Examining the Impact of Influencers and Bloggers on Behavioral Intentions among Youth in Sindh Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of attitude, social media influencers, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), and credibility on behavioral intention among Pakistani youth towards the textile industry. An online survey was distributed with the help of an adapted questionnaire from past studies. A total of 200 cases were considered in this study, and reliability analysis and regression analysis were performed in SPSS version 25. The findings revealed that all independent variables of attitude, social media influencers, e-WOM and credibility are positively and significantly impacted behavioral intention. In detail, results presented that attitude is positively and significantly affect behavioral intention (β=.152, p=.048), social media influencer is positively and significantly affected behavioral intention (β=.176, p=.023), e-WOM is positively and significantly affect behavioral intention (β=.174, p=.022), and credibility is positively and significantly affected behavioral intention (β=.154, p=.021). Social media influencer was found to have a more significant impact on the behavioral intentions of the youth of Pakistan due to higher beta values than the other independent variables. Therefore, policymakers in the textile industry can consider these variables to attract Pakistani Youth towards their behavioral intention in the future.

Keywords: Attitude, Behavioral Intention, Credibility, Electronic Word of Mouth, Social Media Influencer

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, social media is a group of websites that put together applications that form the philosophical and innovative establishments of Web 2.0 and permit the creation and trade of customers' content (Thanuskodi, 2023). Similarly, social media and the internet are omnipresent in today's era and play a vital role in how people communicate and stay connected. In this regard, it is continuously growing in our society, increasing the audience daily. This facilitates organizations in increasing their reach and helps them engage social media as the most robust tool for communication (Capriotti et al., 2021). Social media platforms spread information, build communities, and stimulate action. It has been noticed that the most renowned way to dispense information is through electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). Therefore, social media has introduced communication experts to a new type of opinion leader known as social media influencers and bloggers. They are virtual opinion leaders who get help from social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube to highlight their private lives and products and review different services they have used or tried (Hruska & Maresova, 2020). According to the influencer marketing hub, influencer marketing is expected to grow to $13.8 billion in 2021. These endorsers make an impact and mould attitudes through their tweets, blogs, and other posts on social media platforms.

Social media influencers have high credibility and are seen as most trustworthy, which is why they tend to influence the perception of their followers (Belanche et al., 2021). Adding to that, they have many followers, allowing them to draw out feedback or action from their followers. The defining attributes of social media influencers are good credibility, high engagement, a significant following, great exposure, creative content, and distinct brands. During the last five years, the emergence of internet-based media has revolutionized purchasing and selling methods with stages like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube (Gaurav & Ray, 2020). Buyers can remark on their encounters and share their perspectives online with loved ones. This has led to a rapid growth in the need for brands to generate positive consumer experiences to maximize positive e-WOM, which would easily reach several potential customers through these platforms. Another type of web-based media highlighting famous style-cognizant ladies is writing for a blog. Design online journals have become the best methods of sharing experiences and making suggestions over the web, which has worked with brands to market their product to target crowds for minimal prices (Jin et al., 2022).

Social media bloggers became known as third-party endorsers weighing on all the social media platforms; brands mostly use them to disclose product information and ongoing promotions to online audiences (Jaitly & Gautam, 2021). Women go and stake bloggers to find something desirable and often buy their recommended clothes because bloggers and influencers highly impact their behaviors by highlighting trending apparel brands. Generation Y consumers pay almost 70% of their money on fashion goods (Musova et al., 2021). In response, brands operating in the fast fashion industry are constantly running towards the aim of being at the forefront of offering their customers the latest ongoing trends within clothing, to the most affordable prices and not only that, they tend to use influencer marketing to show their presence online. Rapid growth in internet usage is being witnessed, which gives marketers an edge in close contact with their target customers (Fachrurazi et al., 2022). Adding to that, a new way of influencing the target market through bloggers and influencers is emerging rapidly when we talk about the fashion industry. It can be said that several factors highly influence youth's behavioral intention when their opinion leaders recommend a particular brand. It is suggested that the impact of bloggers and influencers should be studied (Mainolfi & Vergura, 2022).

