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Digital Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour

A Case Study of Pakistani Apparel Brands

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Thesis abstract

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Digital marketing is a powerful modern business strategy for increasing apparel brand awareness through social media and e-commerce. However, there has not been in-depth market research on how to meet consumers' changing preferences and needs via digital marketing. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the role of digital marketing in consumer buying behavior in Pakistan, considering famous apparel brands as a convenience sampling. The AIDA model is considered for examining the issues. The study applies thematic analysis to evaluate the pattern of collected data through Microsoft Forms and interviews over the phone with ten apparel brand professionals.

Empirical findings indicate that Pakistani apparel brands advertise online and promote themselves using digital platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. Nevertheless, various digital marketing tools and techniques must be considered, including digital billboards, video channels, SEO, PPC, email, and content marketing. The study also reveals that when the AIDA model is applied in digital marketing, digital infrastructure, and national and regional culture should be considered.

The study suggests that Pakistani clothing brands should prioritize digital marketing tools for advertising because customer behaviors toward online shopping differ in different cities. For example, customers buy apparel brands by visiting stores if the digital infrastructure needs to be better developed in a specific area. Therefore, companies must set digital marketing goals nationally or regionally to achieve financial efficiency.

¹ Keywords: Digital Media, Fashion, Apparel brands, Pakistan, Social Media Marketing, Customer satisfaction

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Terms and Abbreviations

DM	Digital Marketing
PPC	Pay Per Click
COD	Cash on Delivery
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SMM	Social Media Marketing
AIDA	Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This chapter presents an outline of the thesis. It describes the study background to explain the significance of digital marketing on consumer buying behavior for Pakistani apparel brands. Then, the study identifies research gaps based on prior literature, the research question, and the objective. The following sections present the study scope, while the last section elaborates on the key concepts and study structure.

1.1 Background

As the world is experiencing continuous changes due to the emergence of globalization factors, one significant aspect that has been reported to exist critically is technological transformations (Sachs, 2019, pp.1–3). With increased customer demand, expectations, and emerging technological trends, organizations must accommodate the rapid technological developments in their routine practices. However, technological advancement and development is quite a broad topic, whereas one segment in this study is identified as digital marketing (Autio et al., 2021). Generally, digital marketing refers to all the promotion and advertisement efforts undertaken by organizations through which sufficient awareness regarding their existence, operations, products, and services can be provided digitally (Chaffey & Smith, 2022). Digital marketing relies on various digital channels to efficiently conduct the required marketing activities, including social media, email, and other digital channels.

Similarly, it has been observed that digital marketing significantly impacts consumers' buying behavior, whereas a critical influence has been experienced in the global fashion industry. Due to increased social media and e-commerce trends, fashion brands have adapted their marketing strategies accordingly so that consumers' changing preferences and needs can be met effectively (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2019). A foremost important dynamic under which digital marketing has impacted consumers' purchase behavior is that it serves them with sufficient convenience and required information (Nizar & Jonathan, 2018). Consumers can access online products, conduct a practical comparison between products, and acknowledge reviews from others to make a well-informed decision. In this way, the consumers are encouraged with sufficient empowerment over making impulsive purchases while considering quality and value simultaneously. Similarly, this study has focused on one major fashion brand, Company AZ, which relies on emerging digital marketing trends to positively extend its reach to consumers in the Pakistani fashion market.

1.2 Research Gaps

This research first reviews the previous studies related to digital marketing on consumer behavior to find the research gaps. One significant gap is identified as a lack of empirical research. Apart from having sufficient and relevant theoretical literature related to the influence of digital marketing tools in the apparel industry internationally, there is very limited empirical research supporting the issues. According to Herhausen et al. (2020), there is a discrepancy between what managers believe digital marketing should be and what the relevant theories teach. According to his research, many companies continue to figure out how to create online marketing channels and get value from them. Another critical literature gap observed is the restricted emphasis on digital marketing tools. More empirical research remains needed to provide concrete evidence regarding the effectiveness of digital marketing tools in the apparel industry. According to Pandey et al. (2020), there is a deficiency in marketing tools that measure the gap between managers' " present practices and their optimum DM abilities. Additionally, there is an absence of academic expertise to support the DM shifts occurring in industrial entities.

Moreover, as sufficient literature exists on digital marketing tools generally, there is very limited research that precisely emphasizes the influence of digital marketing tools individually. This can be extensively related to influencer marketing, email marketing, and social media. Social networking, SEO, email marketing, PPC advertising, display advertising, content marketing, and cellular marketing are not given much attention by Rapaccini et al. (2020) in their research of the impact of digital marketing on an organizational level. As a result, the study considers how these technologies affect businesses and people personally.

1.3 Research Aim

After reviewing the previous studies, it is found that there are no studies related to digital marketing on consumer behavior in the apparel industry. Therefore, this study aims to identify the role of digital marketing in consumer buying behavior. It has highlighted some essential factors that work collectively and contribute sufficiently through which consumer behavior in the apparel markets is being influenced in a recurring manner. It has also provided an opportunity for the identified factors to be compared between apparel brands in different regions with a similar economic structure so that the right improvement tactics can be adapted accordingly.

Given the efforts required to complete this project effectively and efficiently, a specific problem statement has been emphasized extensively. The following research aims to assess the extent to which digital marketing incentives applied by companies have been successful in optimizing purchase decisions and the overall attitude of consumers. Moreover, Szmigin and Piacentini (2018) found that their research acknowledges that precise digital marketing incentives have been highly influential in positively optimizing consumers' behavior towards apparel brands. Munsch (2021) further states that by analyzing the influence of digital marketing on customers' buying behavior, several sources have served as essential insights for all fashion companies that aim to enhance their digital marketing activities and maximize their market share profitably.

1.4 Research Questions and Objectives

This study seeks the following research questions, considering the research aim based on research gaps. Answering the research question would assist Pakistani apparel companies in accurately using digital marketing tools for better marketing and sales. Therefore, the main research question is: What is the role of digital marketing on consumer buying behaviors? This study tries to answer the research question in different stages, known as research objectives. Therefore, the general and sub-objectives follow the main research question to reach the study aim. The main objective is to identify the role of digital marketing on consumer buying behavior. However, the sub-objectives are different segments of the main objective. Hence, the sub-objectives are:

- To classify the various types of digital marketing media used by apparel brands in Pakistan.
- To recognize the digital media and its role in consumer buying behavior in Pakistan.

Theoretically, this study answers the research question by considering a theory like the AIDA model. Empirically, this study interviews the managers and executives of the Pakistani apparel brand to understand the apparel market's existing marketing strategy.

1.5 Scope of Research

The scope of this research includes an inductive research approach chosen for the study because it aims to identify the key themes related to digital marketing influences on customer behavior, such as persuasiveness or absurd marketing, so that it can be improved and enhanced accordingly. Moreover, this study takes two months to complete. In addition, the research methodology is qualitative (i.e., a case study). Ten respondents were selected for this study, so they were interviewed individually with ten interview questions to analyze their findings and integrate them with the entire research, aiming to obtain a practical synthesis. Moreover, a convenience-based sampling strategy was chosen for this study because a random sampling strategy would be expensive and unrelated to this study.

It is concluded that the following study is based on analyzing and evaluating the importance and the influence of digital marketing, a famous brand in the apparel industry of Pakistan identified as Company AZ. The company has leveraged digital marketing strategies to a significant extent. However, they are less successful than some of the leading names in the industry, which is why some essential recommendations have been provided with the help of a detailed assessment. The following research is based on a qualitative study that has collected relevant responses with the help of direct interviews so that precision and relevance can be maintained. Table 1 below represents the key concepts of this study with explanation.

1.6 Key Concepts

The key concepts are digital marketing, social media marketing, and search engine optimization (Table 1).

Table 1. Key Concepts.

Term	Explanation
Digital Marketing (DM)	Digital marketing is the promotion of companies to engage with prospective consumers using search engines or other online platforms.
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	Social media marketing involves using SMM platforms to communicate with consumers, develop brands, boost revenue, and improve website traffic.
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	SEO ensures a website ranks high in a search engine's directory of results to maximize the number of visits to that specific website.

1.7 Structure of Research

Chapter One describes the study background of digital marketing and identifies the research gaps considering the previous studies. Accordingly, it focuses on the research aim. The question is formulated based on the study's aim. Then, general and sub-objectives are linked to the research the research question. Finally, the study scope is designed to explain the boundaries of the research. An overview of the literature on a wide range of topics related to digital marketing and consumer purchasing behavior is illustrated in Chapter Two. This chapter provides a thorough contextual perspective while highlighting the role played by digital marketing. Additionally, the chapter conceptualizes and evaluates the body of knowledge regarding digital marketing and consumer purchasing behavior.

Chapter Three covers the research methodology. In this chapter, the research philosophy directs the presentation of the study design, methodology, and data-collecting strategy. The data sample and data processing techniques are then covered along with the ethics. Chapter Four analyzes a case study of an AZ company. It describes the company's products and services and analyzes its market positioning. Chapter 5 discusses the study's empirical findings in light of the influence of digital media platforms on customer buying behavior. Third, the findings described the efficiency of online ads in digital media. Finally, findings related to the influence of digital media on sales. Chapter six describes a detailed discussion of this study's empirical findings.

