



The Effects of Consumer Trust and Perceived Risk on Purchase Intention in Pakistan Social Commerce – A Double Mediation Model

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Abstract

Trust and perceived risk are found to be substantial in online shopping. But, in the context of social commerce, these are even more imperative because of the prominent role of user-generated content in the consumer's intention to purchase. Hence, this study proposed a double mediation model and examine the effects of trust and perceived risk on intention of consumer to purchase, and the mediating role of seeking of information in social commerce in these relationships. Furthermore, the mediating role of familiarity has also been assessed in the connection amid seeking of information in social commerce and intention of consumer to purchase. Data was collected from 298 respondents living in the city Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, and Rawalpindi. Smart PLS was used to conduct the data analysis the research suggested that Trust plays a substantial role in stimulating intention of consumer to purchase in the context of social commerce, while seeking of information in social commerce and familiarity both have significant mediating effects in the construct. It is anticipated that the research will serve as a yardstick for the marketing practitioners in designing social commerce strategies focused on enhancing consumer's online purchase intention.

Keywords: Social Commerce, Trust, Perceived Risk, Intention of consumer to purchase

Introduction

Today, retailers and brands are making more and more use of social commerce in ways that range from elementary strategies such as creating branded hashtags to advance strategies such as adding user-generated content on their social channels and websites (Bugshan and Attar, 2020). Social commerce can be defined as the process of retailing services and goods directly to customers through platforms of social media like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or Pinterest (Han, Xu, and Chen, 2018). Social commerce has made the shopping experience a lot more interactive than the old-fashioned e-commerce because it enables consumers to consult with friends when making purchases, add product or service reviews and share their personal experiences (Li and Ku, 2018).

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Social Commerce has seen a significant amount of growth over the years in terms of popularity reaching up to 43% and resulting in the increase of funds in Social Commerce for approximately 88% of the businesses across the globe (Huang and Benyoucef, 2013). Technologies like web 2.0 have resulted in social networking websites and social media that support the incorporation of user contribution and interaction in online purchasing (Cheng, Gu, and Shen, 2019). With the rise in web 2.0 technology having centralized dominance from apps like Google, Amazon, and Facebook, the year 2006 saw the emergence of web 3.0 technology based on the concept of decentralized infrastructure that allows individuals to own their data (Cabada, *et al.*, 2018). The focus has now shifted towards the development of web 4.0 technology which will focus on augmented reality and big data (Wongmonta, 2020). Hence, with the continuous advancement in technology and changing consumer trends, social commerce has become a major concern for retailers and service providers (Huang and Benyoucef, 2017).

Problem Statement

Retailers across the globe have shifted their transactions on Social Commerce to improve their business and increase profitability (Wang and Herrando, 2019). Moreover, the pandemic has become a catalyst for social commerce as the Covid-19 forced consumers to shift towards social media and online shopping which exposed the consumers to its benefits. Hence, businesses started working towards the integration of their e-commerce businesses with social media (Hashim, *et al.*, 2020). However, there are a few cases where the Social Commerce stratagems failed and some of the factors highlighted that lead to such failures are consumer trust, consumer perceived risk, and user privacy (Al-Adwan, 2019).

Additionally, there are an inadequate number of research studies that focus on social commerce, if there is any, simultaneously indicating whether perceived Risk and Consumer trust influence intention of consumer to purchase with the mediating role of seeking of information in social commerce and familiarity of the SNS (Lazaroiu, *et al.*, 2020; Abou Ali, Abbass, and Farid, 2020). Hence, addressing the gap in research, this research paper discusses the connection between trust, perceived risk, and intention of consumer to purchase, and proposes a model that focuses on two major concepts in social commerce, which include, seeking of information in social commerce that mediate the relationships amid trust, perceived risk and intention of consumer to purchase, and familiarity of the platform that mediates the relationship amid seeking of information in social commerce and intention of consumer to purchase.

Aim and Objectives of Research

The research study aims to assess the significance of trust and consumer risk perception in determining intention of the customer to buy in the Pakistani Social Commerce. The research objectives for the study are as under:

- ✓ To observe the relationship amid trust and intention of the consumer to purchase
- ✓ To assess the relationship amid perceived risk and intention of consumer to purchase
- ✓ To assess the mediating effect of seeking of information in social commerce
- ✓ To examine the mediating effect of familiarity of the platform

Research Questions

The following research questions have been devised for the study:

Q1 To what extent does trust contributes in shaping intention of the consumer to purchase in Pakistani social commerce?



