

The Impact of Facebook Marketing on Customer Purchase Intention in Mid-Scale Restaurants: A Study in Gujranwala, Pakistan

Nurul Firdaus Sikandar Hayat¹, Nurnajihah Ahmad Kamal¹ & *Tajulurrus Mohammad¹

¹ Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management,
Universiti Teknologi MARA
Cawangan Terengganu,
23000 Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia

*Corresponding author's email: tajul404@uitm.edu.my, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the development and implementation of a research instrument designed to assess customer responses to Facebook advertisements for midscale restaurants in Pakistan, utilizing a sample size of 165 respondents. Facebook marketing has proven to be a powerful tool in influencing customer purchase intentions, making it essential for restaurants. Emphasizing a high response rate and data quality, the instrument's design prioritized questionnaire length, question structure, and overall clarity. A trained research assistant distributed the questionnaire, facilitating effective communication and addressing respondents' inquiries. The survey was disseminated through community platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook groups, accompanied by an ethics notice to ensure confidentiality. Participation was restricted to individuals who had previously seen the selected restaurant's Facebook advertisement, enhancing data relevance. The questionnaire was crafted to be straightforward, minimizing cognitive demands on respondents, and was available in both English and Urdu to accommodate diverse language proficiencies. The instrument included adapted items from prior studies and was organized into five sections aligned with the study's objectives: to identify the factors that influence customer purchase intention toward Facebook advertisements for midscale restaurants in Gujranwala and to examine the most significant factors driving this intention. A five-point Likert scale was employed to measure respondents' levels of agreement, providing nuanced insights into customer attitudes and purchase intentions related to social media advertising. Correlation analysis revealed significant relationships among the variables of information, price, feedback, and purchase intention, with information showing the strongest relationship with purchase intention ($r = .563, p < .001$). Price and feedback also demonstrated substantial correlations with purchase intention, further supporting the notion that these factors significantly influence consumer behavior in the context of social media advertising. Overall, this research instrument serves as a

valuable tool for understanding how Facebook advertisements impact customer perceptions and intentions in Pakistan, providing restaurateurs with actionable insights for improving their marketing strategies in a competitive landscape.

Keywords: Facebook Advertisements, Midscale Restaurants, Customer Responses, Purchase Intention, Social Media Advertising

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, social media—particularly Facebook—has revolutionized marketing strategies across various industries, including hospitality. Facebook marketing has proven to be a powerful tool in influencing customer purchase intentions, making it essential for restaurants. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the need for effective online marketing strategies, as traditional methods have faced significant disruptions.

This study emphasizes key variables that influence purchase intention based on Facebook advertisements for midscale restaurants in Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan. The researchers collected data from various articles and journals to deepen the understanding of this topic. The methodology employed draws from previous studies, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of the factors at play.

Pakistan, as of 1996, was the seventh most populous country in the world, with a population of 140 million. At the time of its independence, it ranked thirteenth with a population of 32.5 million (Muhammad Afzal, 2009). Urbanization, often defined as the growth and expansion of cities in relation to population increases, is a significant trend in developing countries like Pakistan (Rana et al., 2017). Rapid urban growth is transforming urban centers, leading to heightened levels of urbanization (Ghaffar et al., 2016).

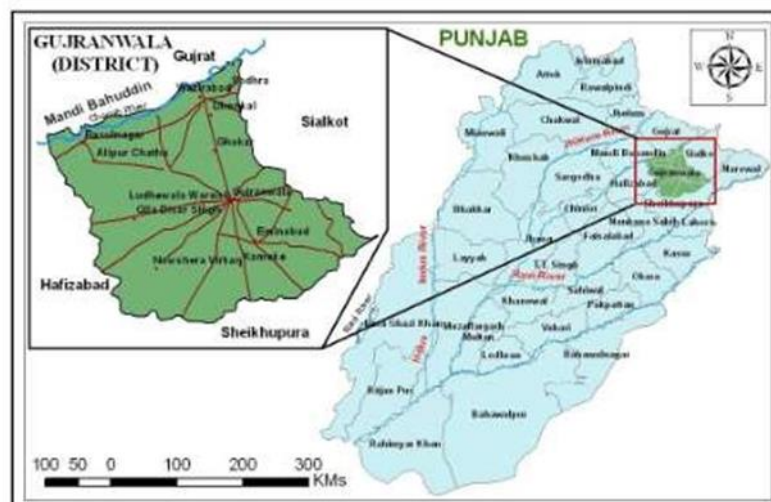


Figure 1 : Map of Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan

Punjab is currently the most populous province in Pakistan, home to six metropolitan areas (populations exceeding one million), numerous cities (between 500,000 and one million), and medium towns (under 500,000). The provincial government identifies Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Gujranwala, and Rawalpindi as the five largest cities in Punjab. As of 2023, Gujranwala's urban population stands at 2,415,000, reflecting a 2.63% increase from 2022 (Macrotrends, 2023).