It indicates the use of digital media in Pakistani apparel brands and digital media tools in Apparel companies to influence customers, reach targeted audiences, increase sales, and improve E-commerce. Chapter Seven discusses the study's summary, theoretical implications, managerial implications, policy implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

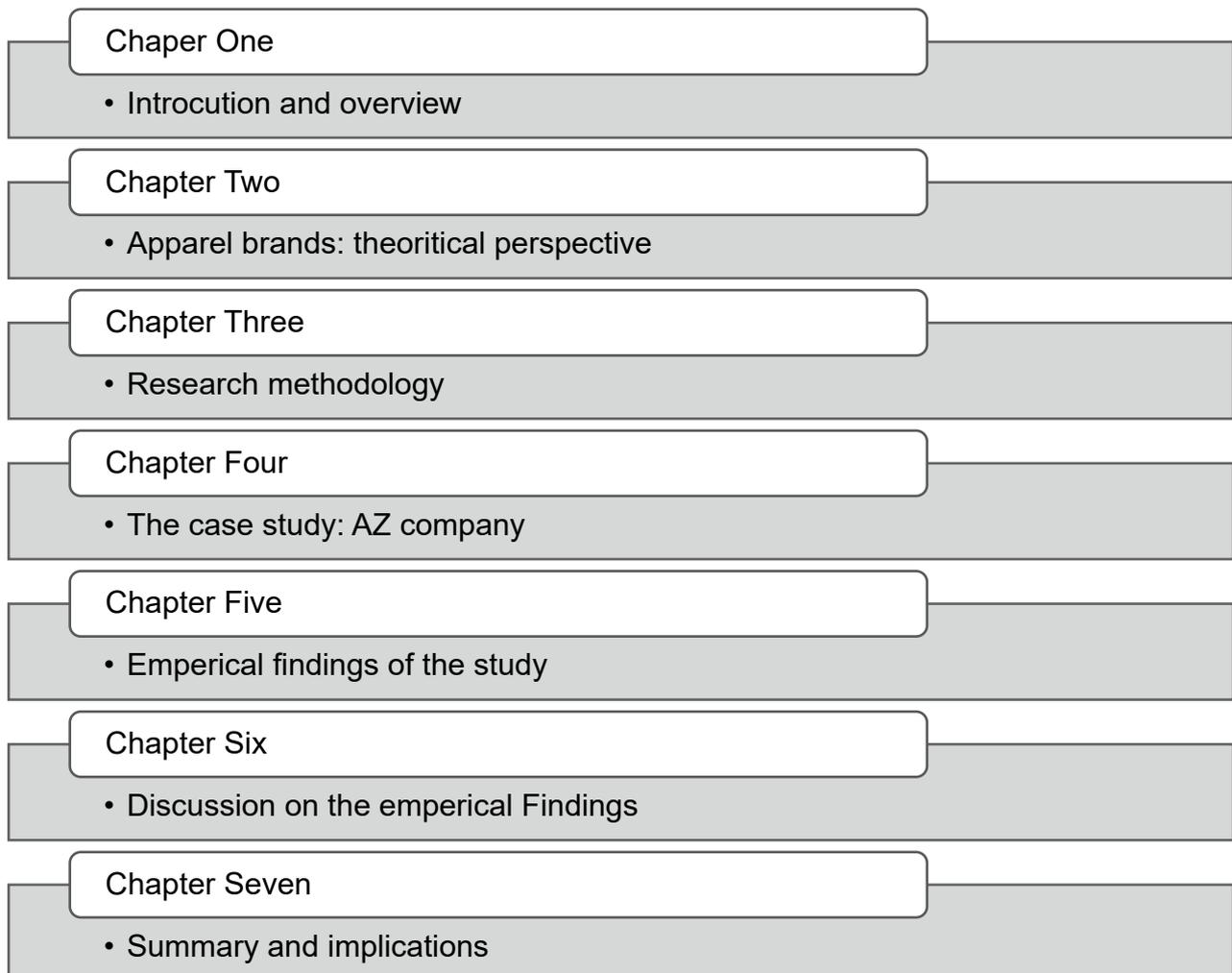


Figure 1. Structure of the Thesis.

2. DIGITAL MARKETING ON APPAREL BRANDS: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This section details the theory as the AIDA model. Following the model, the study reviews articles and journals of earlier knowledge that serve as the primary focus of the study objectives: digital marketing in consumer buying behavioral changes in Pakistani apparel brands.

2.1 AIDA Model

Based on the discussion above emphasizing the influence of digital marketing tools on consumers' buying behavior in the apparel industry, it is essential to understand that the accurate application of the tools can be associated with different theoretical frameworks. The relevant theoretical frameworks can offer a step-by-step guide for aligning digital tools with a strong understanding of appropriately predicted outcomes. Similarly, the relevant theoretical frameworks are identified and illustrated below. The first theoretical model is identified as AIDA, which can be abbreviated as 'Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action.' AIDA is a conventional marketing framework that is usually leveraged in the digital marketing space so that the establishment of marketing strategies can be assisted efficiently. It has been suggested by the AIDA model that customers travel through an array of different stages before they can initiate a well-informed purchase decision.

In contrast, this process begins with their attention being attracted, leading to the development of relevant interest in the product, resulting in a desire for the product to be purchased and ultimately taking an action through which it can be purchased successfully (Ullal & Hawaldar, 2018). The AIDA model is frequently followed in the global apparel industry, which might not be visible transparently. The AIDA model consists of Attention—Marketers must grab clients' attention using visual media to promote products. Other methods include placing ads in unconventional yet conspicuous places to attract clients. Interest - Customer attention must be sparked and maintained to learn about the goods. An intriguing figure, voice actor, or mascot may offer brief, well-paced data to keep attention. Desire - Selling features, dominance over competitors, and adaptability may build desire. This describes an item's value and the attractive features that inspire consumers to choose and buy it. Action - If the consumer came this far, interest exists. Finally, sealing the transaction and encouraging the consumer to decide on interest may require overcoming obstacles and issuing an appeal of action.

2.2 Importance of Digital Marketing in the Apparel Industry

The first aspect that has been emphasized critically in this study is the significance of digital marketing in the apparel industry. According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), digital marketing refers to all the incentives acquired and reflected to promote a product or service through digital channels, including digital media, social media, and other relevant channels. Digital marketing is essential in several industries, including the apparel industry. Several reasons can be highlighted to justify this stance. In contrast, Bizhanova et al. (2019) state that digital marketing assists in maximizing reach to a broader audience. Apparel brands can connect with potential customers locally and internationally by leveraging digital marketing channels, including search engine optimization, email marketing, and social media. Moreover, digital marketing has gained significance in the global apparel industry because it is a cost-effective initiative.

According to Wang (2020), conventional marketing initiatives, including TV commercials, billboards, and print ads, are expensive, whereas digital marketing is comparatively affordable. The brands can establish targeted campaigns that are further extended to the key customers efficiently. Additionally, Salem and Salem (2021) further highlighted that digital marketing offers increased opportunities for individuals to personalize the marketing message for consumers in the apparel industry. With the help of advanced data analytics and sufficient information, apparel brands can customize their communication with precise segments, emphasizing an increase in conversion and engagement levels. On the other hand, Ebrahim (2019) concluded that digital marketing assists apparel brands in developing a robust presence on online platforms while strengthening their niche authority. By creating high-quality content and maximizing audience engagement, apparel brands can foster a loyal customer base while successfully extending brand awareness.

2.3 The Role of Digital Marketing Strategies in Building Brand Awareness

The next aspect, explored extensively as an essential part of the focussed literature review, is identified as the impact of digital marketing strategies on maximizing brand awareness. It has been observed that digital marketing strategies have influenced the objective of brand awareness significantly in recent years, due to which brand reputation for several organizations has outgrown exponentially. According to Febriyanto (2020), social media platforms are the most effective and beneficial approach to extending reach to a larger audience to maximize brand awareness. Brands can develop engaging content that resonates well with the target audience. Simultaneously, Choedon and Lee (2020) stated that content marketing is another beneficial strategy. Creating high-quality content ensures that value is provided to the target audience, further assisting with developing leadership across the apparel industry. By developing and presenting valuable content, apparel brands successfully attract and retain a loyal customer base, which automatically increases brand awareness.

Additionally, the findings of Dolega et al. (2021) highlighted that influencer marketing strategy has also gained significance in recent years. Collaborations with industrial influencers have been a practical and viable approach to maximizing brand awareness by using the influencers' existing audience. Influencers in the apparel industry are entitled to develop sponsored content that engages and authentically represents the apparel products of a particular brand. Lastly, it has concluded that the search engine optimization (SEO) trend has gained significant popularity in the apparel industry. Optimizing a brand's content and website against search engines assists with increasing organic traffic and visibility in a highly competitive apparel environment. Securing a higher rank in search engine results attracts more visitors to the website, increasing brand awareness positively.

2.4 Digital Marketing Tools

The overall competitive intensity of the entire apparel industry has outgrown critically in recent years. In contrast, famous apparel brands continuously search for different approaches to influence consumer buying behavior positively. At this point, leveraging digital marketing tools can be a beneficial tactic that needs to be managed and optimized strategically. According to the findings of Rathnayaka (2018) and considering the rules of the AIDA model, one primary digital marketing tool that is quite effective and efficient is social media. Different social media platforms, including Pinterest, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, have gained popularity in the apparel industry for their marketing efforts with higher frequency.