There are few gaps filled by present study in the domain of behavioral intention of the Pakistani youth. Past local studies were focused on other sectors such as studies by (Aziz et al., 2018), focused on Islamic banking, while (Yeo et al., 2017) conducted a study on the fast-food industry (OFD). For instance, Aziz et al. (2018) conducted a study in Islamic banking sector in Pakistan and revealed that normative and control beliefs are significant determinants of adoption (intention) behavior of Islamic banking in Pakistan. Meanwhile, other local study (Yeo et al., 2017) of behavioral intention focused more on the OFD services and tested other independent variables such as convenience motivation, post-usage usefulness, hedonic motivation, price saving orientation, time saving orientation, prior online purchase experience, consumer attitude towards OFD services. Given that, lack of information is known about behavioral intention towards textile industry particularly on the effects of attitude, social media influencers, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), and credibility.

Thus, more work is needed in the apparel (textile) industry in Pakistan. Therefore, this study is designed to examine the impact of attitude, social media influencers, e-WOM, and credibility on behavioral intention among Pakistani youth towards the textile industry. Since it is a rapidly changing corporate world, new research will keep producing new results, which is why it is necessary to conduct the latest research. Although past research presented that social media's impact on the fashion industry in Karachi (Ahmed et al., 2015), however, more research is needed to show on how bloggers and influencers are related towards behavioral intention among the Pakistani youth. Moreover, Ahmed et al. (2015) was conducted in Karachi in 2015 (about nine years ago), thus, a latest and comprehensive research towards the ongoing market trends demand the current research to examine the latest trends. Moreover, Ahmed et al. (2015) study

was only conducted in Karachi (one division located in Sindh), thus the results limited to the view of youth in Karachi. Therefore, this current study aims for more larger sample which covers a larger area of Sindh Districts (Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Mirpur Khas and Shaheed Benazirabad) in Pakistan.

Given the above information, this current study aims to examine the impact of attitude, social media influencers, e-WOM, and credibility on behavioral intention among Pakistani youth towards the textile industry. Below are the specific research questions of this study: a) What is the impact of the impact of attitude on behavioral intention among Pakistani youth towards the textile industry? b) What is the impact of the impact of social media influencers on behavioral intention among Pakistani youth towards the textile industry? c) What is the impact of the impact of (e-WOM) on behavioral intention among Pakistani youth towards the textile industry? d) What is the impact of the impact of credibility on behavioral intention among Pakistani youth towards the textile industry?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Behavioral Intention

Intentions are defined as how willing a person is to perform a particular behavior (Oteng-Peprah et al., 2020). Behavioral intention is an individual's subjective chance that he will bring about a specific behavior (Ajzen, 2020). In addition, an individual's intention leads to the execution of behavior similarly. Behavioral intentions are motivational factors that capture how much effort a person will put into carrying out a behavior. To date, lack of study on behavioral intention gas been conducted in Pakistan, especially in the context of textile industry. As explained earlier, Aziz et al. (2018) studied the Islamic banking sector in Pakistan and found that normative and control beliefs significantly influence the intention to adopt Islamic banking, while Yeo et al. (2017) focused on behavioral intentions related to OFD services, examining factors such as convenience, usefulness, enjoyment, price saving, time saving, prior online purchase experience, and consumer attitudes. However, there is limited information on behavioral intentions in the Pakistani textile industry, especially regarding the impact of attitude, social media influencers, e-WOM, and credibility. Thus, this study attempts to contribute for a new knowledge on this domain of research.

