

Research Article

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF TRUST ON SOCIAL MOTIVATION AND PURCHASING INTENTION DYNAMICS IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM

Pham Gia Long and *Dr. Nguyen Hong Anh

Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, Quarter 6, Linh Trung Ward, Thu Duc City, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Received 07th April 2024; Accepted 08th May 2024; Published online 25th June 2024

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how trust mediates the dynamics between consumers' engagement with social media and their online purchase intentions in the fashion industry in Vietnam. Drawing on a theoretical framework that integrates concepts from social media marketing and consumer behavior literature, the research investigates how social media activities influence consumer trust and subsequent online purchase intention. The findings reveal a significant positive effect of social media engagement on both consumer trust and online purchase intention. Moreover, trust in fashion retailers was found to partially mediate the relationship between social media engagement and online purchase intention. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by shedding light on the intricate dynamics between SM marketing, consumer trust, and purchase behavior in the Vietnamese fashion market. The theoretical and practical implications of the study offer valuable insights for marketers aiming to leverage social media platforms effectively to enhance consumer trust and drive online sales in the rapidly evolving digital landscape of Vietnam's fashion industry.

Keywords: Social media (SM), consumer behavior, trust, purchase intention (PI), fashion, Vietnam, online shopping, mediation, social media engagement, retailers.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has revolutionized the dynamics of customer interaction in marketing initiatives. With the instantaneous nature of communication on these platforms, companies can now engage with their audience in real time, creating a more personalized and dynamic experience (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). This shift has allowed for more direct and meaningful interactions, enabling brands to better understand their customers' needs and preferences. By leveraging the power of social media, businesses can now build stronger relationships, increase brand loyalty, and drive growth through targeted and engaging marketing strategies. It's prominent that in today's digital age, social media plays a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of customer engagement in marketing strategies in terms of cost and quality efficiency (Akroush, M., 2015). Consumers have the convenience of comparing prices, accessing discounts, and making purchases. Users have the flexibility to access the platform from their computers or tablets at any given time. (Ozkan and Huseynov, 2016). Online retailers play a pivotal role in the contemporary economy, enhancing their marketing strategies by comprehending online consumer behavior. This symbiotic relationship between retailers and customers underscores the advantages that technology affords consumers in the realm of online shopping.

In recent years, a significant number of consumers have transitioned to online shopping, largely driven by concerns surrounding the pandemic as it offers convenience, a wide selection of products, and the ability to compare prices easily. According to Brannon, J. (2020), the transformation in shopping habits has significantly reshaped the retail landscape, compelling conventional physical stores to augment their digital footprint or embrace a blend of online and offline strategies. The prevalence of e-commerce platforms and technological progressions has established online shopping as a

prevalent practice for numerous consumers, offering a convenient and streamlined method to acquire goods from the convenience of their residences.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT.

1) Customer purchasing behavior

Aloka Karunasingha. (2022) encompassed the research of purchasing intentions of customers are influenced by a combination of different factors: perception, emotion, and behavior throughout the purchasing process. With remarks on the growth of social media and technology, their impacts on customer purchasing tendencies are more prevalent, according to Khang, H. and Ki, E.-J. (2012). Under the effects of social media, companies and retailers can tailor their approach to cater customer habits, perception, and ultimately, their purchasing behaviors.

2) Social Incentives and Stimulus

While motivation has been a well-studied field of research, there exists a gap in the context of social environment and factors, specifically, the interactions between individuals within a population that can potentially further their causes. Arango, P. (2018) examined the concept of motivation being a mental structure that results in collective set of behaviors that drive the individual to a predetermined goal. However, motivation can be categorized into different subsections, as according to Maslow (1954), the intrinsic motivation can be divided into a hierarchy of needs. Folmer, C. (2016) argues that motivation, in the context of within a social construct, is a series of continuous interactions driven by the want of obtaining information to progress their goal. Zhang, J., & Mao, E. (2016) research underscored the cognitive patterns of impacting factors and verified hypothesis made by previous studies by various authors, Hoffman (2010), Zanjani *et al.*, (2011). Furthermore, their remarks on

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Nguyen Hong Anh,

Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, Quarter 6, Linh Trung Ward, Thu Duc City, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

insufficient recognition within the marketing landscape add to the importance of understanding Social Motivation.

3) Hypothesis Development

- Interaction between Social Motivation and Purchasing Intention

Investigations into Social Motivation as a determinant of Purchasing Intention have not led to a consensus. The empirical evidence presented by *Chen, A et al. (2017)* suggests a propensity for consumers to be swayed by objective reviews over subjective ratings. This phenomenon renders social media platforms susceptible to heightened skepticism, attributed to the indeterminate quality of information they disseminate. Complementing this perspective, *Aloka Karunasingha. (2022)* has articulated a comprehensive synthesis on the reciprocal nature of consumer behavior, highlighting the pivotal role of peer-to-peer interaction not only in the immediate purchasing context but also in molding the consumer's perception of a brand. With the author final remarks on customer trust under the influence of social media, the following hypotheses can be realized:

H1: A positive correlation exists between the constructions of Social Motivation and Customer Trust.

