Pakistan Social Sciences Review
www.pssr.org.pk

RESEARCH PAPER

Information Verification Motivation and its Influence on Users' Social Media Advertising Evaluation and Outcome Behaviors

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
	Social media has overwhelmingly changed the behavior of users and organizations worldwide. Users use social media platforms for several reasons. One of them is users' product information verification motivation. The effect of product information verification motivation (IVM) on users' attitudes and behaviors in the social media advertising (SMA) context is still unfathomed. The current study investigates the attitudinal and direct influence of users' IVM on their social media ad click response (ACR). Furthermore, the influence of attitude towards SMA and ACR on users' purchase intentions (PI) and online buying behavior (OBB) is investigated. Data was gathered from 200 social media users in Pakistan by using an online survey. Results show that users' IVM attitudinally and directly influence their ACR. Furthermore, users' ACR influences their PI and OBB. Overall, findings highlight the crucial role of IVM, attitude towards SMA, and ACR in influencing users' PI and their OBB.

Introduction

The rapid growth of social media has changed the behavior of people and organizations (Dwivedi et al., 2021). People use social media platforms for communication (Mir, 2021), information gathering, and sharing (Bashir, Malik, & Mahmood, 2021). Users use social media because of several reasons, such as to develop social capital, enjoy, find and share information (Alhabash & Ma, 2017; Qin, 2020; Whiting & Williams, 2013). One crucial reason is users' motivation to verify the existing product information on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter(Mir, 2018, Nee, 2019). For instance, when users receive product information

from offline sources, they read other users' views, reviews, and comments on social media platforms to verify its authenticity and accuracy (Lee &Youn, 2009; Mir & Zaheer, 2012; Siddiqui et al., 2021). Rare studies (e.g., Mir, 2018) have investigated the effect of information verification motivation (IVM) on users' attitudes and outcome behaviour toward social media advertising (SMA). Out outcome behaviours include users' ad click response (ACR), purchase intentions (PI), and online buying behaviour (OBB).

Investigating the relationship between IVM and users' attitudes and outcome behaviours toward SMA is crucial. Because social media firms such as Facebook and Twitter earn through advertising (Fortune.com, 2017; Haggstrom, 2020). SMA becomes effective when users approve it (Mir, 2018; Taylor, Lewin, & Strutton, 2011). Literature (e.g. Mahmoud, 2014; Mir, 2014) indicates that users approve relevant SMA. Importantly, Advertisers pay to social media businesses (e.g. Twitter and Facebook) when users respond to the SMA by clicking on social media ads (Stoke, 2011). Advertisers make sales when users click on SNS ads which redirect them to the advertisers' websites (Mir, 2014). Users' ACR can either affect their PI (Erdem, Durmus, & Ozdemir, 2017) or lead to OBB (Mir, 2018). Thus, the current study aims at examining the attitudinal and direct influence of IVM on users' ACR.Furthermore, the current study examines the influence of attitude towards SMA and ACR on PI and OBB.

Information Verification Motivation (IVM)

Users engage in social media because of several reasons. IVM is one of the critical reasons due to which people use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Mir, 2018; Nee, 2019). IVM is defined as the process of assessing the reliability and accuracy of existing product information (Weigts, Widdershoven, Kok, & Tomlow, 1993).Today, when users' receive product information from personal, public and commercial sources offline, they read other users' product views, comments and reviews on social media to verify it authenticity and accuracy (Lee & Youn, 2009; Mir & Zaheer, 2012; Siddiqui et al., 2021). Users' rely on other users' product views and reviews to verify the existing product information because they consider other users unbiased (Chu & Kim, 2011; Mir & Zaheer, 2012). Furthermore, online product reviews are based on other users' personal experience with product (Park & Lee, 2008).In addition, users trust the product information which unknown users share on social media (Lee & Youn, 2009).Verification of information becomes critical when a user's receives contradictory information about the same product (Hilligoss & Rieh, 2008). Social media platforms such as Twitter are considered useful sources of information. They provide fast and current information (Hocevar, Flanagin, & Metzger, 2014; Westerman, Spence, & Van Der Heide, 2014).Several users' considered product information that other users on share social media reliable (Bahtar & Muda, 2016; Tsai & Bui, 2021). Therefore, they may use social media platforms to verify existing information (Chu & Kim, 2011; Mir & Rehman, 2013).