Q2 To what extent does perceive risk play a role in shaping intention of consumer to purchase in Pakistan social commerce?

Q3 Does Seeking of Information in Social Commerce mediate the relationship amid trust, perceived risk, and intention of consumer to purchase?

Q4 Does familiarity mediate the association amid seeking of information in social commerce and intention of consumer to purchase?

Scope of Study

This study will serve as a yardstick for the social commerce retailers in devising strategies to stimulate intention of consumer to purchase and enhancing profitability.

Literature Review

This chapter of the research study will begin with a discussion on the underpinning theories for intention of consumer to purchase and a discussion on the latent variables of the study. Furthermore, the theoretical relationships will be discussed leading to the development of hypotheses and the conceptual model.

Theoretical Background

In the content of social commerce, intention of consumer to purchase means the intention of the consumer to indulge in an online transaction with online retailers through social media platforms (Yusuf and Busalim, 2018). The planned behavior theory is commonly used by researchers to explain the consumer's intention to purchase a service or product. The theory was first proposed by Ajzen, (1991) who argued that the key factor in the theory is the intention of the consumer to get engaged in a specific behavior, hence, the intention is assumed to be the determinant of the consumer's behavior, and consumer's purchase intention can be defined as the strength of the customer to demonstrate a precise behavior (Yadav and Pathak, 2017). Another theory that guides the consumer intentional behavior in the social commerce setting is the "technology acceptance model – TAM". The theory explains the process that a consumer goes through to accept and use a specific technology (Davis, 1989). TAM is among the most influential extensions of the theory of planned behavior and is the most commonly applied theory in the context of technology acceptance and its usage (Kaur and Kumar, 2020). Social commerce is quite contrary to e-commerce where consumers make their purchases through a website or a dedicated brand application. Social commerce allows the consumers to make their purchases through a social media platform providing an interactive user experience (Gibreel, AlOtaibi, and Altmann, 2018). Social commerce is at times misinterpreted as social selling, social selling is about refining online relationships on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. However, social commerce is about promoting and selling products on social media and at the same time cultivating relationships with consumers (Maia, *et al.*, 2018). Likewise, Consumer Trust in social commerce can be defined as the attitude and confident expectation of a consumer in an online scenario with the risk that the consumer vulnerabilities will not in any way be exploited by the retailer (Bauman and Bachmann, 2017). Similarly, perceived risk is the amount of risk a consumer perceives in a decision to purchase based on the amount at stake and the consumer feeling of subjective certainty about winning or losing a portion of the amount at stake (Wai, *et al.*, 2019). Also, the familiarity of the consumer with technology is of high significance for online retailers. Consumer familiarity in the social commerce context can be defined as the extent to which the consumer understands the procedures of social networking sites (Al-Adwan and Kokash, 2019). Finally, seeking of information in social commerce is the building block of social commerce platforms, it is the customer's effort for obtaining knowledge about a product or service through the present resources on social media such as product recommendations, reviews, and product ratings



(Lazaroiu, *et al.*, 2020). Hence, Consumer Trust and Perceived Risk are found to be significant predictors of intention of consumer to purchase in the context of social commerce, while seeking of information in social commerce and consumer familiarity mediate the relationships between the latent variables (Hajli, *et al.*, 2017; Xue, Liang, and Wang, 2020).

Theoretical Development of Hypothesis

Effects of Trust on Intention of consumer to purchase

The trust which is the consumer's confidence in the capability and reliability of the exchange party is recognized among the top reasons' consumers avoid indulging in electronic purchases (Lin, Wang, and Hajli, 2019; Chen, Gu, and Shen, 2019; Hajli, *et al.*, 2017). However, in Social Commerce, consumers are often notified of a product or a service through social networking sites and get engaged in purchases (Yahia, Al-Neama, and Kerbache, 2018). Therefore, trust in the exchange party and the embedded content such as shared reviews and experiences could perhaps increase consumer's purchase intention (Hajli, *et al.*, 2017). Che, Cheung, and Thadani, (2017) argued that trust is the key factor in online purchasing because it reduces the uncertainties of a consumer and minimizes the risks related to the purchase from online retailers. Previous studies have shown when trust is established between the online retailer and consumer than the consumer's willingness to share information, purchase items, and interact with others increases (Punyatoya, 2019). Hajli, *et al.*, (2017) argued that social commerce platforms enable the exchange of value between consumers and online retailers as consumers to engage with social media content such as videos, pictures, recommendations, likes, and comments related to online retailers, however, trust stimulates consumer confidence in the reliability of the content and online retailer activities. Therefore, trust is a significant factor in social commerce retailing and in influencing intention of consumer to purchase. Hence, it is proposed that consumer trust in the Social Networking Websites like Facebook or Instagram can potentially increase intention of consumer to purchase from online retailers through social commerce platforms.