Various apparel brands frequently leverage these platforms to foster a positive brand community, maximize customer engagement, and showcase products successfully. Social media is also essential for launching new products, promoting discounts and sales, and focusing on other marketing activities. On the other hand, the research performed by Esteban-Santos et al. (2018) stated that email marketing is also considered a powerful tool to maximize customer reach. Apparel brands can leverage email marketing so exclusive offers, promotions, and newsletters can be circulated to subscribers efficiently. In this way, the customers feel valued, and sufficient trust is developed, which further results in increased brand loyalty and repetitive purchases by individuals in the long term.

Lastly, Dastane (2020) has explored that augmented reality (AR) is a conceptually new and emerging tool in the apparel industry that is being used increasingly by apparel brands so that virtual trial rooms can be created and encouraged. These allow the customers to try clothes and other fashion products virtually before they can initiate a relevant purchase decision. AR is also beneficial in developing engaging and interactive product displays, which eventually extend sales and customer engagement successfully.

2.5 Digital Marketing Tools on Customer Purchase Decisions

Additionally, it has been assessed that digital marketing tools critically influence customers' purchase decisions, especially in the apparel industry globally. According to Rathore (2018), one critical impact is greater visibility of products, which is possible through various tools, including search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, and social media. Apparel brands are capable and encouraged to leverage these tools so that their products can be presented before a wider audience, allowing them greater convenience related to accessibility for a specific product of their choice. Simultaneously, Liu et al. (2019) stated that digital marketing tools have allowed apparel brands to maximize customer engagement through personalized offerings. Brands look forward to leveraging social media to communicate with customers, address their queries, and serve them with valuable information. In this way, repetitive purchases are encouraged, eventually increasing customer loyalty.

Furthermore, a study by Alwan and Alshurideh (2022) highlighted that digital marketing tools have increased customers' convenience in accessing sufficient product information. Brands can provide detailed product descriptions, videos, and images on social media platforms and websites. This way, customers can initiate well-informed purchase decisions, maximizing sales. Simultaneously, according to the findings of Sethi et al. (2018), digital marketing tools have allowed brands to develop personalized marketing messages customized precisely to the needs and preferences of individual customers.

The brands can leverage analytics and data so that customers' behavior and preferences can be acknowledged, creating targeted marketing messages that resonate well with their customers. Lastly, Zhang et al. (2019) stated that key digital marketing tools, including influencer marketing and user-generated content (UGC), lead to serving social proof through which the customers can extend their trust towards a specific apparel brand. Customers are likely to initiate a purchase decision when they observe other individuals using a similar brand's products and enjoying it with satisfaction.

2.6 Long-Term Success of Apparel Businesses through Digital Marketing Tools

Digital marketing tools are believed to have a crucial impact on the long-term success considerations of apparel companies. Practitioners have observed different influences, which need to be acknowledged to plan further strategies accordingly. By maintaining consistency in sharing and creating high-quality content, apparel businesses can optimize engagement and attraction with the target audience so that loyalty and recognition for the brand can be maximized. Additionally, the key findings of Sharma and Jhamb (2020) highlighted that digital marketing tools support apparel brands adopting a personal and customized approach to interacting with their audience.

By leveraging email marketing and social media to communicate with customers, apparel brands are eventually fostering long-term relationships beneficially, resulting in positive word-of-mouth advertising and repetitive purchases. As per the research of Abuhashesh et al. (2021), it has been observed that digital marketing tools assist apparel brands in providing an enjoyable and seamless experience for customers. By optimizing mobile devices, allowing interconnectivity between payment modes, and serving quick and reliable deliveries, apparel brands can increase convenience for customers towards their purchases, resulting in increased loyalty and satisfaction. Lastly, Rathore (2021) highlighted that digital marketing tools are helpful for apparel brands by allowing and enabling them to remain ahead of the ongoing competition with sufficient information about ongoing technologies and trends. By continuously monitoring digital marketing contributions while making relevant adjustments in their approaches, apparel brands can maximize their competitiveness in a changing market.

Summarizing the contents of the literature review chapter, it has been observed that the discussion has served as a detailed literature review based on the importance of digital marketing in the global apparel industry while reflecting its influence on consumers' buying behavior in the context of the AIDA model. Initially, the significance of a literature review is stated, followed by a critical context associated with the core objectives of the study. The importance of digital marketing in the apparel industry has been discussed according to the findings of different researchers through which it has been observed that an essential role is being played by digital marketing to extend reach to a broader audience while being a cost-effective method as well.

Furthermore, the overall influence of digital marketing strategies on enhancing brand awareness has been discussed critically in which it has been assessed that search engine optimization (SEO), influencer marketing, content marketing, and social media platforms are identified as effective digital marketing approaches through which brand awareness can be maximized considerably. Additionally, the different digital marketing tools leveraged in the global apparel industry to optimize consumer behavior positively have been discussed. These findings reveal that AR, email marketing, and social media are effective digital marketing tools that positively influence customers' buying decisions. Simultaneously, the influence of digital marketing tools on customers' purchase decisions in the apparel industry has also been illustrated. The findings reveal that some secured benefits include social proof, customization of marketing messages, convenience to access product information, maximum customer engagement, and increased product visibility, positively influencing customers' purchase decisions.

Lastly, the following chapter illustrates the long-term effectiveness of apparel brands with the assistance of digital marketing tools. Different theoretical frameworks have been discussed, including the AIDA model through which the existing strategies can be optimized, and a seamless experience can be ensured for the customers continuously. In this way, competition can be minimized, and long-term market sustainability can be ensured. However, the following literature needs to be updated frequently so that new impacts can be accounted for and they can be integrated into further decision-making accordingly.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter is perhaps the supporting pillar of the study because it lays out all the specific and in-depth considerations regarding data collection and analysis (Davidavičienė, 2018). Generally, research methodology can be illustrated as all the different efforts and contributions made by a scholar to gather required information and data to be leveraged accordingly for further decision-making by explicit users. Various research methodologies can be leveraged. In contrast, the decision is solely based on the nature of the study, which is focused on the preference of the researcher and the availability of relevant resources that can be accessed conveniently (Pandey & Pandey, 2021). Similarly, as far as the research methodology of this study, based on the influence of digital marketing on consumer behavior in Pakistan's fast fashion industry, it is essential to select a specific research methodology and proceed accordingly. Hence, a particular research methodology and its significance are further evaluated through different aspects, as shown below.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The first and foremost important aspect of establishing the research methodology of a particular study is research philosophy. Generally, research philosophy can be illustrated as a researcher's beliefs and perceptions regarding how data about a concept can be acquired, analyzed, and leveraged accordingly (Khatri, 2020). Different research philosophies, including interpretivism, positivism, realism, and pragmatism, can be used in the study. The selection of a specific research methodology is solely based on the nature of the study being focused on and the extent of knowledge the researcher possesses so that the correct research philosophy can be chosen. Similarly, as far as the following research is concerned, the influence of digital marketing on the consumer behavior of Pakistani apparel brands. It is emphasized that the research philosophy that has been leveraged in this study is identified as interpretivism. The interpretivism research philosophy can be illustrated as a sociological research philosophy in which an event or an action is characterized by the culture, norms, and beliefs of the society in which the event or action is being conducted (Tamminen & Poucher, 2020). The reason behind selecting the interpretivism research philosophy for this study is that digital marketing initiatives have different influences on customers' behavior globally.

In contrast, the impact on fashion industry customers is associated with apparel brands. It is no exception and needs to be analyzed critically as well. Thus, all cultural and traditional aspects affect customer behavior in Pakistani apparel brands. This is further observed through the associated research methodology.

3.2 Research Approach

In continuance with the discussion provided above, after setting the research philosophy of this study, the following essential element of research methodology, which needs to be aligned considerably, is identified as the research approach. Generally, a research approach can be illustrated as how the claims made through the research philosophy regarding a research context can be tested, analyzed, and relied upon accordingly (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021). Two prominent and broad research approaches can be aligned in the study based on the nature and the philosophy stated earlier. These types are inductive and deductive research approaches.

Precisely, the inductive research approach leverages a greater quantity of qualitative information, including visual analysis and text-based information, which further assists the researcher in identifying essential themes and patterns in the data. On the other hand, the deductive research approach relies more on quantitative strategies, including statistical analysis, so that the hypothesis and theories can be tested and confirmed accordingly (Armat et al., 2018). Similarly, an inductive research approach was followed for the following research topic on the influence of digital marketing on customer behavior. Following an inductive research approach, the key themes related to digital marketing influences on customer behavior, such as persuasiveness or absurd marketing, can be identified so that they can be improved and enhanced accordingly. A deductive research approach was not applied to this research because the nature of this study is qualitative from the initial phase (Pearse, 2019). Thus, leveraging a combination of interpretivism research philosophy with an inductive research approach, the dedicated research methodology of this study is further examined in detail, as shown below.

3.3 Research Strategy and Design

Upon having the research philosophy and approach set for this research, the following essential and critical element of research methodology, which has the entire study outcomes dependent on it extensively, is referred to as research strategy and design, which indicate the formal structure of the study which can either be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed. Generally, a quantitative research methodology is entirely based on numbers and other quantitative information surrounded by relevant facts and figures. However, qualitative research, on the other hand, is based on theoretical formation, which illustrates the beliefs about the context from different dimensions (Kandel, 2020). However, a mixed research methodology includes certain aspects of both quantitative and qualitative designs to provide a balanced and in-depth assessment. Although a mixed-method research methodology is authentic and extensive, it can also be time-consuming and expensive to initiate (Anguera et al., 2018).