H2: A positive correlation exists between the constructs of Social Motivation and Purchasing Intention.

- Trust and Purchasing Behavior under the influence of Social Marketing

By adopting *Karunasingha, A. and Abeysekera, N. (2022)* research framework, the construct of Trust is revealed as the belief held by an individual in a business's commitment to fulfilling its promises. This trust is predicated on the notion that a business will act in accordance with its stated intentions, thereby honoring the expectations set forth to its customers. Thus, it forms the cornerstone of customer-business relationships and is integral to the development of long-term loyalty. It is through this lens that businesses are evaluated on their ability to deliver on their commitments, which, in turn, influences consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. The establishment of trust is not merely about meeting the minimum requirements but also about exceeding expectations and consistently demonstrating reliability and integrity. A similar argument can be found in research of *Horppu et al., (2008)*, *Bart et al., (2005)*., *Irshad et al., (2020)* recent publishes encapsulates previous research findings with remarks on a positive correlation between Purchasing Intention and Trust level.

H3: A positive correlation exists between the constructs of Trust and Purchasing Intention, under the influence of social marketing.

- Mediating effect of Trust

In continuation of *Irshad et al.'s (2020)* conclusion on Trust correlation to Purchasing Intention, the Trust factor plays the role of an intermediary variable between Purchasing Intention and Social Motivation. In essence, the presence of trust within the consumer's psyche bridges the gap between the social motivations that drive consumer engagement and the ultimate decision to make a purchase. By establishing trust, consumers are more likely to translate their social motivations and interactions into actual purchasing actions, underscoring the nuanced interplay between these fundamental aspects of consumer behavior. *Rehman et al., (2019)*, *Alkan, Z. et al., (2023)*, *Karunasingha, A. and Abeysekera, N. (2022)* studies discovered a point of similarity between the relationship of Social Motivation and Purchasing Intention, gravitate towards Trust being a prominent impacting variable. In addition, previous studies suggest the importance of brand as a value communication vendor, as brand evokes customer trust and encourages positive behavior towards the

business, as observed in *Chaudhuri, A. et al., (2001)* research. Hence, the study synthesizes the hypotheses based on previous studies and the adopted research framework of *Karunasingha, A. and Abeysekera, N. (2022)*:

H4: Under the influences of Social Marketing, Trust acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between Social Motivation and Purchasing Intention

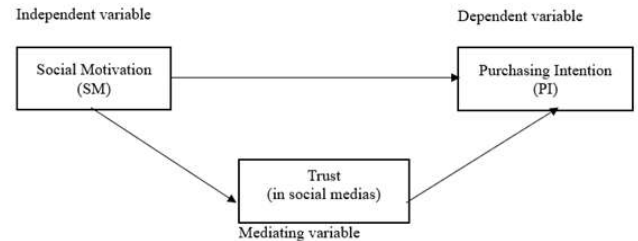


Figure 1: Mediation Analysis model

Source(s): Adapted from *Karunasingha, A. and Abeysekera, N. (2022)*

METHODOLOGY

A total of 93 respondents were recorded over the course of 3 months, in which a convenience sampling strategy is employed to recruit participants. The survey was distributed through various channels such as social media platforms, email invitations, and university networks, with a concentrated focus on the Ho Chi Minh region. Gathered data are processed through Stata 16 software.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

1) Sampled Respondent Demographic

The survey reveals that 68% of the participants are female and 32% are male, all of whom are active on social media and constituting a significant consumer segment for fashion products. Moreover, the predominant age range of the respondents is 20-30 years old, accounting for over 95% of the total, with a negligible number below 20 years of age. This demographic distribution aligns with expectations, considering the research was conducted within a university environment, targeting individuals in similar age brackets. Additionally, the respondents were notably educated, with virtually all of them either pursuing or having completed a bachelor's degree. Geographically, the bulk of the respondents reside in Ho Chi Minh City, a majority of whom are still attending college located within the area.

2) Reliability Analysis – Cronbach Alpha's Analysis

The purpose of this test was to evaluate the dependability of the research instruments, confirming that the variables tested possess a high degree of validity. Cronbach's Alpha analysis conducted using the Stata software, yielded a coefficient range from 0.82 to 0.8532, which is classified as "Good" in terms of reliability, according to *Konting et al., (2009)*. Consequently, the research tools and data demonstrate robust and commendable internal consistency, suitable for subsequent analysis.