While Facebook advertisements have gained significant traction among midscale restaurants in Gujranwala, Pakistan, the specific factors influencing customer purchase intentions toward these ads remain inadequately understood. This understanding is crucial for businesses aiming to develop effective marketing strategies that resonate with their target audiences and ultimately enhance revenue.

A critical gap identified in this research is the scarcity of studies focusing on the impact of informativeness, price, and feedback on customers' perceptions of the value of social media advertising. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to explore how this perceived value shapes customer attitudes toward social media advertising. This study seeks to address these gaps by investigating the value and influence of social media

advertising and examining the moderating effect of corporate reputation on the relationship between attitudes toward social media advertising and consumer responses.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand customer purchase intentions, several theoretical frameworks have been established, notably the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The Technology Acceptance Model, proposed by Davis (1989), asserts that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness significantly influence users' intentions to adopt technologies, including social media platforms like Facebook. The TRA and TPB suggest that attitudes toward behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control are key in predicting behavioural intentions (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Additionally, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) indicates that the extent of cognitive processing affects the effectiveness of persuasive messages (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Recent studies demonstrate that TAM can effectively interpret online customers' purchasing intentions, highlighting the significant impact of consumer interactions on social media platforms (Chen et al., 2002).

Midscale restaurants serve as a bridge between quick-service and fine dining establishments, offering complete meals at reasonable prices in relaxed settings. This segment has experienced notable growth since the 1990s; however, research specifically targeting midscale dining remains sparse (Murat, 2017). Understanding the unique characteristics and consumer behaviors associated with this category is crucial for effective marketing, particularly in light of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which emphasizes how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence purchase intentions.

Effective advertising is essential for informing consumers about dining options and shaping their perceptions. As Canziani et al. (2016) categorize restaurants into various segments, the rise of the restaurant industry has increased demand for both dine-in and takeout services, creating significant opportunities for restaurateurs. To capitalize on these opportunities, advertising strategies must adapt to local market conditions (Al-Olayan & Karande, 2000). While traditional mediums like newspapers and television maintain relevance (Wang, 2003), the shift to social networking sites (SNS) has transformed marketing strategies, compelling restaurateurs to leverage these platforms for greater reach and engagement.

Social media platforms, particularly Facebook, facilitate connections and content sharing, becoming critical channels for disseminating information to consumers (Universal Maccan International, 2008, as cited in Nik, 2015). With 93% of marketers utilizing social media for business (Bennett, 2013, as cited in Salleh et al., 2017), these platforms significantly influence customer purchase intentions. However, the uncontrolled nature of user-generated content can pose challenges for monitoring and managing brand perception (Ayeh et al., 2012, as cited in Salleh et al., 2017). Since its launch in 2004, Facebook has evolved into the most popular social networking site, boasting over 845 million users by December 2011 (Capua, 2012). Its advertising features, which have expanded since 2006 to include targeted advertising and enhanced analytics, make it a vital tool for effectively reaching potential customers (Beauchamp, 2013).

In addition to social media engagement, price plays a crucial role in influencing purchase intentions. Jacob and Olson (1977) define "perceived price" as consumers' subjective perception of a product's objective price. Research indicates that high prices can deter customers (Dodds et al., 1991; Kim et al., 2011), while lower prices may entice purchases (Yang & Mao, 2014). Therefore, the displayed price significantly impacts purchasing decisions and must be considered in advertising strategies. Furthermore, informativeness is a key attribute of social media advertising, defined as the ability to provide relevant information effectively (Xu & Oh, 2003). Ducoffe (1996) emphasizes the importance of informing users about alternative products, suggesting that marketers must engage customers through informative content to influence their responses (Lee & Hong, 2016). The significance of informativeness in driving customer behavior is well established (Gao & Koufaris, 2006), underscoring its essential role in influencing buying decisions (Dao et al., 2014; Lee & Hong, 2016).