Similarly, in contrast to the study context emphasized in the research, a qualitative research strategy has been considered with a case study research design. The core reason behind proceeding with a qualitative research strategy is that numerous factors can influence human behavior due to digital marketing, which can differ according to geographic regions and the type and style of digital marketing being reflected. The impacts eventually focus on improving a business's sales, maximizing its significance (Hennink et al., 2020). Simultaneously, a quantitative research strategy is not selected for this study because it is inappropriate, as measuring consumer behavior influences related to digital marketing is challenging. Hence, a discussion revolves around the research methodology based on philosophy, research approach, strategy, and design.

3.4 Data Collection Strategy

Proceeding further with the discussion provided above, having the research philosophy, approach, strategy, and design set effectively and appropriately, the next important element of this research, which has been emphasized critically, is identified as the data collection strategy. Generally, data collection refers to all the efforts and approaches leveraged through which appropriate, adequate, reliable, and relevant data and information can be acquired successfully (Ghauri et al., 2020).

Such data and information must be collected to give the researchers a starting point for their study, which can be presented effectively so that the reliability of the research users can be maximized. There are different ways through which the required data and information for research can be collected. In contrast, two main initiatives can be focused, including a primary or a secondary strategy. A primary strategy includes first-hand information and efforts through which actual and ongoing data and information can be collected. On the other hand, the secondary approach relies on the existing data and information that has already been collected and presented by researchers and scholars in the past (Ruggiano & Perry, 2019). However, selecting an appropriate and relevant data collection strategy is eventually based on the preference of the researcher, the available time to complete the research, and the overall research budget.

Similarly, the following research is focused on the impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior; the data collection strategy, which has been followed systematically and strategically, is identified as primary. As it is a piece of primary information, the research has opted for interviews through which direct communication and interaction are emphasized from the case companies (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Selecting interviews through a primary data collection strategy ensures the researcher observes the ongoing influence of digital marketing on consumer behavior and further seeks additional information through which the behavior can be molded positively, which benefits the organizations considered for Pakistani apparel brands.

3.5 Sampling Strategy

After selecting a primary research strategy based on the interview approach for data collection, the next important aspect that needs to be emphasized and established carefully and effectively is the sampling strategy. Generally, sampling refers to an initiative through which the population that is intended to be researched practically can be set (Busetto et al., 2020). Different sampling strategies have been designed and promoted for researchers to use depending on the nature of the study, the data collection strategy being followed, and the researcher's preference. These sampling strategies include cluster sampling, systematic sampling, random sampling, purposive sampling, and convenience-based sampling. Similarly, referring to the study context emphasizing the influence of digital marketing on consumer behavior based on the interview strategy for data collection, the sampling strategy opted for this research to recruit the required individuals is convenience sampling.

The convenience sampling process entails selecting individuals who fit the researcher's agenda. No consistent method is used to find these participants; they might be found by approaching individuals in public spaces, workplaces, or any educational institute (Stratton, 2021). Moreover, ten respondents were selected for this study to be interviewed individually, and ten interview questions were used to analyze their findings and integrate them with the entire research, aiming to obtain practical synthesis.

3.6 Data Analysis Method

Continuing with the discussion above, after obtaining all the required, relevant, and adequate data and information through the recruited participants for the set data collection strategy, the next important step, completed carefully and responsibly, is identified as data analysis. Data analysis can be illustrated as an initiative through which the collected data can be synthesized and interpreted critically for adequate presentation so that the reliance and decision-making of the expected users can be optimized positively (Popenoe et al., 2021). Data analysis is important for ongoing research so that the acquired information can be presented clearly and understandably. Different data analysis strategies, such as systematic, content, and thematic analysis, can be leveraged.

Simultaneously, as the following study is entirely based on a primary qualitative research design having the required data and information collected through interviews, the data analysis method that has been followed strategically is identified as thematic analysis. Generally, thematic analysis focuses on critically assessing the research objectives and the content of the literature review and then drawing relevant themes from them collectively, which can be tested with critical analysis explicitly and individually (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The thematic analysis method is used in this research by making four relevant themes and evaluating them critically, which are further provided in detail in the next chapter.

3.7 Validity and Reliability

Although 'validity' is related to the conclusions drawn from assessment outcomes, it is a dynamic and intricate notion. It is implied that the conclusions drawn should be suitable and sufficient when concentrating on the outcomes. Noble and Smith (2015) note that assumptions and evaluating propositions happen when the assumptions are confirmed. Therefore, validity is defined as the ability to make evaluative decisions about the conclusions drawn from assessment findings in this research, i.e., the ability to draw the correct conclusions and take appropriate action from them. These critical assessments are being made accurate and truth-reflective in this study. Thus, it is predicated on the idea that if the interview or questionnaire is valid, it ought to provide comparable findings even when conducted under the same circumstances.

On the other hand, reliability is the capacity to remain consistent and repeatable throughout time. Additionally, as a test is considered less trustworthy the more measurement mistakes it contains, reliability is also defined as the extent to which it is error-free. Reliability facilitates the researcher's capacity to draw trustworthy comparisons. An evaluation's unreliability increases with the number of faults it contains, and vice versa. A crucial component of the research, reliability is described as enhancing validity rather than contradicting it. The consistency with which an observation, questionnaire, or other measuring process yields the same findings when used repeatedly is known as reliability (Noble & Smith, 2015).

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Proceeding further with the following research on the impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior, the last element that assists in designing an appropriate and accurate research methodology that can be relied upon effectively is ethical considerations. Generally, ethical considerations mark all aspects that must be followed with strict compliance so that ethical issues and critical consequences can be avoided effectively and responsibly (Arifin, 2018). The ethical considerations differ according to the research design being followed, whereas qualitative research is based on primary findings, and various ethical considerations have been emphasized critically. Initially, the researcher ensured the anonymity and privacy of the respondents selected for the study so that their security concerns could be optimized per their requirements. Moreover, bias was avoided during the interview sessions, and the transcript was discarded as soon as the information was leveraged in data analysis. Lastly, the following research has been ensured to remain compliant with the university guidelines on conducting formal research, effectively maintaining the authenticity and reliability of the findings.

Summarizing the key contents of this chapter related to research methodology, it can be concluded that this chapter serves as the central aspect of an underlying study context. This statement can be justified because the research methodology chapter emphasizes the different ways to acquire and present relevant and accurate data and information through which the reliability of the researchers can be optimized efficiently. Establishing a robust research philosophy, research approach, and research design are the initial steps to forming an adequate research methodology, which can be further leveraged to base other essential elements of the research accordingly.

Similarly, proceeding with primary qualitative research based on interviews with a sample size of 10 recruited through the convenience-based sampling method has been considered relevant for this study because it has assisted in remaining precise towards the explored context and acquiring essential results that can be synthesized strategically. Simultaneously, a practical and relevant data analysis measure of thematic analysis ensures extensive and in-depth critical evaluation while obliging the ethical concerns to prevent any conflicts and confusion in the future, limiting the outcomes and the quality of the overall study.

4. THE CASE STUDY: AZ COMPANY

This chapter briefly defines the case company, for instance, its products and services in the market, its market share, and its competitive edge in the apparel industry.

4.1 Description of the Case Company

AZ Company is a top wholesaler and supplier of high-quality garments. Multinational apparel, shoes, and home items retailers are some of the categories of AZ Company. The corporation swiftly acquired brands and diversified. AZ Company, one of Pakistan's major apparel shops, sells attractive and trendy clothes for both genders, including children. It is in approximately Four hundred fifty-eight locations, including virtual shops and worldwide franchising. Customer behavior changes, such as internet buying and fashion trends, have caused problems for the corporation. AZ Company has shown resiliency by adjusting its business strategy and enhancing its online platform to meet client expectations. AZ Company's CSR and sustainability programs include environmental protection and charity work. AZ Company is a worldwide fashion retail leader because of its high-quality items and customer service.

4.2 Products and Services in the Market

To meet consumer demands, AZ Company provides a wide variety of goods and services. Its main product is a wide range of clothing for both genders, including casual and formal designs, and seasonal offerings, including sportswear and outerwear. AZ Company sells all kinds of footwear, such as sandals, sneakers, and others, in several styles and sizes to match customers' clothes. The business also sells purses, belts, caps, and more that pair with outfits. In addition to fashion, AZ Company sells home accessories, kitchen and dining, home furnishing, and bedding arrangements. With its comprehensive e-commerce infrastructure, AZ Company offers online purchases with adaptable shipping and easy returns. It offers a wide selection of products and simple online and offline services to provide a complete retail experience.

4.3 Market Positioning

AZ Company has been in the retail business for over 40 years due to the high quality of the fabric they use in their apparel line, and their clothing product has gained significant recognition in the market due to its exceptional quality and designs. In the retail business, the firm is now at a mature stage. While many brands may rival AZ Company in the market for high-quality clothing, it may be difficult for new and current consumers to break into the market and outperform AZ Company's offerings.