H1: Consumer trust in the SNS increases intention of consumer to purchase from an online retailer on social media

Effects of Perceived Risk on Intention of consumer to purchase

The internet provides consumers with numerous benefits, however, there is always a level of uncertainty involved in online purchasing (Jordan, Leskovar, and Maric, 2018). Previous studies have identified the significance of perceived risk in online purchasing (Ariffin, Mohan, and Goh, 2018; Xue, Liang, and Wang, 2020). Perceived risk is argued to be a major factor that influences online purchasing and is recognized as one of the key motivators in consumer behavior (Han and Kim, 2017). Pelaez, Chen, and Chen, (2019) argued that perceived risk helps retailers to see the world from a consumer perspective. Perceived risk is found to reduce intention of consumer to purchase items from the internet (Jordan, Leskovar, and Maric, 2018). Hence, it is proposed that perceived risk negatively influences a consumer's willingness to purchase from an online retailer on the social media platform.

H2: Perceived risk negatively influence intention of consumer to purchase from an online retailer on social media

Effects of Trust on Seeking of information in social commerce

Acquiring information enhances the consumer knowledge of the product or services offered online and strengthens consumer trust in the online retailer. Furthermore, it stimulates the consumer decision-making process to purchase online (Hajli, *et al.*, 2017). Ellis, *et al.*,



(1993) proposed the six phases of consumer information-seeking behavior: 1) All the activities related to the search of information about a specific product or service and recognizing the platform containing the information, 2) pursuing the product or service on various platforms or relevant websites, 3) going through the content on various communities related to the product or service, 4) selecting the source based on the quality of information, 5) going through comments about different retailers of the product, and 6) extracting the material of interest and then selecting the online retailer for purchase. As part of the information search, consumers often read recommendations about the product and use these recommendations in making purchase decisions (Pratama, *et al.*, 2017). Hence, consumer recommendations and reviews are a key feature for online retailers on social commerce and promote consumer trust in the online brand (Hajli, Hajli, and Khani, 2013). Therefore, it is proposed that Trust has a substantial and constructive relationship with seeking of information in social commerce.

H3: Consumer trust in the SNS has a significant and positive relationship with seeking of information in social commerce

Effects of Perceived Risk on Seeking of information in social commerce

Consumer information seeking in the context of social commerce is based on two key factors including personalization and mutuality (Li, *et al.*, 2020). Personalization in social commerce can generate customized and relevant information that matches the requirements and preferences of the consumer which inadvertently reduces the perception of risk involved in online purchase (Xue, Liang, and Wang, 2020). Likewise, mutuality can be defined as the degree to which the consumer can acquire help or information from other users on the social media platform regarding a specific product or service (Li, Liang, and Li, 2018). Shaheen, *et al.*, (2019) argued that information related to other users online may provide external cues that reduce consumer's uncertainty during the purchase decision-making process. Both these factors are an important part of consumer information seeking on social commerce platforms, and the right information acquired by the consumer decreases perceived risk. Hence, it is proposed that Seeking of Information in Social Commerce negatively affects consumer perceived risk in purchasing online through social media platforms.

H4: Perceived risk in SNS has a substantial adverse relationship with seeking of information in social commerce

Effects of Seeking of information in social commerce on Intention of consumer to purchase

Seeking of Information in Social Commerce improves the knowledge of an individual about the product through a pool of information at the consumer's disposal. Hence, the increase in the knowledge of consumers about a specific product positively stimulates the decision-making process of the consumer and intention to purchase (Liu, Bao, and Zheng, 2019). Yeon, Park, and Lee, (2019) argued that content generated by users such as online reviews, ratings, and comments offer value analytics to consumers which positively stimulates their intention to purchase from an online retailer through social commerce. Previous literature has also indicated that reviews about the product and content that allow the consumer to interact with the product before deciding to purchase have a positive impact on their purchasing behavior (Hajli, *et al.*, 2017). Hence, it is proposed that Seeking of Information in Social Commerce through product reviews and shared user experiences have a positive impact on the consumer's intention to purchase from an online vendor.