Feedback is a process through which participants receive reactions to their behaviour, informing future performance (Litwack, 1929). It serves as a medium for measuring efficiency (Rife, 2016) and enhancing performance. Engaging in feedback mechanisms can lead to significant improvements in customer purchase intentions through Facebook advertisements. Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) has

transformed consumer perceptions by rapidly disseminating opinions to large audiences (Asif et al., 2022). E-WOM has become an effective marketing strategy, significantly impacting consumers' purchasing intentions (Castronovo & Huang, 2012, as cited in Bennett, 2017). Purchase intention refers to the likelihood of a consumer buying a specific item (Phelps & Hoy, 1996, as cited in Nik, 2015). It is influenced by factors such as trust and the accuracy of information on social media platforms (Musante et al., 2009, as cited in Nik, 2015). Understanding purchase intention is vital for this study, as it serves as a key variable indicating the influence of Facebook advertisements on customer behaviour.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study is grounded in a theoretical framework comprising three independent variables—Price, Information, and Feedback—leading to a single dependent variable: Purchase Intention (As shown in Figure 2). Specifically, it aims to identify the factors that influence customer purchase intention toward Facebook advertisements for midscale restaurants in Gujranwala and to examine the most significant factors driving this intention. To assess the effectiveness of Facebook advertisements in reaching their audience, this framework will be compared against Facebook's general advertising strategies.

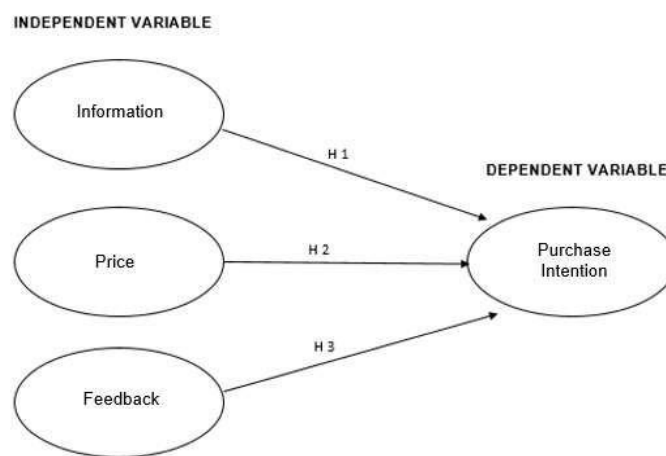


Figure 2 : Theoretical framework of factors influencing customer purchase intention on Facebook advertisement towards midscale restaurants in Gujranwala, Pakistan

Reliability and validity tests were conducted to ensure the robustness of the findings. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to perform all necessary analyses, including regression analysis to test the study's hypotheses.

3.1 Population and Sampling

The target population for this study consists of individuals working within the Amazon community in Gujranwala, Pakistan, totaling approximately 290 individuals. Gujranwala is recognized as the fifth most populous metropolitan area in Pakistan and is renowned for its vibrant food culture (Butt et al., 2021). As of 2023, the urban population in Gujranwala is approximately 2,415,000, reflecting a growth rate of 2.63% from the previous year (Macrotrends, 2023). This research specifically focuses on Amazon employees to explore how restaurant advertisements on social media platforms influence their purchasing behaviors. Choosing this demographic is strategic, as Amazon employees often represent a tech-savvy, young, and diverse group that actively engages with online content, making them an insightful sample for understanding the impact of social media advertising on purchasing intentions.

A sample is defined as a subset of the population. In this study, the sample includes the 290 Amazon community members in Gujranwala. The targeted demographic consists of young adults and adults from Generation Y and Generation Z, aged 18 to 35, as this group is generally more active online and possesses significant purchasing power. The sampling frame for this study comprises a list of the 290 individuals within the Amazon community in Gujranwala. This record serves as the basis for selecting participants for the survey.

Identifying specific sampling criteria is essential for standardizing the questionnaire and ensuring effective follow-ups (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). For this study, the sampling criteria are as follows:

- Individuals residing or working in or near Gujranwala, Punjab.
- Aged between 18 and 35 years.
- Access to mobile phones and the internet to complete the questionnaire.
- A basic understanding of the English language.

To ascertain customer attitudes toward Facebook advertising for midscale restaurants, data will be collected from Amazon employees who meet the specified criteria. Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970), with a target population of 290, a sample size of approximately 165 is required. This reference facilitates efficient sample size determination without necessitating a full population study.