Their trendy clothing, including dresses, coats and jackets, jumpsuits, and trousers, has captured a significant portion of the market and made customers feel at ease. An essential factor that has maximized Company AZ's success in Pakistan is believed to be its localized approach. The company has customized its product portfolio and marketing activities to suit the Asian fashion market. For instance, the company offers modest clothing options such as abayas and hijabs, which are quite popular in the Pakistani markets.

5. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This chapter entails the empirical findings from a thematic analysis of the information obtained from interviewing ten participants (see Appendix 1). It emphasizes the influence of digital marketing on customer behavior in the Pakistani apparel sector, considering the AIDA model.

Pakistan's internet clothing business is expanding but has not reached maturity yet. With a growing middle class and widespread internet access, the vast country offers an untapped potential for e-commerce expansion. Pakistan is the 36th-largest e-commerce market in the world. During the pandemic, online sales increased nationally. Pakistan's e-commerce industry has expanded ever since. There was a slight decline in Pakistan's internet retail sector in 2023, which had seen rapid expansion during the epidemic (Javed, 2020).

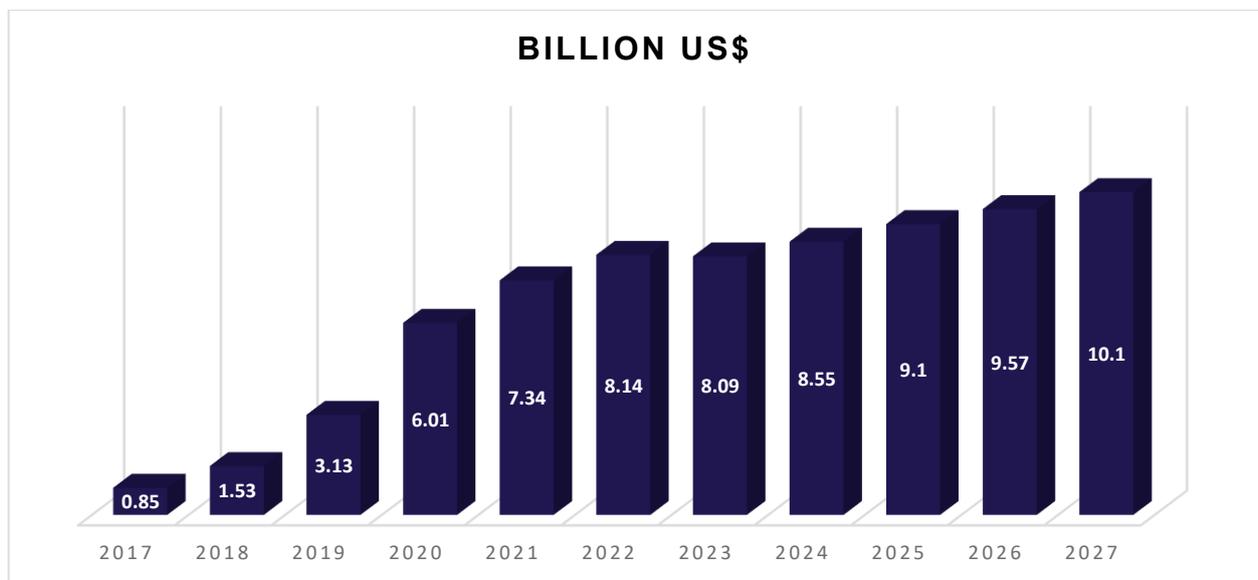


Figure 2. E-Commerce Revenue Development in Pakistan (ECDB, 2023).

E-commerce sales increased twice between 2018 and 2019, continuing the previous growing trend in the online industry. The epidemic that struck in 2020 only served to accelerate the growth of the internet sector. E-commerce revenue increased significantly during this period, from US\$3.13 billion in 2019 to US\$6.01 billion in 2020, e.g., a 93% increase. This growth occurred during the pandemic, which caused a worldwide rise in e-commerce.

Like customers worldwide, Pakistanis saw internet platforms as more secure substitutes for physical establishments, several of which were forced to close during lockdowns (Imtiaz et al., 2020). E-commerce grew in Pakistan even as the epidemic regulations were progressively relaxed and businesses resumed in the subsequent two years. Revenue grew gradually until 2022 and then slightly decreased in 2023. This unfavorable increase was caused by the nation's general atmosphere of political and economic unrest, inflation, and reduced retail spending (Barrech et al., 2023). Though the economy is recovering slowly, the Pakistani e-commerce sector is expected to pick up pace in the following years, namely between 2024 and 2027. Revenue is expected to increase at an average yearly rate of 5.7%. By 2027, the online apparel sector in Pakistan is expected to grow to US\$10.1 billion (Siddiqa, 2022). Recently, digital media has surfaced as a fresh way to offer goods and services to customers and capture their interest. Thus, in response to the following question, interviewees said that the team in charge of digital media and marketing at their clothing company is up to date on the newest techniques in digital marketing.

The benefits of digital marketing from different social media platforms are ample, particularly when our target audience has smartphones and tends to shop online anytime, anywhere. (H1, H3 & H7)

The answers reveal that businesses nowadays try to learn about digital marketing and are aware of its advantages. The primary goal of this research was to determine whether digital media and its various tools have any bearing on Pakistani apparel brands' efforts to promote their brands. As the study encountered the current stage of digital advertising evolution, it has been noticed that e-commerce and social media have advanced to the point where every organization has begun to market its brand worldwide. This method has rendered the world a global village, where it is now possible for any brand to be present anywhere. Trends in digital marketing have accelerated even in Pakistan, with most businesses moving towards it (Singh & Singh, 2018).

5.1 Targeting Techniques and Different Tools

Most scholars have attempted to establish a connection between new and ancient media. Numerous analogies were examined to show how emails, round tables, telegraphs, and bonfires vary. The key distinction between the two mediums is how they differ from one another. The primary distinction is that new media is built on a digital fragment instead of a physical one. Compared to traditional media, contemporary media offers individuals greater flexibility and authority (Obar & Wildman, 2015). Three key characteristics of new media are synchronization, interaction, and demassification. Aside from that, new media establish a hierarchy between forms of interpersonal communication and mass communication techniques. Apart from the invention of the telephone, technical growth has led to developing and enhancing the art of communicating with others. The focus of these modern technologies is increasingly on face-to-face contact. Several techniques have been found for how modern technology supports interpersonal interaction. The goal of this study is now to pinpoint the characteristics and traits of interaction (Reese & Shoemaker, 2018). When asked if the participants were aware of different digital media tools and how they could help the company in targeting customers, they stated that:

Digital media has significantly impacted our sales compared to traditional methods, especially since our target demographic often shops online and has smartphones. (H1 & H3)

Based on the answer above, it is evident that modern apparel businesses in Pakistan are trying to learn about digital marketing. They are following the 'A – Attention' from the AIDA model in first spreading awareness and appealing to those at home. They also understand the many tools available to them and how they can be used to target their buyers better. The participants also mentioned how, over the past 20 years, various digital media tools and concepts have changed significantly. From websites to "Online Branding Assets," traditional digital marketing tools like online advertising, e-mail marketing, online brochures, and more have evolved. Digital advertisers have also altered the wide range of tactical strategies and resources that fall under the purview of Internet marketing, providing an overview of how each plans according to different tools. The study collected data on the following tools that fall under the category of digital media: online brochures and infographics; social media channels (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and more); earned online coverage (e.g., PR, social media, and reviews); company websites, other branding assets, blogs posts and e-books (Tregrove, 2021).

In addition to social media, they use email, content marketing, and other digital marketing techniques to reach their target audience. To connect with their target audience, businesses produce videos that showcase their goods and share them on social media. Respondents answered the question about the material they should make for their digital media marketing.

Our digital marketing staff knows how to target customers and is well-equipped with various tools. If a new tool is introduced to the market, we also teach them about it. We produce and promote product videos on social media. (H5 & H6)

The researcher first questioned whether they were aware of various tools, and then she asked them how they might be used for internet marketing. Many responders have experience with the procedure that influences a webpage's viewing visibility in unpaid search engine results. Making SEO an effective digital marketing strategy requires setting up computer programs, elements, HTML, and analytics and knowing what proportion of customers visit the website and their preferences. Additionally, they discussed content marketing, a form of online marketing used to boost company visibility and consumers following growth (Holliman & Rowley, 2014).

Content marketing is an administrative procedure that uses a variety of online platforms to increase awareness of the brand to the customer and anticipate customer behavior. The AIDA model is fairly implemented by grabbing customer's preferences and desires. The primary duty is to encourage consumer connection with the business and grow brand awareness, boosting brand sales (Atherton, 2023). Six of the ten participants spoke about inbound advertising, which promotes brands and goods using the "Full-Funnel Approach" to draw in lead consumers and turn them into prospective users via digital content. The study also discusses the social media and digital media platforms businesses use for digital marketing. Few of the participants said, In response to the question.

First, we created a website for buying online, which was simply through the bank. YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook are some other avenues. We keep things simple and use Facebook, Instagram, and other conventional marketing platforms for the product items. (H2, H6 & H10)

This is where the second component, "I—Interest," from the AIDA model comes up. According to this statement, Facebook and Instagram are the top online advertising platforms for Pakistani brand enterprises, and recent reports have shown that one of the most effective digital marketing tactics nowadays is marketing through these two tools.

