained by Customer Trust.
- Residual Sum of Squares = 2083.006: This represents the variance in OPI that is unexplained by the model (i.e., the error term).
- Total Sum of Squares = 2608.945: This is the total variance in OPI, combining both explained and unexplained variance.

- **F = 40.903:** The F-statistic confirms that the model is statistically significant, meaning that Customer Trust has a significant effect on OPI.
- **Sig. = 0.000:** The p-value for the F-test is less than 0.05, indicating that the regression model is highly significant. This means that Customer Trust is an important predictor of OPI.

Coefficients:

- **Intercept (Constant) = 13.380:** This is the predicted value of OPI when **Customer Trust (CT) = 0**. It suggests that, when customer trust is zero, the baseline value of **OPI** is **13.380**.
- **CT Coefficient = 0.645:** This indicates that for each one-unit increase in Customer Trust, the OPI is expected to increase by 0.645 units, holding other factors constant. This suggests a positive relationship between Customer Trust and OPI.
- **Standardized Beta (CT) = 0.449:** The standardized coefficient (Beta) represents the strength of the relationship between Customer Trust and **OPI**. A Beta of **0.449** suggests a mediated positive effect of Customer Trust on OPI.
- **Standard Error (SE) for CT = 0.101:** The standard error of the CT coefficient is 0.101, indicating the precision of the estimate for Customer Trust. A lower standard error means a more precise estimate.
- **t = 6.396 and p = 0.000:** The t-statistic for Customer Trust is 6.396, which is significantly higher than 2, indicating that the coefficient for Customer Trust is significantly different from zero. The p-value of 0.000 confirms that Customer Trust is a statistically significant predictor of OPI.
- **95% Confidence Interval for CT (LLCI = 0.446, ULCI = 0.845):** The confidence interval indicates that, with 95% confidence, the true effect of Customer Trust on OPI lies between 0.446 and 0.845. Since the confidence interval does not include zero, this further supports the conclusion that Customer Trust is a significant predictor of OPI.

Conclusion:

- **Customer Trust (CT)** has a mediated positive effect on OPI, as indicated by the coefficient of 0.645 and Beta of 0.449.

- **Customer Trust** explains 20.2% of the variance in OPI, which is a significant proportion given the complexity of human behavior and other influencing factors.
- The regression model is statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.000 for both the F-test and the coefficient for Customer Trust, confirming that CT is an important predictor of OPI.
- The **95% confidence interval** for the CT coefficient does not include zero, reinforcing the statistical significance of Customer Trust's impact on OPI.

This analysis suggests that **Customer Trust** plays an important role in influencing **OPI**. Businesses or organizations can improve **OPI** (customer online purchase intention) by enhancing **Customer Trust**. The relationship is strong enough to be considered a significant factor in **OPI** outcomes.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The results of this study shed important light on the correlations, significance, and dependability of the factors examined concerning customer purchase intention (OPI), customer trust and satisfaction (CT), and social media marketing (SMM). For companies using digital marketing platforms, these insights are essential in forming strategic approaches.

A prioritized list of the factors influencing SMM, CT, and OPI is provided by the Relative Importance Index (RII) results. Social media is a dynamic and handy medium for marketing, as seen by the top-ranked items like "Social media marketing keeps me up to date about new products" (SMM_Q6) and "It is a great advantage to buy products at any time of day on the internet" (OPI_Q2). On the other hand, the lowest-ranked items, such as "It is more difficult to shop on the internet" (OPI_Q3), highlight particular difficulties or perceived shortcomings that would need more research or enhancement.

Finding the main factors influencing consumer involvement and purchasing decisions is made easier with the help of the RII analysis. Businesses can more efficiently deploy resources to improve their marketing strategy and customer happiness by concentrating on the factors that are most important to them.

There were no statistically significant differences in attitudes about SMM according to location, marital status, gender, or occupation, according to the demographic study. Age, however, displayed an almost significant tendency, suggesting that younger groups (those between the ages of 18 and 35) have more positive opinions on SMM. This is consistent with the worldwide trend of younger people being more tech-savvy and open to online marketing tactics. The sample's preponderance of students highlights the significance of focusing marketing campaigns on younger, tech-savvy populations.

Social Media Marketing and Customer Trust

The strong positive correlation between SMM and CT highlights the pivotal role of effective social media marketing in building customer trust. This finding aligns with

prior studies suggesting that personalized, interactive, and high-quality content on social media platforms fosters transparency and enhances the credibility of brands. For instance:

- Engaging visuals, real-time responses, and consistent communication on platforms like Instagram or Facebook make brands appear more approachable and reliable.
- Trust is further reinforced when brands use ethical practices, such as transparency in advertisements and honest influencer collaborations.