This study employs probability sampling, specifically stratified random sampling, as the probability of selection is known and planned. The population is divided into mutually exclusive groups, allowing for random selection from each stratum. This method enables focused analysis on a specific Amazon community in Gujranwala while ensuring efficient sample representation.

3.2 Research Instrument

In designing the research instrument, significant emphasis was placed on ensuring a high response rate and the quality of data collected. Key considerations included the length of the questionnaire, the structure of questions, and overall clarity (Hair et al., 2007).

The questionnaire was carefully developed to prioritize reliability and clarity. A trained research assistant was responsible for distributing the questionnaire, allowing for effective communication and handling of respondents' inquiries. The survey was disseminated through community platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook groups, accompanied by an ethics notice to ensure confidentiality and transparency.

To maintain data quality, participation was restricted to respondents who had previously seen the selected restaurant's Facebook advertisement. This prerequisite was essential for obtaining relevant and accurate data. The questionnaire was designed to be straightforward, minimizing the cognitive load on respondents (Kelly et al., 2003).

To accommodate varying language proficiencies among respondents, the instrument utilized two languages: English and Urdu. The questionnaire included adapted items from prior studies (Cadet, 2016; Dong et al., 2021; Kim & Ko, 2010; Yadav & Rahman, 2018; Nuseir, 2020) and was structured into five sections aligned with the study's objectives. A five-point Likert scale was employed to gauge respondents' levels of agreement, ranging from "Very satisfied" to "Very dissatisfied." This approach ensured that the instrument effectively captured the nuances of respondents' attitudes and intentions.

3.2.1 Data Collection

A quantitative approach was employed for data collection in this study, which entails gathering and analyzing numerical data. The primary method of data collection involved distributing questionnaires to the target participants via the Amazon Community group on Facebook, as well as through WhatsApp groups. The questionnaire is structured into five sections, as outlined in the instrument section.

To facilitate participation, an online survey collection tool, specifically Google Forms, was utilized. As noted by Nayak and Narayan (2019), Google Forms supports a variety of question formats, including text boxes, multiple-choice questions, checkboxes, and Likert scales, making it an ideal choice for this study. Given the time constraints and geographical considerations, the online format enables efficient distribution to the target participants.

Additionally, a trained research assistant was involved in the data collection process, assisting in both the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. This data collection effort is anticipated to take approximately two months, with regular updates provided to the research assistant to ensure efficient data management.

Data analysis in this study aims to elucidate the relationships among the variables: information, price, feedback, and purchase intention. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was chosen for data analysis due to its user-friendly interface and the researchers' familiarity with its functionalities. SPSS is known for its reliability, speed, and effective data management capabilities.

Descriptive analysis was employed to provide a comprehensive overview of the dataset, mapping the landscape of the study's phenomena. This method allows for the examination of multiple variables simultaneously and can yield insights that facilitate hypothesis formation when interpreted correctly. Descriptive analysis was conducted in both cross-sectional and longitudinal contexts, capturing events and trends over time. As Hafizullah Baha (2016) posits, descriptive analysis is a superior method for gathering information that describes relationships, effectively portraying the existing state of the studied variables.

Correlation analysis was utilized to explore the relationships between the independent variables—information, price, feedback—and the dependent variable, purchase intention. As noted by Walliman (2011) and cited in Hafizullah Baha (2016), correlation analysis can reveal the presence of no correlation, positive correlation, or negative correlation among the variables, providing valuable insights into their interdependencies.

4.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study focuses on the key variables: information, price, feedback, and purchase intention. The reliability test assesses the consistency and measurement accuracy of the test scores (Amirrudin, Nasution & Supahar, 2021). Reliability serves as a critical indicator of the validity of conclusions drawn from the data (Zumbo, 2007; as cited in Amirrudin, Nasution & Supahar, 2021). For this study, Cronbach's Alpha values were calculated for the independent variables—information, price, and feedback—and the dependent variable, purchase intention. As shown in Table 1, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.81 or above indicates good reliability.