2.2 Attitude towards Influencers and Bloggers

A recent study highlighted that consumers' attitudes toward influencers and bloggers are affected by their recommendations, and their intentions are highly influenced (Tran & Nguyen, 2020). Another study indicated that attitude is an influential factor that decides the behavioral intention of a consumer (Hwang et al., 2021). If a particular blogger is negatively reflected in consumer perception, that log reader may opt for his recommendations. Similarly, it indicates attitude as blog readers' perception and personal feelings about the bloggers and influencers (Mainolfi & Vergura, 2022). Attitudes mirror an individual's values and feelings about a specific thing, and their attitude reflects their perception. A recent research's findings confirmed that marketing research indicated that consumer attitude is a significant aspect that has facilitated marketers in designing affluent marketing operations (Al-Zyoud, 2021). In this connection, the study also included several psychological studies that were closely monitored. Therefore, a conclusion was drawn that individuals' behavior is highly influenced by the behavior of people in their surroundings. Therefore, this study focuses on how attitudes change toward bloggers' and influencers' recommendations to purchase a particular product or service and how an individual will likely change his perspective according to those recommendations. Consumers also believe a blog's credibility is higher than that of traditional media. Lastly, scholar have debated that

attitude directs consideration more toward strong attitudes and that consideration of a brand arbitrates the influence of attitude (Purohit & Arora, 2022). Thus, following hypothesis has been proposed.

H$_1$: Attitudes towards influencers and bloggers have significant effect on behavioral intention of Pakistani youth towards textile industry.

2.3 Social Media Influencer

A recent study indicated that an influencer is a person who has control over the buying decision-making interaction of his/her audience followers (Javed et al., 2022). Similarly, influencers are not just highlighting marketing techniques; they are vital for brands to reach their objectives. Another recent study supported the idea that the media is jumbled with various blogs, covering many points and containing fascinating and certifiable substances that numerous readers depend on (Warren, 2022). However, it must be refreshed regularly to keep readers committed and individuals on top of new patterns. Furthermore, a study stated that regardless of the expanding deployment of influencers for brand endorsement, logical information on their promoting esteem is restricted (Chan et al., 2023). However, the viability of conventional VIP support has been broadly researched. Lastly, Influencers draw in enormous followers by sharing content curated from their day-by-day daily lives on social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube, developing around one specific space of interest (Taddeo, 2023). Thus, following hypothesis has been proposed.

H$_2$: Social media influencers have significant effect on behavioral intention of Pakistani youth towards textile industry.

2.4 Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)

Electronic word of mouth or e-WOM can be defined as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Clients (customers) can purposefully post about brands and their products or services. Besides, they can unexpectedly show their inclinations to their organization, such as becoming a devotee of brands, collaborating with brand posts through loving and remarking, or posting a brand-included substance without publicizing the reason. Advertisers can likewise post data through their authority accounts via online media sites. A recent study suggested that the customers' utilization of innovation to impart insights about products or services of e-WOM can be a responsibility for organizations, as it can turn into a factor they do not control (Liaqat, 2023). To check this, organizations are looking to oversee clients' online surveys by making virtual spaces on their sites, where buyers can leave remarks and offer their assessments about the business's products and services. Lastly, another study stated that word of mouth has been effective for past years as a significant affecting element on what individuals know and how they feel about something specific (Al-Adwan et al., 2022). E-WOM is remarking about a product or administration given by customers employing organizations. Thus, following hypothesis has been proposed.

H$_3$: e-WOM has significant effect on behavioral intention of Pakistani youth towards textile industry.

2.5 Credibility

A recent study suggested that when customers think they can relate to the interests, values, or characteristics of a blogger or an influencer, they are more likely to be influenced by them (Chopra et al., 2021). Similarly, when there are celebrity endorsements, they usually inspire consumers and they want to be like that celebrity. People (youth) connect with influencers and are more

strongly determined by perceived similarity, and compared to celebrities, influencers are considered more relatable and approachable (Gräve & Bartsch, 2022). Since they can comment on the posts shared by different bloggers, there is always a possibility for interaction with them since they are connected to audiences, which eventually might strengthen the influencer and give them a feeling that the influencer is like them. In addition, consumers who have used the product and have a viewpoint about its success and use are referred to as knowledge sources in the case of online reviews. However, given the disparities in product experience, their views could not be regarded as trustworthy (Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020). Influencers endorsing a brand have a significant impact on the customer awareness of an advertisement; it helps them grab their attention and make the brand reach a higher number of audiences. According to social media studies, integrity is linked to confidence, contributing to a desire to participate in campaign efforts (Kamaldeep, 2021). Thus, following hypothesis has been proposed.