This relationship suggests that companies should prioritize trust-building strategies within their social media campaigns, as trust serves as a critical foundation for consumer relationships.

Social Media Marketing and Online Purchase Intention

The mediated positive correlation between SMM and OPI indicates that social media marketing mediately drives consumers' intention to make purchases online. While the effect is weaker than that observed with trust, this result highlights the importance of SMM in influencing consumer behavior. Specifically:

- Social media serves as a platform for showcasing products, providing consumer reviews, and running promotions, all of which contribute to increasing purchase intention.
- However, the relatively mediated strength of this correlation suggests that other factors, such as perceived product quality or external social influences, may also play significant roles in shaping OPI.

To maximize the impact of SMM on OPI, marketers should ensure that their campaigns not only attract attention but also directly address consumer needs and concerns, encouraging actionable decisions.

Customer Trust and Online Purchase Intention

The mediated positive correlation between CT and OPI highlights the critical mediating role of trust in driving purchase intentions. This finding is consistent with

the idea that trust reduces perceived risks associated with online transactions, making consumers more comfortable committing to purchases. For instance:

- Trust in a brand ensures that consumers feel confident about the product's quality, the security of their payment, and the company's ability to deliver as promised.
- Social proof, such as user-generated content or testimonials on social media, further enhances trust and, consequently, purchase intention.

Brands should focus on building and maintaining trust by ensuring transparency, delivering on promises, and engaging authentically with their audience.

With an R-value value of 0.449, the model demonstrated a mediated powerful level of explanatory power, accounting for roughly 44.9% of the variance in online purchase intention. The following were the important predictors:

- SMM: Emphasizing its direct influence on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.327$, $p = 0.0001$).
- Customer Trust: Highlighting how important customer happiness and trust are in influencing behavior. The unexplained variance, however, indicates that additional factors impacting purchase intention should be investigated.

Theoretical Implications

The results contribute to the literature by reinforcing the mediating role of trust in the relationship between SMM and consumer behavior. They also highlight the need for future studies to explore additional moderators, such as demographics or cultural differences. The positive correlation recorded between SMM and customer trust indicates that effective social media strategies do more than promote visibility as in the work of Elhajjar (2023), they foster relational bonds that influence trust and satisfaction. This aligns with the relational marketing theory, suggesting that customer trust mediates the relationship between marketing efforts and behavioral outcomes. The study underscores the importance of integrating trust-building mechanisms into digital marketing frameworks to enhance theoretical models' explanatory power for online consumer decision-making. In conclusion, the theoretical implications

emphasize the need for precise and reliable measurement in advancing marketing theories.

Practical Implications

Marketers can use these insights to design campaigns that not only promote products but also establish meaningful, trust-based relationships with their audience. For example:

- Highlighting customer reviews and testimonials on social platforms.
- Providing behind-the-scenes content to demonstrate authenticity.
- Addressing consumer concerns promptly and transparently.

The research findings offer actionable insights into designing effective SMM strategies. From result obtained, it is evident that businesses can prioritize activities that simultaneously enhance customer trust and promote purchase intentions through content personalization, trust-Building activities and data-driven decision-making. Developing engagement, relevant, and transparent content can foster trust while simultaneously influencing purchase decisions. Results from respondents revealed that social media campaigns should emphasize product quality, customer service, and reliable delivery systems to build and maintain trust.

Furthermore, the observed relationships suggest that businesses should use social media platforms to educate customers, address concerns, and build a community. Such efforts are not only cost-effective but also integral to fostering long-term customer loyalty and driving repeat purchases. Customers by tailoring their social media presence to align with these insights, companies can optimize their resources to target critical factors that significantly impact consumer purchase intentions.

Consumers reported that social media provide accurate and proper knowledge, enthusiasm to find the description of products on an electronics platform, they were more convenient to probably buy a product on the internet, and advertising messages via the mobile phone demonstrate innovativeness to patronizes. These views may represent factors that are central to the respondents' concerns or priorities. While lower-ranked items are considered less important, they should not be ignored. It may

be worth investigating whether they are irrelevant or if their perceived importance can be enhanced with better framing or emphasis.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has effectively illustrated how SMM, CT, and OPI interact, highlighting the significance of social media as a marketing tool. The RII analysis's high-priority items offer useful information for improving marketing tactics. Students and younger demographics are important target audiences for digital marketing campaigns. Converting online interaction into purchase intentions requires a high level of trust and satisfaction. The analysis strongly supports the idea that Social Media Marketing (SMM) significantly influences Online Purchase Intention (OPI). The results show a mediated positive relationship between SMM and OPI, with a coefficient of 0.286, which indicates that for each one-unit increase in social media marketing efforts, online purchase intention increases by 0.286 units. This effect is statistically significant, as evidenced by the p-value of 0.000, confirming that SMM is a meaningful predictor of online purchase intention.