Theoretical Foundations and Hypotheses

IVM is a crucial user motivation for using social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Mir, 2018; Nee, 2019). The current study applies uses and gratifications (UG) theory (Katz & Foulkes, 1962) to conceptualize that how IVM influences users' attitude towards SMA and their outcome behaviors which include ACR, PI and OBB. The UG theory claims that users use different media to fulfill their utilitarian and hedonic needs and motives. Prior gratifications studies (e.g. Gan, 2017; Hossain, 2019) found UG theory a suitable theoretical approach to detect users' utilitarian motivations (e.g. information seeking) for using social media platforms and applications. Recent social media studies (e.g. Mir, 2018; Nee, 2019) acknowledged that users join and use social media platforms, for instance; Facebook and Twitter, to confirm the precision and credibility of current product information. Furthermore, Mir (2018) found UG theory useful in understanding the relationship between users' information seeking motivations and their attitude and behaviors toward SMA.

In line with UG theory and gratifications scholarship (e.g. Gan, 2017; Hossain, 2019; Mir, 2018), the current study offers that IMV has a mediated influence on users ACR on social media (See Figure 1). Attitude toward SMA is supposed to play mediation between IVM and ACR. Attitude is a user's favorable or unfavorable assessment about carrying out a behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The attitudinal mediation in the context of advertising is well recognized (SeeHomer, 1990; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986). According recent social media gratifications scholarship (e.g. Al Haj Eid, Nusairat, Alkailanic, & Al-Ghadeer, 2020; Arora & Agarwal, 2020), users social media usage motivations impact their attitudes toward SMA. Attitude towards SMA positively influences users' ACR on social media (Zhang & Mao, 2016). ACR is social media users' behavior to click on social media ad that relocates them to sponsors or advertisers websites (Mir, 2014). Furthermore, some social media gratifications studies (e.g., Erdem et al., 2017; Mir, 2018) found that user' social media usage motivations influence their ACR directly. Consistent with prior scholarship the current study offers that IVM influences users ACR on social media directly (See Figure1). Specifically, the following hypotheses are offered:

H1. Attitude towards SMA mediates the relationship between IVM and users' ACR.

H2. IVM influences users' ACR on social media directly.

Earlier social media gratifications research (e.g. Mir, 2014) motivation based ACR has a positive influence on users' OBB. Consistent with prior studies, the current research proposes that IVM based ACR has a positive influence on users OBB (See Figure 1). Social media motivation research such as Mir (2018) found that once ACR relocates the users from social media platform to advertiser's website, many of them actually buy the advertised products. Few studies (e.g., Chen et al., 2021; Erdem et al., 2017) identified that ACR leads to users' intentions to buy the advertised product. The current study proposes that ACR has positive influence on PI (See Figure1). Furthermore, some prior studies (e.g., Arora & Agarwal, 2020; Chen et al., 2021; Erdem et al., 2017; Mukherjee & Banerjee, 2017) have identified that attitude towards SMA

has a positive influence on PI. PI indicates a person's willingness to execute a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The current study offers that IVM based attitude towards SMA has a positive influence on users' PI of products shown in social media ads (See Figure 1). PI is generally supposed to result into actual purchase behavior (Morrison, 1979; Newberry, Klemz, &Boshoff, 2003). The current study postulates that PI positivelyinfluences users' OBB (See Figure 1). Specifically, the following hypotheses are offered:

H3. ACR positively influences users' OBB.

H4.ACR has positive influence on users' PI.

H5. Attitude towards SMA positively influences users' PI.
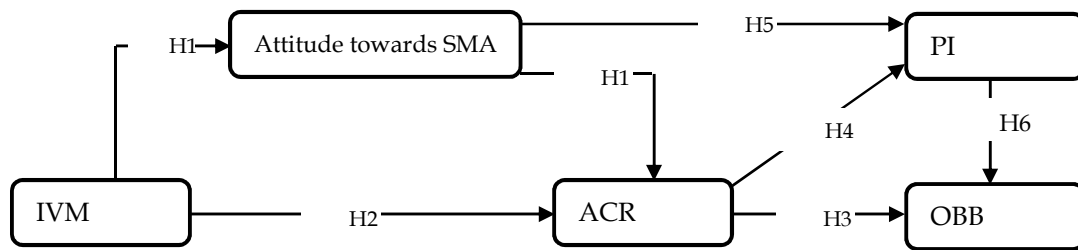
H6. PI has a positive influence users' OBB.

Figure 1: Proposed Model

Material and Methods

Data was gathered from a purposive sample of 200 social media users in Pakistan using an online survey. Responses were record on an online questionnaire. Particularly focus was Facebook and Twitter users. 126 respondents were male. 73 respondents were female. While, 1 respondent denied to reveal the gender. All respondents' ages were between 18 to 35 years. Email addresses of respondents were collected through Facebook and Twitter before conducting survey.