H5: Seeking of information in social commerce has a substantial position association with consumer's intention to purchase on social commerce

Effects of Seeking of information in social commerce on Familiarity

Previous literature has investigated the effects of consumer familiarity with brands or products on intention of consumer to purchase (Wang, *et al.*, 2018; Raza, *et al.*, 2019). However, the role of familiarity in the online platform and specifically social commerce to enhance intention of consumer to purchase needs further investigation (Monfared *et al.*, 2021). When a consumer acquires information about a product or service through consumer-generated content such as product reviews or shared experiences, the consumer gains knowledge of the platform which in turn enhances consumer familiarity with the Social Networking Site SNS (Azam and Aldehayyat, 2018). Al-Adwan and Kokash, (2019) argued that continued engagement in the information-seeking channels enables the consumer to gain familiarity with the searching tools, policies of rating, and content of reviews. Hence, this positively stimulates the buying behavior of the consumer. Therefore, it is proposed that Seeking of Information in Social Commerce improves the familiarity of the consumer with the social media platform.

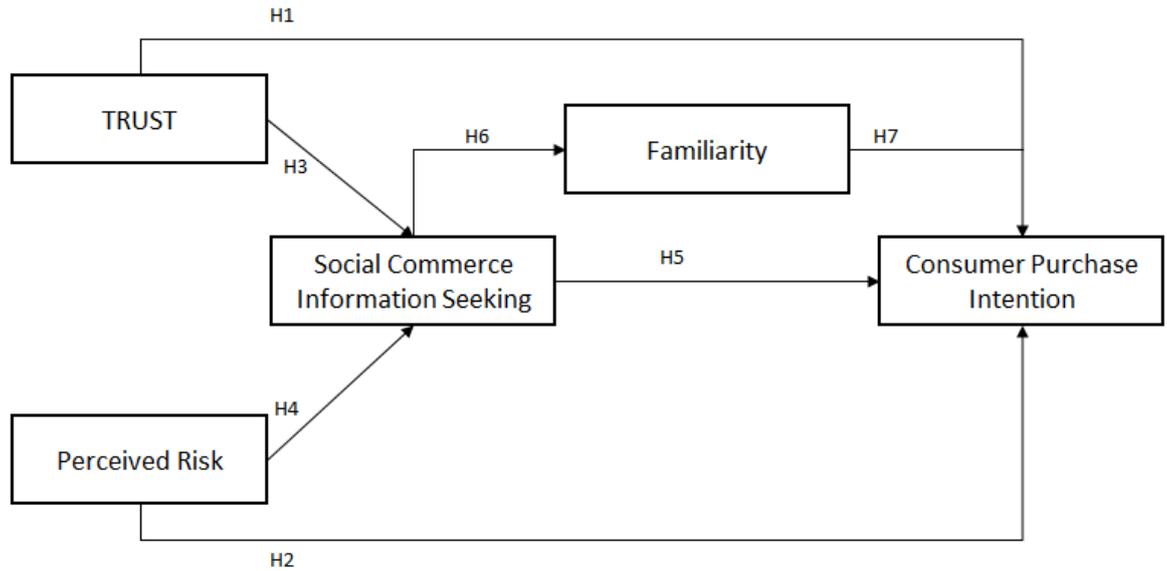
H6: Seeking of information in social commerce has a substantial position association with consumer familiarity with the social media platform

Effects of Familiarity on Intention of consumer to purchase

Purchasing through social commerce is a complex process that requires the consumer to go through certain steps such as findings a specific product, searching for customer reviews, product ratings and user experiences, selecting the vendor and the product, and providing information to make the purchase (Hajli, *et al.*, 2017). Hence, complexity in the online platform can result in consumer avoidance to purchase, nevertheless, familiarity with the platform can enhance the understanding of the consumer of the shopping process and stimulate consumer online purchase intention (Agila and Anthony, 2020). Previous studies have suggested that familiarity with the social media platform enables consumers to depend on user-generated content for making online purchases (Al-Adwan and Kokash, 2019; Xiao, *et al.*, 2019). Hence, it has been proposed that consumer familiarity with the social media platform can enhance intention of consumer to purchase in social commerce.

H7: Consumer familiarity with the social media platform has a significant and positive relationship with intention of consumer to purchase

Conceptual Framework



Research Methodology

This chapter of the study discusses the methodology adopted through which the research has been conducted.