Facebook offers two options for advertising: sponsored ads and organic advertising (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). As previously stated, people's use of social media and other online digital resources has grown rapidly, and consumers spend significant time on these platforms. Businesses can use these to market their brands to consumers online; this is the most popular and effective way to market consumer brands, goods, or services quickly and affordably (Husnain & Toor, 2017). It has been noted that digital media has a significant impact on how it influences a company's performance. Two of the participants stated:

There are no comparable criteria to measure success, yet we are getting sales on our website, and our Facebook and Instagram presence is growing. This indicates that we are successful, that various digital media tools are being used online successfully, and that our key performance indicators—which allow us to gauge our income and profitability—are satisfied. (H5 & H9)

We asked them further about measuring their success, and they explained that they use pay-per-click (PPC), which is an effortless way to drive traffic to a website. When a user arrives at a website and recognizes an attractive, striking brand advertisement, they proceed to it to view the brand web page appropriately. At that point, the marketing company must pay the website owner a set price through two PPC versions (i.e., Google AdWords and Microsoft Bing Ads). Participants 5 and 9 also spoke about affiliate marketing, a kind of digital "Performance-Based" advertising in which the creator of a website promotes the brands of other companies in exchange for a percentage fee earned throughout the website's optimum promotion.

5.2 Influence of Digital Media Platforms in Customer Buying Habits

The AIDA concept may be used to explain users' purchasing habits through digital media. The third component, "D—Desire," explains the buyer's need and plea to buy the product seen online or not. The AIDA model is mainly utilized in conventional media to assess consumer behavior; however, digital media studies have effectively used this theory since the advent of the web and online sites. In contrast to other media concepts that see buyers as apathetic information users, this theory contends that people oversee how they use media and actively seek it out to satisfy needs like recreation, relaxation, or socializing (Mumtaz, 2019). Participants responded as follows when asked how the online presence of apparel brands and the products they desired affected their shopping habits.

We all know that e-commerce relates to web-based transactions for purchasing and selling various goods using internet access with overtime purchases. However, the crucial aspect outlined here is that the purchase or sale occurs at any moment of the day, in contrast to conventional physical transaction practices, where the buyer and the seller used to conduct the transaction physically, which was time-consuming. (H4 & H10)

Using the AIDA model to connect this statement, we discovered that digital marketing is increasingly prevalent with online apparel websites. This is because most customers use their free time on mobile devices to check and compare multiple items on online shopping mobile sites. Digital media can be incredibly beneficial for marketing brands on online shopping websites and generating buyer data and insights into the goods that they frequently purchase (Abdelkader et al., 2019). Social media is a significant change since it helps consumers get an unbiased variety of product data and enables them to consult with more seasoned consumers before purchasing.

Growing trends like online communities, blogging, buzz agents, and MySpace show that Pakistani users have much to say – they want to hear questions and express themselves freely. (H5, H7, & H10)

More significantly, they added, customers utilize social media these days to browse through reviews, ratings, blogs, and friends' likes and dislikes. Social media platforms that enable members to share, engage, and connect with other rational site visitors are effective in social networking. The marketer's primary goal is to utilize this platform to facilitate pleasant experiences and disseminate these materials among the communities. Businesses now have the chance to engage with customers via social media and use it as an avenue for brand reputation and promotion (Ramanathan et al., 2017). When a consumer and employer connect in this manner, it generates a connection that, if managed correctly by the company, results in an exciting long-term relationship. Digital media has also had an impact on customer retention and brand loyalty (i.e., being defined as the tendency of a consumer to make repeat purchases of a brand from the same company, hence preserving a link between the brand and the end-user) among apparel brands in Pakistan Participants were of the view that:

Customer retention is our utmost goal. Our management does not compromise on the quality of the goods, keeping in mind that the cost does not exceed. (H8 & H9)

The main goal of all entities (relying on digital media marketing) is to maximize profits from their products or services, which can only be accomplished when buyers are committed to the brand, resulting in recurring purchases. Therefore, businesses strive to connect consumers with their brands as much as possible to increase profits, turn loyal consumers into prospective clients, and establish customer loyalty via different digital media channels. All businesses undertake the essential procedures for their organizations to help buyers prevent adversaries and substitutes (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Companies must have a competitive advantage over their rivals to sustain or grow brand loyalty. This can be achieved by encouraging brand ambassadors to spread brand awareness in the marketplace, offering high-quality brands, competitive pricing, an effective supply chain, erecting obstacles to entry for companies that sell related products, and offering a more comprehensive range of products and brands to cater to consumer preferences and option. In digital marketing, loyalty is defined as the buyer's self-commitment to buy and repurchase the company's products as an act of emotional connection and reflection (Išoraitė, 2018).

However, loyalty also refers to the brand recommendations consumers now get online via various channels. Active and passive brand loyalists are the two main categories of loyalists. Passive loyalists also consider other brands when purchasing or before, possibly due to reliability, customer satisfaction, or price. Active loyalists, in contrast, buy apparel products from the same brand regardless of their soaring prices and identify themselves as the organization's self-brand ambassadors. Businesses also want these passive brand evangelists to actively spread the word about their companies to other like-minded customers. This introduces the three main components of any brand: repurchase, dedication, and referrals. If they are met, the organization may maximize its ROI (Ozuem et al., 2021).

5.3 Efficiency of Online Ads in Digital Media

Using digital media techniques, Pakistani apparel businesses may increase their customer base and attract new customers. After questioning whether participants were incorporating new digital trends and strategies into their overall marketing plan, it was discovered that newly launched apparel brands in Pakistan have decided that using cutting-edge instruments and innovative technology may enhance their marketing approach. That was said:

We embrace innovation and are open to new ideas in digital marketing. We think using innovation is the finest approach to interacting with customers and generating revenue for the business's success. (H1, H2 & H7)

Digital media tools have, according to Colbert et al. (2016), always relied heavily on technology. Research has shown that advancements in IT, optical fiber Internet, and processor performance can moderate the impact of external factors on the efficacy of online marketing. As a result, these variables have been included in the study. Consequently, our findings lend credence to the earlier research that found comparable effects. In other words, the last component of the AIDA model, "A – Action," is observed here from the above statement where researchers have found that moderating factors such as technological advancements in communications, the usage of smartphones, and the speed of telecommunications (1G to 5G) have a substantial impact on the relationship between outside influences and the efficacy of digital media platforms for establishing long-term brand loyalty. With the ease of shopping in hand and the desire already created, customers can swiftly take action to purchase apparel products online through e-payments (Haq et al., 2023). The findings from this study are consistent with those from other studies. The results of technological components are paramount for e-advertising and e-marketing of apparel products. Since technology evolves in hours rather than months or weeks, it is crucial to incorporate various new technologies to achieve the goals of effective, rapid, and personalized advertising. This is something that should be carefully considered in the study that was conducted.

5.4 Influences on Sales via Digital Media

The apparel industry in Pakistan has always been a competitive business that requires ongoing innovation to sell goods and services. Digital media advertising has recently become an essential marketing tactic in the country. It involves promoting goods or services via online platforms with the primary objective of drawing in clients and facilitating their establishment of a connection with the company via digital media (Wadho & Chaudhry, 2018). According to two of the participants:

Despite Pakistan's lack of development, smartphones are still reasonably priced, allowing us to use creative marketing techniques to boost sales. (H4 & H7)

This answer well explains that the employment of unique and inventive types of promotion is growing in the digital media sector in Pakistan, particularly in the apparel industry. Examples are interactive shops and online advertising like e-mail and e-newsletters with subscription possibilities. For SMEs, digital media opportunities are too tremendous to be dismissed since SMEs have been essential to global job creation and economic expansion (Neves, 2015).

To promote a brand image, we use social media ads to promote flash sales during special events. Additionally, we use reduced offers to retarget users who have visited our website frequently to view our product. (H2 & H4)

Brand awareness describes a person's knowledge of a particular brand, item, or business. Any business needs to build brand recognition and visibility to sell its items. The answers indicate that buyers are more inclined to purchase from a company they know and trust. Developing an emotional connection with customers through brand awareness might influence their desire to make future purchases (Molinillo et al., 2017). One of the best strategies to increase sales performance is to raise brand awareness by ensuring prospective buyers know the company's name, product, or service. Raising brand awareness makes it easier to differentiate offerings from rival companies' offerings. More brand recognition correlates with higher sales (Foroudi, 2019). The answers provided by the respondents also suggested that using "Attention" from the AIDA model—that is, through PPC, SEO, advertisements management, and optimization—would aid in increasing natural visitors to the site and social media platforms. The first stage of the sales funnel is building brand recognition, but the ultimate objective is to turn them into prospective clients. When people search for a product or service, they visit the website if the Pakistani clothes brand is the first name that appears in their minds. It thus generates traffic and positively impacts revenue (Thongpapanl & Ashraf, 2011).

6. DISCUSSION ON EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This section discusses the findings gathered and extracted in the previous chapter in detail. It showcases the arguments favoring our research questions and the literature review conducted above.

6.1 Use of Digital Media in Pakistan Apparel Brands

Years ago, conventional shopping took hours, and internet buying was unheard of in Pakistan. Despite being a latecomer, internet use is rapidly growing in Pakistan, where there are already around 30 million internet users, with \$30 million coming from e-commerce. The electronic and cellular market has the largest market share (20%), followed by the service sector (18%), vehicle and computing equipment (10%), and fashion goods (7%), making up 6% of Pakistan's e-commerce share.