Construct Measures, Assessment and Source

Study constructs (i.e. IVM, attitude towards SMA, ACR, PI and OBB) were measured on items adapted from previous research.Table 2 shows sources of construct measures. Responses of sampled respondents were record on a five point Likert scale which varied from strong disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The confirmatory analysis (CFA) was conducted to determine the goodness of fit of construct measurement models. All Constructs models demonstrated good fit on traditional model fit test, alternate test and model fit Indices. Table 1 presents construct measurement scale

goodness of fit information. Scales of ACR and OBB contained single item measures, thus their model fit was not assessed. To ensure the item-wise validity of construct measures, standardized beta (β), standard error (SE), t and p statistics were evaluated. Reliability of construct measures was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha (*a*). Table 2 presents study construct scale items, validity statistics and alpha.

Table 1
Study Constructs' Measurement Scale Goodness of Fit Information

Constructs	Traditional Test	df	*p*	Alternate Test	Model Fit Indices					
	(χ2)			(χ²/ df)	GFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
IVM	8.308	5	.140	1.662	.983	.952	.980	.959	.980	.058
ASMA	4.481	2	.106	2.240	.989	.976	.986	.958	.986	.079
PI	4.699	2	.095	2.350	.989	.984	.991	.972	.991	.080
GOF Criteria	-	-	> .05	≤ 3	≥ .90	≥ .90	≥ .90	≥ .90	≥ .90	≤ .08

Note: Goodness of Fit (GOF)

Table 2
Study Construct ScaleItems, Validity Statistics and Alpha

| Construct	Scale Items	β	SE	t	*P*	*a*	*Source*
	I use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter………						
IVM	→ 1. To confirm that I do not miss any useful product information.	0.47	-	-	-		Grant, 2005; Rodgers, Wang, Rettie, & Alpert. 2007; Wang & sun, 2010
	→ 2. To assess the accuracy of the product information.	0.68	0.28	5.08	***		
	→ 3. To verify that I possess right product information.	0.70	0.27	5.46	***		
	→ 4. To evaluate the validity of product information that I obtainsocially.	0.49	0.24	4.37	***	0.71	
	→ 5. To confirm that what I know about the products is correct.	0.55	0.25	4.67	***		
Attitude towards SMA	→ 1. Overall, I like social media advertising.	0.74	-	-	-		Mir, 2012
	→ 2. I deem social media advertising very vital	0.74	0.13	7.95	***		
	→ 3. As a whole, I deem social media advertising a good activity.	0.66	0.11	7.61	***	0.74	
	→ 4. I like social media click through ads.	0.45	0.12	5.24	***		
PI	→ 1. I will consider buying the products advertised on social media.	.70	-	-	-		Chang, Yan, Zhang, &Luo, 2010
	→ 2. I have strong desire to buy the products advertised on social media.	.83	.13	9.67	***	.83	

	→	3. I intend to buy the products presented in social media click through ads.	.768	.12	8.94	***	
	→	4. I am probably to buy the products presented in social media click through ads.	.68	.12	8.46	***	
ACR	→	1. I frequently click on social media ads.	-	-	-	-	Mir, 2014
OBB	→	1. Ifrequentlypurchase products displayed in social media click through ads from website of the advertiser.	-	-	-	-	Mir, 2014

Note: ***p < .001

Model and Hypotheses Testing

The proposed model fitted data on traditional test (i.e. χ^2), alternate test (i.e. $\chi^2/ df = \leq 3$) as well as on model fit indices i.e. GFI, NFI, IFI, TLI, CFI $\geq$ .90, and RMSEA $\leq$ .08. Figure 2 shows model fitness statistics.
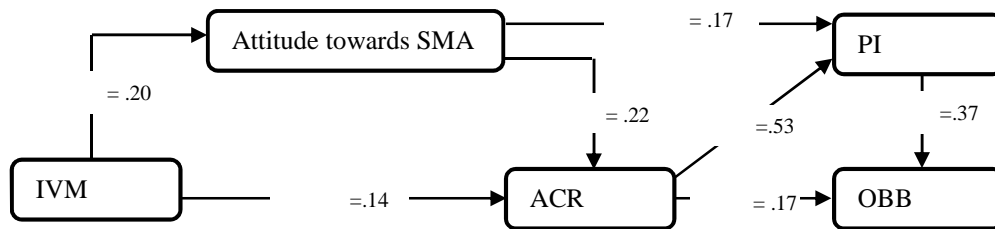
Model Fit: $^2 = 7.411$, *df* = 3, p = .113, $^2/ df = 2.470$, Indices: GFI = .98, NFI = .96, IFI = 97, TLI = .91, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .08