The **R² value of 0.107** indicates that SMM explains 10.7% of the variance in online purchase intention. While this suggests that other factors beyond social media marketing also contribute to online purchase intentions, the effect of social media marketing is substantial enough to be noteworthy. Furthermore, the regression model is statistically significant with an F-statistic of 19.391, showing that the overall relationship between SMM and OPI is meaningful and not due to random chance.

In addition, Customer Trust (CT) plays an important mediating role between SMM and OPI, as indicated by the indirect effect of 0.2102 (with a bootstrapped confidence interval that does not include zero), highlighting the importance of building trust through social media marketing efforts. Customer Trust significantly enhances the impact of SMM on OPI, suggesting that social media marketing initiatives that foster customer trust can lead to a higher likelihood of online purchases.

In conclusion, the data suggest that effective social media marketing strategies are not only directly influencing purchase intention but also indirectly enhancing it through building customer trust. Therefore, businesses aiming to improve their online sales and consumer engagement should prioritize developing trustworthy and authentic social media content to increase purchase intentions.

Recommendations

1. **Marketing Strategy Refinement:** Companies should concentrate on the high-priority elements found in the RII research, such as using social media to notify consumers about new products and highlighting the ease of online shopping.

2. **Increasing Customer Trust:** Clear communication, timely resolution of customer issues, and providing accurate product and service information are all important components of efforts to establish and preserve customer trust.

3. **Targeting Younger Demographics:** Because younger audiences are more active on social media, marketing initiatives that are specifically designed for them might produce noteworthy outcomes.

4. **Continuous Evaluation:** To guarantee alignment with changing consumer tastes and technical improvements, evaluate and improve marketing tactics and measurement scales regularly.

Future Research: To address the regression model's unexplained variance, look into other factors that affect the intention to make an online purchase. Examining environmental, cultural, or psychological factors may be part of this.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire items:

Social Media Marketing (SMM)

SMM1 I think that social media makes my life easier

SMM2 I am very enthusiastic to find the description of products on electronic platform like internet, email or web.

SMM3: I think social media provide accurate and proper knowledge of products and services

SMM4: Social Media innovates the ways of advertising products or services in an efficient manner.

SMM5: I like to adopt the way of buying and selling of products or services using social media

SMM6: I think social media marketing inspires me to make a buying decision

SMM7: I like to spend more time on social media because I like to see what the latest fashion

SMM8: By using advertising messages via the mobile phone I can demonstrate my innovativeness to my Friends

Customers Trust (CT)

CT1: I will probably buy a product on the internet (Soon)

CT2: I feel capable of finding shopping verity and information on the social media websites

CT3: Social Media marketing keeps me up to date about new products and Services.

CT4: In general, I am satisfied with the service provided by the internet

CT5: I am satisfied on social media services about marketing

Consumer Purchase Intentions (OPI)

OPI1: I think shopping on the internet saves my time

OPI2: It is a great advantage for me to buy product at any time of the day on the internet

OPI3: It is more difficult to shop on the internet

OPI4: I will prefer online shopping only if online prices are lower than Actual price

OPI5: A long time is required for the delivery of products and services on the internet

OPI6: Online shopping is as secure as traditional shopping

OPI7: The information given about the products and services on the internet is sufficient

Appendix B: TURNITIN SIMILARITY REPORT

CUSTOMER TRUST EFFECTS SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION: CASE STUDY OF NORTH CYPRUS

by Nfamara Sylla

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CUSTOMER TRUST EFFECTS SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION: CASE STUDY OF NORTH CYPRUS

ORIGINALITY REPORT

14%	9%	8%	9%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
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2	docs.neu.edu.tr Internet Source		1%
3	readersinsight.net Internet Source		1%
4	Submitted to University of Northampton Student Paper		1%
5	Submitted to Center for Applied Information Technology - NEU Student Paper		1%
6	www.coursehero.com Internet Source		<1%

**Appendix C: Near East University Scientific Research Ethic Committee
Approval document**