According to our findings, most of the time, people who buy online do it mostly for fashion, even if they still prefer in-person shopping since it is simpler and all-in-one (Imtiaz et al., 2020). Women, primarily those in the workforce, choose it because it saves them time and energy. The trend is progressively shifting, with more people purchasing online since it is simpler and allows us to search for products and services with a single click. Nowadays, most Pakistani clothing manufacturers have online sites where they disseminate information about their current and forthcoming collections. Online shoppers are more cautious when purchasing; they research the goods by reading relevant blogs, product feedback, and user testimonials (Barrech et al., 2023).

Digital marketing (DM) marketing has grown significantly in the past few years, and Pakistani companies now realize how important it is to promote their goods and services online. Unlike conventional marketing strategies, social media and DM marketing enable apparel companies to advertise their goods and services via e-channels. Businesses may now reach customers online, thanks to it. All large businesses, as well as SME businesses, employ these strategies to market their brands and connect with prospective customers (Siddiqa, 2022). Compared to traditional marketing strategies, these forms of marketing are considerably more economical. In Pakistan, like in other regions of the globe, DM has been more popular in the past couple of years. Apparel businesses are quickly embracing this sort of marketing.

Furthermore, the interview data also indicates that Pakistani clothing firms look to online advertising and digital platforms for assistance in selling their goods and services online and advertising them (Akhlaq & Ahmed, 2015).

6.2 Digital Media Tools in Apparel Companies and Influence on Customers

Based on the data gathered from the ten participants and the interview, digital media is a highly participatory platform that allows people to discuss and exchange user-generated material. This platform is a strategic tool that business organizations may utilize for their company marketing. Understanding an online platform's role in customer buying and product and service marketing is crucial (Blasco-Arcas et al., 2014). Organizations of all sizes utilize social media because they understand its benefits; they use Facebook to create fan pages, YouTube to upload videos, and Twitter to send tweets. The top five sectors of Facebook in Pakistan are retail, services, telecom, e-commerce, and fashion. With 19,724,723 admirers, the fashion industry is the most popular among them. However, there is competition among the top five businesses based on the number of interactions on Facebook and Instagram. Determining the impact of social media on encouraging consumer purchases and the success of the products or services is crucial for academics (Macarthy, 2021).

The findings also imply that social media's introduction has completely altered how businesses previously engaged with their clients. In addition to being a quick technological advancement, social media offers consumers more convenience and effectiveness since it allows them to be more outspoken and active and reach any global location. Customers and businesses benefit from social media since it provides a platform for information gathering. The twenty-two million Facebook and Instagram users nationwide may help designers enhance their marketing skills, which their advertising budget cannot do (Kircova et al., 2021). According to an analysis of the participants' responses, it is accurate to say that consumers' demand for businesses to interact with them more is growing daily and impacts their lives. This is because social media has become a part of our lives. Marketers can produce advertisements that cater to the wants and preferences of customers by using these channels to the maximum extent possible. Most online users across Pakistan use Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Even though the country uses social media on par with other nations, not many studies have been done on the impact of social media and social networks on consumer behavior (Khan et al., 2016).

The pros of DM tools for a company's sales are a further subject that emerged as significant in the interview findings. The outcomes of the interviews also point to the value of digital marketing for attracting and interacting with customers. A review of the earlier research offers a similar analysis that digital marketing may effectively engage customers by expanding a company's worldwide reach and increasing its access to consumers, as researched by Bala and Verma (2018). Despite the wealth of studies on the benefits of digital media for large enterprises, there seems to be a dearth of research on how small businesses may use SMM (i.e., Social Media Marketing) to grow. There is unambiguous proof that social media marketing may increase sales of prescription drugs.

Furthermore, e-commerce is often commercial, including online payments; however, in the textile industry, e-commerce serves more purposes than simply sales. Many Asian nations have begun to benefit from e-commerce by opening their economies, which is vital for promoting greater competition and dissemination of online technologies; it is a combination of e-business and e-marketing where the items or services are pushed and sold (Qin et al., 2014). Over the last ten years, several services have been introduced to the electronic industry; this progress is undoubtedly ongoing. Since computers and software often operate in an electronic environment and provide extra services, human labor is often partially replaced by computerized labor. Numerous businesses in Pakistan operate in online marketplaces (Vulkan, 2020).

Emails are another effective form of web-based e-marketing. Most international buyers and sellers use emails to advertise their businesses globally. Several textile organizations, both big and small, from Pakistan participate in textile trade shows throughout the globe, exchanging information for potential contracts and fostering new connections with buyers and sellers. Email campaigns are a standard tool used by businesses to both acquire and retain clients. Businesses may email their current and potential consumers brochures, product details, pricing, shipments, and more (Frost & Strauss, 2016). However, unwanted messages are a downside since they might harm prospective clients and are often removed without being reviewed. This is a relatively inexpensive e-marketing instrument that a firm may employ to further its interests.

6.3 Reaching Target Audience for Increasing Sales

The findings and literature also confirm that digital media enables businesses to segment their customers, allowing them to tailor their content and promotions to specific groups. Businesses may reach their target audience through sponsored advertisements with personalized email communications. One benefit of email marketing is the ability to send many emails simultaneously, utilizing computer programs and software (Thongpapanl & Ashraf, 2011). Based on consumers' buying habits and reactions on social media, apparel businesses may tailor the timing of email campaigns and the creation of web ads, both paid and unpaid. While buying online, it is usual practice to add items to a digital shopping cart. The widespread use of social media and its emphasis on free expression has significantly altered how contemporary businesses advertise to those they serve (Rana et al., 2022).

In addition, businesses and companies in Pakistan could reach many consumers simultaneously due to the rapid increase in smartphone and digital media users in recent years. This is especially true when considering the impact of online advertising on consumers' purchasing behavior. Social media branding increases income, boosts customer loyalty, and enhances public perception of organizations and corporations (Imtiaz et al., 2020)—consequently, a more positive perception of the brand results in more sales and improved company success. According to primary data, Internet and social media marketing affects a company's reputation, sales, and income (Javed, 2020). The opinions of dissatisfied customers could influence those of prospective and existing customers.

By providing humorous material or incorporating it into advertising campaigns, businesses may satisfy customers' desire for light-heartedness. According to the study findings, many digital resources are available to assist companies in their non-traditional social media marketing efforts. Companies may inform their customers about current events by posting relevant news articles and links on social media (Javed, 2020). People who spend time on DM are more inclined to talk about specific items when there is much fresh information posted about them. According to the research, younger people use search engines significantly more often than they did a few years ago. When searching, they pay more attention to the keywords that provide targeted results than to the caliber of the content produced (Siddiq, 2022).

6.4 Improvement in E-Commerce and Apparel Brands through Innovations

Pakistan's economy is mostly based on cash. It may be difficult to persuade customers to switch from the conventional cash-on-delivery approach due to several factors, including limited banking reach, a lack of confidence in digital purchases, insufficient connection, and high transaction fees. For example, in Pakistan, the percentage of people using Internet banking is only expected to reach 3.8% by the end of 2024 (Ahmed & Jafri, 2024). E-commerce companies may thus reach customers who lack bank accounts or confidence in online payments by providing COD as a payment option. Payment flexibility in Pakistani eCommerce is gradually becoming better. To enable reasonably priced small-value retail payments, the State Bank of Pakistan introduced Raast, an in-house electronic payment system, in 2021 (Inder et al., 2022).

Easypaisa and JazzCash are two examples of mobile wallets whose usage is expected to increase dramatically. The percentage of people using the internet is also predicted to rise from 25.6% in 2023 to 38.8% in 2028. Even if this rate is lower than regional equivalents, it may nevertheless play a significant role in the growth of the nation's eCommerce business, especially when combined with governmental measures that support e-commerce, the launch of various payment options, and a greater movement in consumer behavior towards online purchasing (Ali et al., 2024). However, with the advancement of technology and the ease of online payments, customers have shown more willingness to buy apparel products just by visiting websites online, without any hassle of physically visiting the stores. Ultimately, this has improved online sales of the fashion industry by almost 23.4% in 2023 and is expected to grow to 35% by 2025 (Ahmed et al., 2024).

7. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATION

This chapter summarizes the previous chapters, research findings, and discussions. It then describes the theoretical and managerial implications and elaborates on policy implications. Lastly, the sub-chapters explain the limitations of the research and provide future suggestions.

7.1 Summary

As we all know, Pakistan is one of the nations where social media use is rapidly increasing. The study's findings show that the effect of social media marketing for female clothing brands encourages customers to interact and share their experiences, influencing their intention to purchase. In another way, digital media marketing is helpful for Pakistani companies, particularly those specializing in clothes. Furthermore, in contrast to earlier research, this study has been conducted to investigate how contemporary technology might influence the business trends in Pakistani fashion brands. Thematic evaluation was employed to extract pertinent patterns and perspectives from the collected qualitative data in this study. The results showed how important Internet marketing is for increasing brand awareness, reaching specialized markets, and impacting consumer decisions. It is evident that Pakistan apparel businesses fail to keep pace with these digital advancements and often fall behind in today's cutthroat business climate. This study highlights the capacity of digital marketing to reach a range of consumers. Based on the study's results, it is recommended that companies, regardless of their size and market share, use digital marketing's potential to engage with their target consumers effectively.