H_4: Credibility of influencers and bloggers have a significance effect on behavioral intention of Pakistani youth towards textile industry.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Such an approach can be classified into quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches (Taherdoost, 2022). This research is based on a quantitative method; thus, a quantitative research approach is based on the claims or hypotheses of a researcher by establishing relationships between the variables. The approach uses observation, measurement, and testing and involves statistical techniques and methods to explore the problem and evaluate results.
A research design may embrace distinctive methods, incorporating experimental, descriptive, correlation, review, meta-analytic, and other designs. A descriptive research design was adopted as a questionnaire survey for data collection. The data will be explicitly collected from the members by employing an organized and adopted survey based on the youthful population of Sindh Province, Pakistan. The primary source of the study includes collecting research data, specifically from the respondents. In other words, the essential source is the direct information source related to the subject or issue. Scale development was development from studies of attitude ((Valaei & Nikhashemi, 2017), social media (Haque et al., 2023), e-WOM (Yan et al., 2016) and behavioral intention (McInerney, 1991).

Because of a few imperatives, including time, geography, and finance, it is significant for an investigation to choose a subset of the populace. The examining interaction can be either probability or non-probability. For this situation, a convenience sampling procedure is utilized, in the category of the non-probability technique. Several items are 20*10 = 200 respondents to get a more reliable result.

This research aims to determine youth perceptions of attitude, social media influencers, e-WOM, and credibility of influencers and bloggers on their effect on behavioral intention among youth in Sindh, Pakistan. Sindh Province was selected as a focus of this study because most of the youth use social media tools and spend plenty of time on them (Hanif & Warraich, 2023).
To analyze the data, this study used Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) where this study performed descriptive (demographic of the respondents) and inferential (reliability, and multiple linear regression) analyses.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The total number of collected online questionnaires was obtained from the first 200 responses from the youth of Sindh, Pakistan. 50% percent are male and 50% female. Age was divided into three categories, from which 30.5 % were aged 18-20 years, 66.5 % were aged 21-30 years, and 3% were aged 30 and above. Education was also categorized into four categories: undergraduate, graduate, master's, and PhD. The percentage of undergraduates at each level of education was 58.5%. Graduate, 27.55, masters were 12%, and PhD were 2%. The respondents were from Hyderabad, which contributed 65.5 % of the total. 32.5 % of respondents were Karachi residents, and 2% were from other cities - see Table 1.

Table 1 Respondents' Profile

Construct	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	100	50%
	Male	100	50%
Age	18-20	61	30.5%
	21-30	37	65.5%
	Above 30	6	3%
Education Level	Undergraduate	117	58.5%
	Graduate	55	27.5%
	Masters	24	12%
	PhD/MPhil	4	2%
Sindh City of Respondents	Hyderabad	131	65.5%
	Karachi	64	32.5%
	Others	4	2%

4.2 Reliability Analysis

Table 2 shows the reliability statistics; the worth of Cronbach's alpha is utilized for final choices about the reliability quality of the studied information. On that premise, we can even out of reliability regarding poor or excellent. As presented in Table 2, Cronbach's alpha worth of attitude is 0.773, social media influencer is 0.863, e-WOM is 0.861, credibility is 0.833, and behavioral intention is 0.821. As stated by Taber (2018), alpha values were described as excellent (0.93–0.94), strong (0.91–0.93), reliable (0.84–0.90), robust (0.81), fairly high (0.76–0.95), high (0.73–0.95), good (0.71–0.91), relatively high (0.70–0.77), slightly low (0.68), reasonable (0.67–0.87), adequate (0.64–0.85), moderate (0.61–0.65), satisfactory (0.58–0.97), acceptable (0.45–0.98), sufficient (0.45–0.96), not satisfactory (0.4–0.55) and low (0.11). Thus, all of the Cronbach alpha values in this study are good according to Taber (2018).