Research Purpose

The research study made use of an explanatory research purpose to examine the interrelated relationships amid the latent variables of the construct (Hair, Page, and Brunsveld, 2019). The research study intended to examine the influence of consumer trust and perceived risk on intention of consumer to purchase, and identify the mediating role of Seeking of Information in Social Commerce amid these relationships. Further, the research aimed at assessing the influence of seeking of information in social commerce on intention of consumer to purchase with the mediating effect of consumer familiarity.

Research Approach

A quantitative research approach was adopted to assess the connection amid the latent variables of the conceptual framework proposed in the study (Apuke, 2017). Additionally, a deductive approach was selected for the study (Hair, Page, and Brunsveld, 2019).

Research Design

The research study selected a correlational research design because it helped in assessing the influence of one latent variable over the other (Eden, Nielsen, and Verbeke, 2020). Moreover, a survey-based research design was selected to gather the data from the respondents of the study. The study was conducted in Pakistan, and data was gathered from respondents living across several cities in Pakistan.

Sampling Technique

The study selected a non-probability convenience sampling technique because the data was gathered from respondents living in several cities across the country. Hence, convenience sampling enabled the researcher to gather data from those respondents who were easily available to provide their feedback (Hair, Page, and Brunsveld, 2019). A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed to respondents living in Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and



Karachi through online channels such as Facebook and Twitter, and a total of 298 responses were collected to perform data analysis.

Sample Size

The targeted population for the research study was respondents living in several cities across Pakistan including Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, and Rawalpindi. From this population, a sample of 298 respondents was selected for data analysis.

Research Instrument

The research study made use of a questionnaire as a tool to gather the responses for data analysis. The items of the questionnaire were adapted from past studies including Hajli, *et al.*, (2017) and Xue, Liang, and Wang, (2020). Moreover, the inter-item reliability was also tested using Cronbach’s Alpha to assess that the adopted items provide reliable and suitable results (Taylan, Özkan, and Çelik, 2020).

Statistical Technique

The research study made use of a structured equation modeling technique using Smart PLS. The statistical technique helped in examining the structural relationships among the latent variable of the construct (Shiau, Sarstedt, and Hair, 2019). Furthermore, bootstrapping was chosen to examine the statistical significance of the path coefficients highlighting the relationships among the latent variables. Hence, this enabled to validation of the hypotheses postulated in the study (Sarstedt, Ringle, and Hair, 2017). Likewise, the reliability and validity were also tested at both the construct and individual indicator levels.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical issues were taken into consideration during data collection for the study. The identity of the respondents was kept anonymous and the data acquired was utilized solely to conduct the research study.

Data Analysis

Table 1 Respondent Profile

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	89	29.86
	Female	209	70.14
	Total	298	100
Age	16-22	45	15.10
	23-30	65	21.81
	31-40	78	26.17
	41-50	56	18.79
	>50	54	18.13
	Total	298	100
Occupation	Student	126	42.28
	Employed	98	32.88
	Self-	74	24.84



	Total	298	100
Income	Less than 25,000-	110	36.91
	25,000-35,000-	90	30.21
	35,000-50,000 and	40	13.42
	50,000 and	58	19.46
	Total	298	100
City	Karachi	255	85.57
	Islamabad	13	4.36
	Lahore	20	6.72
	Rawalpindi	10	3.35
	Total	298	100
Total		298	100

In table 1, the profile of the respondents has been illustrated. Among the 298 respondents from whom the data was collected, 209 were females and 89 were males. Therefore, female respondents have dominated this research study. Furthermore, 26.17 percent of the respondents belonged to the age bracket of 31 to 40 years. Whereas, 21.81 percent belonged to the age bracket of 23 to 30 years. Likewise, 18.79 percent of the respondents were aged between 41 to 50 years and 15.10 percent belonged to the age bracket of 16-22 years. The occupation was also considered as a variable, and the majority of the respondents were students i.e. 126 while 98 respondents were employed and 74 were self-employed. Likewise, the majority of the respondents i.e. 110 were having an income level below 25000, while 90 respondents were having an income level between 25000 to 35000. The remaining respondents had an income level between 35000 and 50, 000 and above 50,000. Lastly, the majority of the data was collected from Karachi which accounts for approximately 85 percent of the total responses.

Evaluation of the Outer Model

The outer loading was assessed in the study to determine the item’s absolute contribution to the assigned construct.