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha analysis, N = 93

Variables	Cronbach Alpha
Social Motivation	0.8550
Trust	0.8532
Purchasing Intention	0.8200

Source(s): Survey data (2024)

3) Regression Analysis

In the conducted correlation analysis, the statistical outcomes revealed significant relationships among the variables. The correlation between Social Motivation and Trust was quantified at 0.695, indicating a substantial positive correlation. Similarly, the correlation between Social Motivation and Purchasing Intention was measured at 0.744, and the correlation between Trust and Purchasing Intention is slightly higher at 0.747. Each of these correlations is associated with a significant level of 0.000, underscoring the robustness of the relationships and suggesting a negligible probability that these results are due to random chance. These statistics collectively highlight the strong interconnectivity between Social Motivation, Trust, and Purchasing Intention.

Table 4: Correlation Matrix

Variables	Social Motivation	Trust	Purchasing Intention
Social Motivation	1.000	0.695***	0.744***
Sig. (2 tailed)		(0.000)	(0.000)
Trust	0.695***	1.000	0.747***
Sig. (2 tailed)	(0.000)		(0.000)
Purchasing Intention	0.744***	0.747***	1.000
Sig. (2 tailed)	(0.000)	(0.000)	

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$, $N = 93$

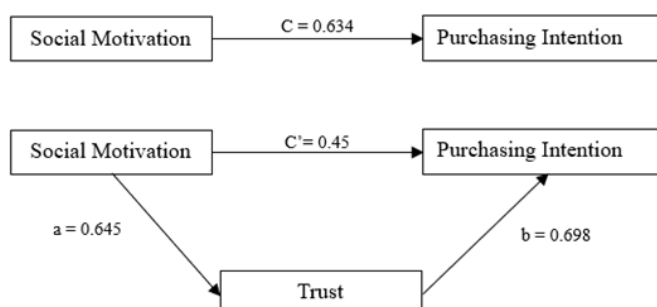
Source(s): Survey data (2024)

4) Mediation Effect Analysis

Baron and Kenny (1986) developed a systematic approach to analyze the relationship between two variables under the influence of a third factor. The model involves proving the significance of the pairwise effect of each variable, concluding a direct or indirect correlation of independent variables on their dependent counterpart. In accordance with Karunasingha, A (2022), the Sobel test was employed to diagnose and determine the effect of Trust on Social Motivation and Purchasing Intention relationship. Quantifying the significance of Trust as an intermediary influence suggests that the mediator variable carries the influence of the independent variable to the dependent variable.

The analysis illustrated that the direct effect of Social Motivation on Trust and Purchasing Intention is 0.645 and 0.634, respectively, with $p < 0.01$, indicating that even without considering trust, social motivation has a significant positive impact on the likelihood of a purchase, proving the validity of H1 and H2. In addition, a positive relationship between Trust and Purchasing Intention has been realized with the figure of 0.698 ($p < 0.01$), supporting H3.

Figure 2: Sobel mediation analysis



c = direct effect: 0.634, $p < 0.01$

c' = indirect effect = $a \cdot b = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$

Source(s): Survey data (2024)

Table 5: Direct Effect results

Hypothesis	Adjusted R square	Sig. level	Decision
H1: SM -> TR	0.645	0.000	Accept
H2: SM -> PI	0.634	0.000	Accept
H3: TR -> PI	0.698	0.000	Accept

$N = 93$

Source(s): Survey data (2024)

Utilizing the Sobel test, the mediation analysis uncovers the indirect influence of Trust. The analysis determined that the pathway from Social Motivation to Trust, and subsequently to Purchasing Intention, has a coefficient of 0.45. This finding substantiates the hypothesis presented in H4. Nonetheless, the analysis also reveals a substantial direct positive effect of Social Motivation on Purchasing Intention. Consequently, this indicates that Trust serves as a partial mediator in this relationship.

Table 6: Sobel Analysis result

Hypothesis	Path coefficient	Sig. level	Mediation Type	Decision
H4: SM -> Trust -> PI	0.45	0.000	Partial	Accept

$N = 93$

Source(s): Survey data (2024)

DISCUSSION

Aligned with the research objectives of determining the mediating effect of Trust on the relationship between Social Motivation and Purchasing Intention within the context of social marketing. The empirical evidence suggests a positive correlation. The data substantiates that Social Motivation is positively associated with Trust, which, in turn, is positively associated with Purchasing Intention (H1 and H2). Suggesting that Social Motivation—defined as the impetus derived from social interactions and influences—serves as a precursor to the establishment of Trust. This aligns with previous studies mentioned in literature review (Horppu *et al.*, 2008; Bart *et al.*, 2005; Irshad *et al.*, 2020). The study further concludes that positive interactions of peers with the product can have a profound effect on Trust, guiding their Purchasing Behaviors as a result, proving pre-existed theory and study, as according to Irshad *et al.*, (2020). In addition, it is posited that Trust amplifies the likelihood of Purchasing Intention, the propensity to engage in the acquisition of goods or services, as stated and validated in H3 and H4.