Table 2 Reliability Analysis

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Attitude	.773	4
Social media influencer	.863	4
E-WOM	.861	4
Credibility	.833	4
Behavioral intention	.821	4

4.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

The multiple regression analysis is presented in Table 3. It shows two significant values, the beta and the p-value. The beta value determines the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variable; on the other hand, the p-value shows the significance level. In this study, all variables that are attitude with (β= 0.152, p= 0.48), social media influencer with (β = 0.176, p= 0.023), e-WOM with (β =0.174, p= 0.022), and credibility with (β = 0.154, p= 0.21) have a positive and significant effect on the dependent variable, that is behavioral intention. The R square of this result was 0.167.

Table 3 Multiple Regression

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	β-value	p-value	Remarks
Behavioral intention	Attitude	.152	.048	Supported
	Social media influencer	.176	.023	Supported
	E-WOM	.174	.022	Supported
	Credibility	.154	.021	Supported
R-square	.167			

4.4 Discussions

In this case, all of the alternative hypotheses are accepted – see Table 3. First, findings showed that attitude positively and significantly affects the individual's behavioral intention with β=.152, and p=.048. Thus, hypothesis 1, H_1: Attitudes towards influencers and bloggers have significant effect on behavioral intention of Pakistani youth towards textile industry, is accepted in this study. This indicates that positive attitudes towards influencers and bloggers play a crucial role in shaping the behavioral intentions of Pakistani youth towards purchasing in the textile industry.

Second, this study aimed to see the impact social media influencer have on the youth of Sindh, Pakistan and their behavioral intentions. As indicated in Table 3, social media influencer highly affects the role of youth towards their behavioral intention with β=.176, and p=.023, thus Hypothesis 2, H_2: Social media influencers have significant effect on behavioral intention of Pakistani youth towards textile industry, is accepted in this study. Even certain studies support that influencers play a massive impact on customers' behavioral intention; a study also found that 49.3% had made a purchase based upon a blogger's recommendation and that 44.2% of respondents trust the recommendations from (Zatwarnicka-Madura et al., 2022). People believe in influencers' choices because they are ordinary people to whom they can relate (Chopra et al., 2021). Hence, this study shows how people consider bloggers (influencers) edible sources, whitening a purchase decision.

Similarly, hypothesis 3, H_3: e-WOM has significant effect on behavioral intention of Pakistani youth towards textile industry, is accepted in this study. As can be seen in Table 3, e-WOM is positively and significantly affecting behavioral intention (β=.174, p=.022). Thus, the basis of this conclusion is that e-WOM on blog writers' sites and all social media platforms has a massive impact on the behavioral intention among youth of Sindh, Pakistan. Since it can stimulate a purchase or negatively impact a commodity. e-WOM information is easily accessible on social media sites, influencing consumer attitudes and behavior before and after consuming the product (Ruangkanjanases et al., 2021).

Finally, hypothesis 4, H_4: Credibility of influencers and bloggers have a significance effect on behavioral intention of Pakistani youth towards textile industry, is accepted in this study. Referring to Table 3, credibility is positively and significantly affecting behavioral intention (β=.154, p=.021). Youth tend to connect with influencers largely because they see themselves reflected in them. This perceived similarity plays a crucial role in forming strong connections. Influencers, are often considered more relatable and approachable. Influencers, however, often share more personal and everyday aspects of their lives, which makes them appear more genuine and attainable. This relatability and credibility allow youth to feel a stronger personal connection and trust towards influencers, thereby enhancing the impact influencers have on their followers (Gräve & Bartsch, 2022).

5. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

In this study, we used primary data to determine determinants that significantly impact the behavioral intention among the youth of Sindh, Pakistan, when exposed to bloggers' and influencers' content. Based on the multiple regression analysis, the estimates of all independent variables are significant at a five percent significance level. Furthermore, the results indicate that the variables affect behavioral intention positivity in this study. This study concludes that bloggers and influencers are the new way businesses adopt to stimulate behaviors, leading to influencer marketing being the revolutionary new and rapid way of marketing in the textile industry. Brands are more towards social media influencers and bloggers because they are influencing, inspiring, and modelling behaviors.

Social impact and attitude significantly impact the behavioral intention to utilize videos as a decision point for future purchasing intention. Contrasted with different research concerning social media influencers, this research looked for all practical and just as socially situated components for effectiveness. The research has shown that both social factors are significant when looking at the effectiveness of social media influencers, while only one functional factor does. Moreover, this research adds logical information. This study mainly included attitude as an independent variable, which has previously been regularly discussed concerning whether it affects behavioral intention. This research has shown that the attitude towards social media influencers influences the behavioral intention to utilize the recommendations in the recordings as a choice factor for purchasing intention. This implies that attitude can be utilized as an independent variable to analyse the dependent variable behavior, the real intention when customers then acknowledge another innovation.

The regression results of this study reveal significant insights into the factors influencing behavioral intention among youth towards the textile industry. The findings indicate that all examined variables—attitude, social media influencers, e-WOM, and credibility—positively and significantly impact behavioral intention.

First, attitude has a positive and significant effect on behavioral intention (β=0.152, p=0.048), suggesting that the youth's overall perception and feelings towards the textile industry play a crucial role in shaping their intentions to engage with it. This implies that efforts to positively

influence attitudes, such as through targeted marketing campaigns and positive brand messaging, can enhance behavioral intentions. Thus, by developing marketing strategies that positively influence youth attitudes towards the textile industry. This can include highlighting the sustainability, innovation, and cultural relevance of the products.

Second, social media influencers have a notable impact on behavioral intention (β=0.176, p=0.023), highlighting the importance of influencer marketing in the textile industry. Given the higher beta value, this suggests that partnerships with influencers who are relatable and trusted by the youth can significantly drive engagement and intention to purchase. Therefore, collaborating with popular and credible social media influencers who resonate with the youth demographic. Influencers can effectively communicate brand values and promote products in a way that feels authentic and relatable.

Fourth, e-WOM also positively affects behavioral intention (β=0.174, p=0.022). This underscores the power of online reviews, testimonials, and peer recommendations in shaping consumer behavior. Encouraging satisfied customers to share their positive experiences online can amplify this effect and attract more potential buyers. Hence, implementing strategies to encourage satisfied customers to share their experiences online. This can be achieved through incentives such as discounts for referrals, social media contests, or featuring user-generated content on official brand channels.

Fifth, credibility significantly influences behavioral intention (β=0.154, p=0.021), indicating that trustworthiness and reliability of information sources are critical. Brands need to focus on building and maintaining credibility through transparent communication, high-quality products, and reliable customer service to foster strong behavioral intentions among youth. Therefore, focusing on establishing and maintaining credibility through consistent and transparent communication. Ensure product quality and customer service meet high standards to build trust and reliability among customers.

The positive and significant effects of attitude, social media influencers, e-WOM, and credibility on behavioral intention suggest that these factors are crucial for influencing the purchasing behavior of youth in the textile industry. By strategically focusing on these areas, policymakers and marketers can effectively enhance engagement and drive positive behavioral intentions, ultimately contributing to the growth and success of the textile industry.

Some limitations are present in this research. Firstly, the sample size is small and restricted to Sindh, Pakistan only. The future researchers are advised to focus on all district of Pakistan including Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad and Sindh. The number of respondents is limited, including the first 200 participants only. This is due to financial and time restraints. Moving forward, the usage of social networking sites might differ in other demographic areas of the country and different cultural, economic, and social settings. Comparable research is suggested for various industries and a larger demographic area to enhance knowledge about how digital media influencers play a vital role in influencing behavior. Based on all these limitations, it is recommended that further research can extend this research where there is an area for improvement.

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