Table 1: Reliability Test For Pilot Study

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Information	7	.981
Price	3	.912
Feedback	4	.968
Purchase Intention	4	.964

4.1 Respondents' Profile

To achieve the research objectives, an online questionnaire was distributed to participants from the Amazon community via WhatsApp and Facebook. A total of 165 responses were collected, and the demographic characteristics of the respondents are detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographics of Respondents

No.	Demographic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Gender		
	Male	139	84.2
	Female	26	15.8
2	Age (year)		
	18-21	40	24.2
	22-25	38	23
	26-29	36	21.8
	30-35	51	31
3	Academic Qualification		
	Primary (years one to five)	5	3
	Middle (year six to eight)	7	4.2

	High School (years nine to Secondary School Certificate)	26	15.8
	Intermediate (years eleven to Higher Secondary School Certificate)	58	35.2
	University (undergraduate/graduate degree)	69	41.8
4	Income (Rupees)		
	1500 - 10000	33	20
	11000 - 20000	37	22.2
	21000 - 50000	39	23.4
	51000 - 80000	19	11.4
	81000 - 200000	31	19
	210000 and above	6	4
	Frequency of Eating at Restaurants		
5	2 – 3 times	72	43.6
	4 – 5 times	28	17
	More than 5 times	25	15.2
	Once	40	24.2
	Hours Spent on Social Media		
6	30 minutes	36	21.8
	2 – 3 hours	49	29.7
	4 – 5 hours	39	23.6
	More than 5 hours	41	24.8

The sample consists of 165 respondents, with a gender distribution of 139 males (84.2%) and 26 females (15.8%). The majority of respondents (31%) fall within the 30-35 age group, followed by those aged 18-21 (24.2%). In terms of educational qualifications, most respondents hold university degrees (41.8%), while a significant portion has completed intermediate education (35.2%). Regarding income, the highest proportion of respondents (23.4%) earns between 21,000 and 50,000 Rupees, with only 6 individuals (4%) reporting earnings above 210,000 Rupees. Additionally, the majority of respondents (43.6%) reported dining out 2-3 times per week, and a significant number (29.7%) indicated spending 2-3 hours per week on social media.

4.2 Summary of Hypotheses and Key Findings

The study assessed how information, price, and feedback attributes affect customer purchase intention. Hypotheses were tested using Pearson correlation coefficients in SPSS, revealing significant positive influences from all three attributes as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Hypotheses Summary and the Results of Pearson Correlation Coefficient Test

Hypotheses	Pearson Correlation Coefficient
H1: There is a positive relationship between information attributes and purchase intention.	Supported (p < 0.01)
H2: There is a positive relationship between price attributes and purchase intention.	Supported (p < 0.01)
H3: There is a positive relationship between feedback and purchase intention.	Supported (p < 0.01)

5.0 CONCLUSION

This study offers significant insights into the factors influencing customer purchase intention towards Facebook advertisements for midscale restaurants in Gujranwala, Pakistan. The findings substantiate **Hypothesis 1**, indicating that information significantly influences purchase intention, as customers increasingly rely on social media for detailed product information. Furthermore, **Hypothesis 2** highlights that price is a crucial factor in purchase decisions, with customers frequently comparing prices to assess value before making a purchase. Additionally, the study confirms **Hypothesis 3**, demonstrating that feedback—particularly through online reviews—plays a vital role in shaping purchase intention by helping customers reduce uncertainty and perceived risk.

By understanding these dynamics, restaurant owners and marketers can develop targeted strategies that emphasise high-quality content, competitive pricing, and active customer engagement. Such strategies not only enhance customer loyalty but also drive sales, which is crucial for thriving in a competitive market.

Moreover, the implications extend beyond individual businesses to policymakers and industry associations, emphasising the potential of social media advertising as a cost-effective means for small and midscale restaurants to reach their target audiences. The promotion of platforms like Facebook can elevate visibility and engagement in a crowded marketplace, thereby supporting local economies.

Academically, this research contributes to the literature on social media marketing and consumer behaviour within the hospitality sector. By employing established theoretical frameworks, such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the study addresses a notable gap and provides a foundation for future research.

However, the study is not without limitations. Its geographical focus may restrict the generalisability of findings, and reliance on online surveys could introduce bias by excluding individuals without internet access. Additionally, the quantitative approach may overlook qualitative factors influencing customer behaviour, suggesting that future research should incorporate diverse methodologies for a more holistic understanding.

In conclusion, expanding the geographical scope and examining the long-term effects of social media advertising on customer loyalty and engagement are vital for future research. These efforts will deepen the understanding of customer behaviour in the context of social media marketing, providing valuable insights for both practitioners and academics.

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