This study explored how trust mediates the relationship between consumers' social media (SM) engagement and their online purchasing intention (PI), specifically within the fashion industry in Vietnam, under the influence of social media marketing environment. The results indicated a substantial positive impact of Social Motivation on consumers' Trust and online Purchasing Intention. Moreover, it suggests that consumers' online purchasing intentions are significantly shaped by their level of trust. Additionally, the study revealed that trust in fashion retailers acts as a partial mediator, rather than a fully mediated relationship, in the linkage between social media engagement and consumers' online purchasing intention.

The study's findings have both theoretical and practical significance, offering valuable insights to refine current models and provide actionable strategies in understanding consumer behavior, especially in the context of social media marketing. This research contributes to bridging the existing gap in our understanding of consumer behavior patterns specific to social media marketing in Vietnam.

REFERENCES

1. Alkan, Z., & Ulas, S. (2023). Trust in social media influencers and purchase intention: An empirical analysis. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 13(1), e202301. <https://doi.org/10.30935/ojcm/12783>
2. Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, M. (2001). The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: The role of brand loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, 65(2), 81-93.
3. Chen, A., Lu, Y., & Wang, B. (2017). Customers' purchase decision-making process in social commerce: A social learning perspective. *International Journal of Information Management*, 37(6), 627-638. doi: 10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2017.05.001
4. De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Social media influencers: A structural framework for identifying the drivers of influencer's credibility. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798-828. doi:10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035
5. Gefen, D., Karahanna, E., & Straub, D. W. (2003). Trust and TAM in Online Shopping: An Integrated Model. *MIS Quarterly*, 27(1), 51-90.
6. General Statistics Office. (2021). Area, population and population density by province by Cities, provinces, Year and Items. Retrieved from <https://www.gso.gov.vn/en/px-web/?pxid=E0201&theme=Population%20and%20Employment>
7. Karunasingha, A., & Abeysekera, N. (2022). The drivers of omni-channel shopping intention: A case study for fashion retailing sector in Danang, Vietnam. *Journal of Asian Business and Economic Studies*, 28(2), 143-159. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JABES-05-2020-0053>
8. Konting, M., Kamaruddin, N., & Man, N. (2009). Quality Assurance in Higher Education Institutions: Exist Survey among Universiti Putra Malaysia Graduating Students. doi:10.5539/ies.v2n1p25
9. Liu, C., Marchewka, J. T., Lu, J., & Yu, C. S. (2011). Beyond concern—a privacy-trust-behavioral intention model of electronic commerce. *Information & Management*, 42(2), 289-304.
10. Mangold, G., & Faulds, D. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons*, 52(4), 357-365.
11. McKnight, D. H., Choudhury, V., & Kacmar, C. (2002). Developing and validating trust measures for e-commerce: An integrative typology. *Information Systems Research*, 13(3), 334-359.
12. Pavlou, P. (2003). Consumer acceptance of electronic commerce: integrating trust and risk with the technology acceptance model. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 7(3), 101-134.
13. Paul, J., Modi, A., & Patel, J. (2016). Predicting green product consumption using theory of planned behavior and reasoned action. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 29(1), 123-134.
14. Preacher, K., & Leonardelli, G. (2021). Calculation for the Sobel test. Retrieved from <http://quantpsy.org/sobel/sobel.htm> (accessed 1st May, 2021).
15. Rehman, S. U., Bhatti, A., Mohamed, R., & Ayoub, H. (2019). The moderating role of trust and commitment between consumer purchase intention and online shopping behavior in the context of Pakistan. *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, 9(1). doi:10.1186/s40497-019-0166-2
16. Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students* (5th ed.). Pearson Education.
17. Sirdeshmukh, D., Singh, J., & Sabol, B. (2002). Consumer trust, value, and loyalty in relational exchanges. *Journal of Marketing*, 66(1), 15-37.
18. Virtanen, A., Kairisto, V., & Uusipaikka, E. (1998). Regression-based reference limits: determination of sufficient sample size. *Clinical Chemistry*, 44(11), 2353-2358.
19. Zhang, J., & Mao, E. (2016). The mediating effect of trust on consumer behavior in social media marketing environments. *Psychology & Marketing*, 33(3), 155-164. doi:10.1002/mar.20862