Table 1 Outer Loadings

Outer Loadings		Intenti on of consumer to purchase	Familiar ity	Perceiv ed Risk	Seeki ng of information in social commerce	Tru st
CPI1	0.795					
CPI2	0.796					
CPI3	0.838					
F1			0.889			
F2			0.950			
F3			0.895			
PR2				0.945		
PR3				0.941		



1	SCIS	0.894	
2	SCIS	0.856	
3	SCIS	0.945	
4	SCIS	0.853	
	T1		0.8
		59	
	T2		0.9
		32	
	T3		0.8
		83	

Table 2 portrays the collective outer loading which indicates the reliability of all the items and latent variables in the construct (Sarstedt, Ringle, and Hair, 2017). The results of the assessment show that all of the outer loadings are on their respective items and are greater than the threshold value of 0.60. Some of the items i.e. PR1, CPI4, and F4 were removed due to reliability issues. Hence, the criterion for outer loading has been met (Ringle, *et al.*, 2020).

Table 2 Convergent validity

Convergent Validity			
	CA	CR	AVE
Intention of consumer to purchase	0.74	0.85	0.65
Familiarity	0.89	0.93	0.83
Perceived Risk	0.87	0.94	0.89
Seeking of information in social commerce	0.91	0.93	0.78
Trust	0.87	0.92	0.79

Convergent validity was also assessed to identify whether the measures of the construct that should be correlated are related to each other (Sarstedt, Ringle, and Hair, 2017). Table 3 indicates that Cronbach’s Alpha is greater than the threshold value of 0.70 which means that inter-item reliability has been established. Moreover, the composite reliability has also been established as the values are greater than the threshold value of 0.70. This indicates that the scale items have internal consistency (Hair, Page, and Brunsveld, 2019). Likewise, the values of the AVE is larger than the threshold value of 0.50. This indicates that latent variables are well measured by their respective scale items. Hence, convergent validity has been established (Ringle, *et al.*, 2020).

Discriminant Validity

Apart from discriminant validity, the convergent validity was also assessed to establish that the measures of the construct that should not be correlated are not related (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2015). To check the discriminant validity, two major criteria were used including Fornell & Larcker, and HTMT Criterion.



Table 3 Fornell & Larcker Criterion

Discriminant Validity: Fornell & Larcker Criterion							
	Intention of consumer to purchase	Familiarity	Familiarity	Perceived Risk	Seeking of information in social commerce	Trust	Trust
Intention of consumer to purchase	0.81						
Familiarity	0.76	0.912					
Perceived Risk	0.64	0.835	0.94				
Seeking of information in social commerce	0.59	0.830	0.82	0.88			
Trust	0.61	0.720	0.64	0.7	0.892		0.8

Fornell and Larcker is the most common method to test the discriminant validity of the model. The method is used to examine the level of shared variance amid the latent variables of the construct (Hair, Page, and Brunsveld, 2019). Through this technique, the AVE square root was estimated against the correlations of the framework and confirm that the AVE square root that the correlations of all the other variables of the construct (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2015). Table 4 confirms that the discriminant validity through the Fornell and larcker criterion has been established.

Table 4 HTMT Criterion

Discriminant Validity: HTMT Criterion							
	Intention of consumer to purchase	Familiarity	Familiarity	Perceived Risk	Seeking of information in social commerce	Trust	Trust
Intention of consumer to purchase	-						
Familiarity	0.808	-					
Perceived Risk	0.781	0.815	-				
Seeking of information in social commerce	0.698	0.804	0.815	-			
Trust	0.744	0.793	0.721	0.78	-		

The second criterion used to check the discriminant validity of the construct is the heterotrait-monotrait ratio criterion. All the values illustrated in Table 5 are less than the threshold value i.e. 0.90 hence, the HTMT criterion confirms that discriminant validity has been established (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2015).



Table 5 Blindfolding Test & Quality Criteria

R ² , Adjusted R ² & Stone-Giesser's Test (Q ²)			
	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Intention of consumer to purchase	0.60	0.601	0.380
Familiarity	0.68	0.687	0.567
Seeking of information in social commerce	0.72	0.727	0.567

After verifying the reliability and validity of the construct, the estimation relevance was also examined using Stone-Giesser's Test through the blindfolding technique. Table 6 shows that Q² is larger than the threshold value of '0' which specifies that there is estimation relevance in the path model (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2015). Also, Adjusted R² was also assessed, and Table 6 illustrates that higher than 60 percent of the variation in the latent variable i.e. Intention of consumer to purchase is explained by its respective predictor variables. Similarly, more than 68% of the variation in the output variable i.e. familiarity is explained by its respective predictor variable, and more than 70% of the variation in the variable seeking of information in social commerce is explained by its respective predictor variables.