Summing it up, it would not be wrong to state that when the Internet was first launched and introduced in the 1990s, it opened new avenues for businesses to market their brands. The World Wide Web (WWW) and other portals for brand interaction and online purchases soon followed. However, with the Mobile Era, things have become even more complicated, quicker, and easier to access. Today, businesses and users can obtain insights anytime, anywhere, and with 24/7 access. Technology is essential to raising the quality of services companies provide, affecting the final product. As a result of merchants' increased efforts, brands are becoming increasingly integrated into buyers' daily lives in the modern world, allowing consumers to act as co-producers of these brands. Value is becoming more and more significant.

The internet, and more primarily e-commerce, has made it easier and more affordable to connect with consumers in specific markets than traditional marketing methods such as advertising. This gives you the benefit of using digital marketing tools to reach unexplored markets before your rivals. Investing in online marketing would improve the shopping experience via social media, mobile, and content creation and management. The study further highlights that compared to traditional marketing strategies, these forms of marketing are considerably more economical. In Pakistan, like in other regions of the globe, DM has been more popular in the past couple of years. Apparel businesses are quickly embracing this sort of marketing. Furthermore, the interview data also indicates that Pakistani clothing firms look to online advertising and digital platforms for assistance in selling their goods and services online and advertising them.

The results of our study also show that multinational corporations depend on their web pages, social media accounts, and digital media for effective brand promotion. Several Pakistani apparel brands utilize their expertise in digital marketing to identify consumer needs and draw attention to their brands even before they are officially pre-launched. According to Stankevich (2017), a firm's internet presence nowadays equates to brand recognition within its target audience and understanding what and when the consumers desire. Since most consumers are tech-aware, a brand's online presence may be defined as its reputation and exposure. It also allows them to assure client safety during transactions and retain existing clients.

In the modern fashion industry, buyers have many alternatives and must manage overwhelming information when making judgments. The potential for a customer to purchase an item or service in the coming time is known as purchase intention. Previous research on advertising and branding has shown that consumers' intentions to make purchases occur throughout the decision-making process, at the point when they have established an inclination to continue working for a product or brand. As a result of internet marketers' lack of control over sources that influence consumer choice and decision-making, such as social networks, blogs, peer evaluations, and referrals, patterns are shifting. All these user-generated materials include their experiences based on preferences and tastes, empowering the customer to make the first purchase. It was discovered that a little over 25% of digital media users acknowledged looking at the advertisements shared by their friends.

According to a study, social media has expanded as a funnel for purchases in that post-purchase discussions are increasingly fueled by user-generated content and word-of-mouth. As shown by explanations and the data provided in this research, which amply demonstrate the significance and applicability of online marketing as a promotional instrument, digital media marketing is one of the most effective and affordable ways to sell a brand using various internet marketing methods. Through different social media platforms, brand awareness, e-commerce, brand recognition, and promotion, internet advertising has already influenced several companies in Pakistan.

The study findings and literature review demonstrate the importance of DM. After learning about the shortcomings of traditional marketing channels, Pakistani brands are looking at digital marketing as a revolutionary factor in their business. According to studies, people use social media platforms to spend a lot of their free time online, which may lead to their becoming active participants in online brand growth. Reaching the target client is one of the main benefits of employing DM for brand advertising. Digital media tools are critical to several organizations' business strategies. SMEs in Pakistan use them instead of traditional forms of marketing because they enable them to communicate with clients globally and more effectively.

7.2 Theoretical Implications

Given the previous discussion on how digital marketing tools affect clothing customers' purchasing behavior, it is important to recognize that their correct use might be linked to distinct theoretical frameworks. Theoretical frameworks may assist digital tool alignment with a solid grasp of projected consequences. The main theoretical model used in the research is AIDA—Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action. AIDA is a traditional marketing framework used in digital marketing to help create a marketing strategy. AIDA suggests that customers go through several stages before making a well-informed purchase decision, starting with their attention being drawn to the product, developing a relevant interest in it, fostering a desire to buy it, and finally taking action to buy it. The data collected from various sources, particularly with respect to the AIDA model, matches the theoretical discussion as suggested by the AIDA model. Similarities between Pakistani consumer behavior and the AIDA model suggest that digital marketing strategies are working to some extent in the developed cities of Pakistan. However, differences emerge in the rural areas of Pakistan due to cultural nuances and varying levels of digital infrastructure.

Cultural preferences, language barriers, and trust issues are some of the factors that affect Pakistani consumers' response to digital marketing. The AIDA model requires a developed digital infrastructure to work correctly, and Pakistan is still in the development stages. Digital marketing has immense potential to influence Pakistani consumers, especially in big cities with more developed digital infrastructure. However, this might not be the case for the small cities and rural areas of Pakistan, where customers still prefer going physically to stores for shopping.

7.3 Managerial Implications

This study outlines the key contextual factors managers should consider when choosing a strategy and course of action for their apparel operations in Pakistan. It also offers recommendations for practical solutions to the problems encountered by the Pakistani clothing sector. In addition to making recommendations for a matrix of potential strategies based on their assessment of the strategic significance and character of socially responsible conduct, managers are accountable for ensuring that CSR is upheld. Marketing managers can monitor the impact of marketing messages across the customer journey and distribute them via any digital or e-device-based marketing strategy. Managers may maximize the use of advertisements that show up on a laptop, smartphone, tablet, or other electronic device. For instance, social media postings, display advertisements, SEO, sponsored web ads, and online video.

Using various digital platforms, such as email marketing, affiliate marketing, and other techniques, is essential to building long-lasting customer relationships and raising brand awareness. Businesses should also adapt their strategies to align with the preferences of their target audience and stay abreast of evolving digital trends. In summary, this study demonstrates the transformative power of digital marketing strategies. Ensuring continuous growth and significance in the digital age is essential as the business world changes. Through carefully examining the subject, this thesis has expanded awareness of the intricate relationship between digital marketing and contemporary firm dynamics. Nevertheless, apparel companies need competent staff if their digital media marketing plan is going to be successful. Even while digital marketing can expand a company's customer base to include people worldwide, it does not conduct well if the people working on the SMM and DM campaigns lack the necessary expertise and up-to-date technological knowledge. Thus, the organization's digital marketing staff should be well-equipped, which contributes to the development and execution of superior online marketing strategies.

Pakistani clothing brands should improve their wide range of digital marketing tools and techniques. These include digital billboards, SEOs, video channels, PPCs, email, and content marketing. In financial terms, consider all the primary cost-cutting and expense-saving measures one could take to save significant money on traditional advertising tools. Virtually, the opportunities are limitless. Since digital marketing is still fresh in Pakistan and people are still getting accustomed to it, it is essential to explore the opportunities as they may take some time to comprehend fully. However, if one primarily prioritizes the consumer's needs, they may successfully utilize digital marketing tools. In addition to being able to draw in new business and keep existing clients, this would assist brand managers in potentially achieving a return on investment in DM marketing.

7.4 Policy Implications

The organizational specifics of how the global economy influences local circumstances are essential. These solutions must be carefully considered when developing and executing policies to deal with repercussions in the garment market and any other industry. The effect of capital flows on recipient nations' socioeconomic and financial situations has been a topic of intense discussion as the protracted era of abundant global liquidity begins to diminish or is approaching its end. Given the decisive role that "supply and demand-push" elements played, the increasing importance of capital markets in assessing financial aggregates, and the unique situations, adequate policies need to be taken and implemented by the management. Different tech enterprises in Pakistan may change their business models to open fresh export markets and allow the digital and tech sectors to manufacture more advanced goods and services. Furthermore, by encouraging digital commerce, the Pakistani government may raise local competitiveness by enabling businesses to increase productivity. Data, which often has to travel across borders, is the lifeblood of modern technology. To raise Pakistan's degree of growth, the administration must promote digital commerce and the international movement of data via open marketplaces.

7.5 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

A comparative study with neighboring nations, including India, Bangladesh, China, and other South Asian countries, is a topic of future research. Since the Pakistani viewpoint is the foundation of this study, research generability might be more effective considering the neighboring nations. The researcher looked at the apparel brand sector to understand the efficacy of digital media; future studies may concentrate on all sectors of the Pakistani economy. Moreover, this research discussed only limited online media channels. Thus, it is advised that future scholars include other channels. There are many additional significant mediating factors in digital media. Thus, it is advised that future researchers include additional significant mediating factors that might influence consumer behavior apart from digital media.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Questions asked from participants (company executives).

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1. What factors do you consider before selling while targeting your customers online?
2. To what extent have digital media platforms influenced the sales of apparel products?
3. How successfully has an online marketing ad convinced customers to buy a Pakistani apparel product? What factors influenced their decision?
4. Compared to conventional approaches, in what ways has digital media brought improvements in your sales of apparel items?
5. If you have ever sold an apparel item via any digital media platform, describe your perception and experience.
6. Why should apparel brands have a strong presence on digital media in modern times?
7. What factors or aspects appeal to you the most from digital platforms while making an online advertisement about an apparel brand?
8. How much do you think digital media has been successful in boosting demand for apparel brands compared to congenital advertising, for instance, newspapers or TV ads?
9. Do you think that along with e-commerce, different social media platforms have played a huge role in customer buying attitudes? If yes, how?
What better steps can apparel brands take to improve their demand through effectively utilizing digital media?