Table 6 Path Coefficients

Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values			
	SRW	P Values	Remarks
Trust -> Intention of consumer to purchase (H1)	4.765	0.006	Significant
Perceived Risk -> Intention of consumer to purchase (H2)	6.057	0.000	Significant
Trust -> Seeking of information in social commerce (H3)	8.067	0.000	Significant
Perceived Risk -> Seeking of information in social commerce (H4)	17.588	0.000	Significant
Seeking of information in social commerce -> Intention of consumer to purchase (H5)	5.002	0.004	Significant
Seeking of information in social commerce -> Familiarity (H6)	40.438	0.000	Significant



Familiarity -> Intention of consumer to purchase (H7)	12.300	0.000	Significant
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In the final step of the data analysis, the bootstrapping technique was applied where a structured framework was assessed using 5000 replications, and path coefficients were evaluated to validate the postulated hypotheses in the study (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2015). The accepted p-value for the confirmation of the validity of the hypothesis is less than 0.05, and any value greater than 0.05 is rejected (Sarstedt, Ringle, and Hair, 2017). We predicted that trust has a substantial position association with Intention of consumer to purchase and the p-value i.e. 0.006 indicates that the hypothesis has been confirmed. We also predicted that perceived risk has a significant inverse relationship with Intention of consumer to purchase, and the p-value i.e. 0.000 indicates that our hypothesis has been accepted. Likewise, it was hypothesized that trust has a substantial positive association with seeking of information in social commerce, and the p-value i.e. 0.000 validates the hypothesis. Also, we predicted that perceived risk has a significant inverse relationship with seeking of information in social commerce, and its respective p-value i.e. 0.000 validates the hypothesis. Our fifth prediction was that seeking of information in social commerce has a substantial position association with Intention of consumer to purchase, and its respective p-value i.e. 0.004 verified the hypothesis. We also predicted that seeking of information in social commerce has a substantial position association with familiarity, and its respective p-value i.e. 0.000 confirmed the validity of the hypothesis. Our last prediction was that familiarity has a substantial position association with Intention of consumer to purchase, and its respective p-value i.e. 0.000 confirmed the validity of the last hypothesis of this study. Hence, all the postulated hypotheses for the study were found to be significant.

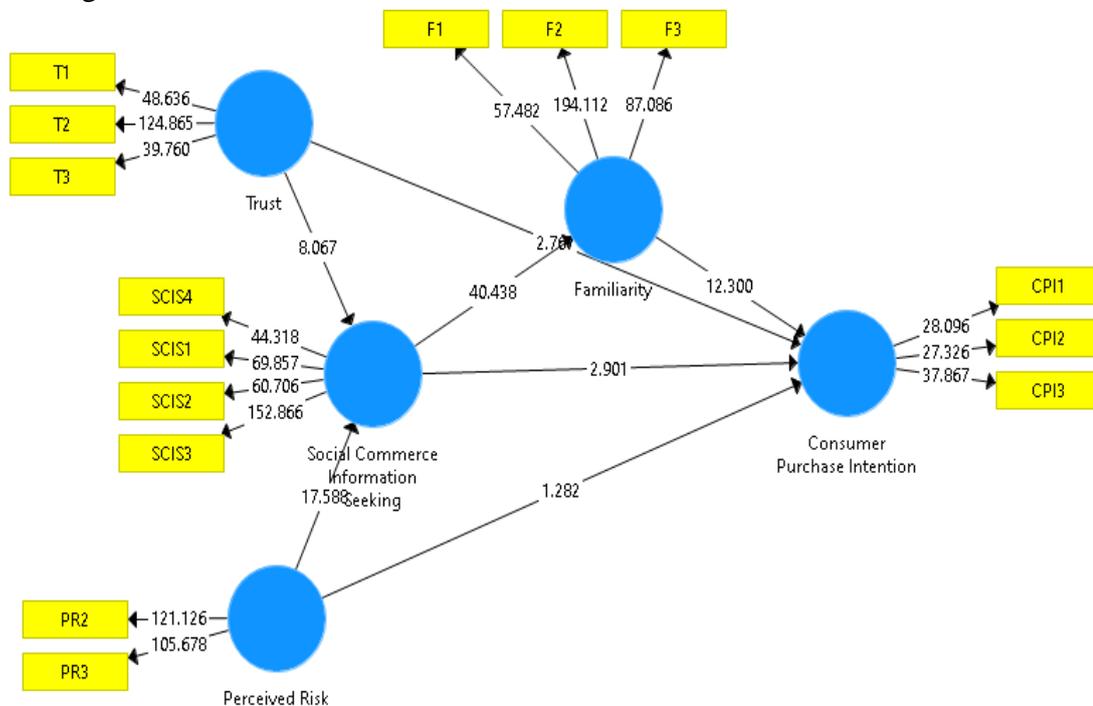


Figure 1 Bootstrap Estimated Model

Discussion

Literature has shown that the pandemic has shifted the consumer trend towards online shopping (Hashim, et al, 2020), and as a result, social commerce has seen a significant amount of growth in the past two years (Huang and Benyoucef, 2013). Social commerce has surpassed traditional commerce and e-commerce because it provides an interactive platform where



buying and selling are done through user contribution. Hence, social commerce is found to provide more comprehensive consumer engagement (Gibreel, AlOtaibi, and Altmann, 2018). Past studies have confirmed that consumer trust has a significant role in stimulating consumer's behavioral intention in making a purchase using social commerce platforms like Facebook and Instagram (Chen, Gu, and Shen, 2019; Yahia, Al-Neama, and Kerbache, 2018). Studies have also identified the role of perceived risk in stimulating intention of consumer to purchase (Xue, Liang, and Wang, 2020). However, there is a limited amount of research that simultaneously examined the role of trust and perceived risk on consumer's intention to purchase in the context of social commerce, and at the same time identified whether seeking of information in social commerce and familiarity play a mediating role in these relationships.

Our findings suggested that consumer trust improves the consumer's intention to purchase from retailers selling through social media websites. These findings are congruent with the findings of Hajli, *et al.*, (2017) and Che, Cheung, and Thadani, (2017). Moreover, our study suggested that perceived risk has a substantial inverse relationship with consumer's intention to purchase over social media networking websites. The results are congruent with the findings of Ariffin, Mohan, and Goh, (2018) and Xue, Liang, and Wang, (2020). Hence, our study suggests that in the context of Pakistan, consumer risk perception reduces intention of consumer to purchase through a social networking website. Moreover, the study suggests that when consumers seek information about a specific product or brand on social networking websites by going through consumer reviews and product ratings, it improves the consumer's trust, minimizes risk perception, and positively stimulates consumer's intention to purchase from the retailer. Therefore, Seeking of Information in Social Commerce mediates the connection amid consumer risk perception, consumer trust, and consumer's intention to purchase. The results are congruent with the findings of Liu, Bao, and Zheng, (2019) and Yeon, Park, and Lee, (2019).

Likewise, our findings have also suggested that consumer familiarity mediates the association amid seeking of information in social commerce and intention of consumer to purchase. This implies that when consumers seek information using social media platforms, they become aware of the content and procedures, which as a result enhances their intention to purchase from the social media platform. The results are congruent with the findings of Hajli, *et al.*, (2017) and Al-Adwan and Kokash, (2019).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

The study provides empirical evidence that trust plays a substantial role in stimulating consumer's intention to purchase in Pakistan social commerce. Moreover, the study confirms that consumer risk perception negatively influences consumer's online purchase decisions. However, seeking of information in social commerce is found to improve trust and minimize consumer risk perceptions which in turn enhances the consumer's intention to purchase online through social media websites like Facebook and Instagram. Likewise, familiarity also improves the association amid seeking of information in social commerce and intention of consumer to purchase.

Managerial & Theoretical Implications

Our findings have made significant theoretical implications. The findings confirm the role of trust as a major factor in predicting consumer purchase intention on social commerce platforms, which is further strengthened by the quality of available information about the product, and user familiarity with the platform. Likewise, the study also confirms the negative



role of perceived risk and that perceived risk can be abridged through the information shared by other users about the product on social commerce platforms.

Consequently, marketing practitioners should focus their social commerce strategy on consumer-generated content and ensure the availability of information regarding their brand or product to positively stimulate consumer's intention to purchase. Similarly, marketing practitioners should be concerned about consumer engagement with the social media platform because as our study suggests, the more consumer will engage with social media, the more they will become familiar with how things work which will increase the chances of purchase and diminish the likelihood of perceived risk.

Future Recommendations

The study has a few limitations. The data for the research has been collected from Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, and Rawalpindi. Future research should consider collecting data from more cities like Peshawar, Faisalabad, and Quetta. Moreover, future research should consider testing the moderation effects of potential factors such as consumer habits and social media involvement. It is anticipated that this research will contribute to the studies on social commerce in the context of Pakistan.

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