Figure 2: Structural Model

The structural model tested contained 7 paths (See Figure 2). To test the hypotheses, *β, SE,* t, and P path statistics were examined. The *β* >SE, t > 1.96 and p< .01 indicated significant association between IVM and AT.SMA. Similarly, the *β*> SE, t > 1.96 and p< .01, indicated a significant association between AT.SMA and ACR (See Table 3). These results supported H1.The *β*> SE, t > 1.96 and p< .05 indicated significant association between IVM and ACR (See Table 3). These results supported H2. The *β*> SE, t > 1.96 and significant P values of (ACR → OBB), (ACR → PI), (AT.SMA → PI), and (PI →OBB) (See Table 3) respectively supported H3, H4, H5 and H6.

Table 3
Structural Model Path Statistics

Variable	Path	Variable	B	*β*	SE	t	P
IVM	→	AT.SMA	.191	.20	.068	2.824	.005

IVM	→	ACR	.221	.14	.111	1.984	.047
AT.SMA	→	ACR	.368	.22	.115	3.216	.001
ACR	→	PI	.449	.53	.050	9.034	***
AT.SMA	→	PI	.234	.17	.082	2.844	.004
ACR	→	OBB	.182	.17	.080	2.267	.023
PI	→	OBB	.460	37	.095	4.842	***

***p < .001, **P < .01, *p < .05, Unstandardized estimates (B), Standardized estimates (β), Standard error (SE), Attitude (AT.)

Discussion and Implications

IVM is an important user motivation to engage in social media (Mir, 2018). Users read other users' views, comments, and reviews on social media to validate the accuracy and authenticity of the current product informationon social media(Lee & Youn, 2009; Mir & Zaheer, 2012; Siddiqui et al., 2021). Consistent with UG theory, the current study found that attitude towards SMA mediates the relationship between IVM and users' ACR. This finding is consistent with prior scholarship. For instance, Alkailanic and Al-Ghadeer (2020) found that social media usage motivations influence users' attitude towards SMA; that in turn, influence their ACR (Zhang & Mao, 2016). This finding implies that social media firms should pay special attention to user attitudes while developing social media ad content. Another significant finding is that IVM has a direct influence on users' ACR. It is consistent with Erdem et al. (2017) and Mir (2018). These studies found a direct association between users' social media usage motivations and their ACR. This finding suggests that social media firms should make click-through banner ads attractive. Attractive social media ads will bypass the users' cognitive filters, and they would click them instantly.

Furthermore, the current study found that ACR has a positive influence on both PI and OBB. This finding is in line with Chen et al. (2021), Erdem et al. (2017), Mir (2018), Mir, Haider, and Sharjeel (2021). These studies identified that once users click social media ads, it influences both their intentions and actual online purchasing behavior. This finding implies that social media firms should publish more click-through banner ads on their websites. Consistent with Arora and Agarwal (2020), Chen et al. (2021), and Mukherjee and Banerjee (2017), the current study found that users' attitude towards SMA has a positive influence on their PI of advertised products. Attitude and purchase intention connection is well-established in literature (See Ajzen, 1991). Another significant finding of the current study is that PI leads to OBB.These findings imply that social media firms should repeatedly expose users to social media ads. Repeated exposures to social media ads will convert the users' PI into actual OBB faster. In addition, the current study made a significant contribution to social media literature. It conceptualized the IVM construct and connected it with users' evaluation of SMA and their outcome behaviors.

Conclusion

Users use social media platforms due to several reasons. IVM is one of the crucial reasons for users' social media engagement. Users use social media platforms (e.g. Facebook and Twitter) to authenticate the accuracy and trustworthiness of the current product information. Importantly, IVM has an attitudinal and direct influence on users ACR. Importantly, IVM has an attitudinal and direct influence on users' ACR. IVM driven ACR leads to both PI and OBB. Similarly, IVM driven attitude towards SMA generates users' PI of advertised products. Overall, findings highlight the crucial role of IVM, attitude towards SMA, and ACR, which causes users' PI and actual OBB. Furthermore, the results of the current study endorse the application of UG theory. They suggest that UG theory should be used to identify social media usage motivations and to assess their effects on users' attitude and behavior toward SMA. The current study focused on conventional social media click-through banner ads. Future studies should investigate the influence of IVM on users' attitudes and behaviors toward unconventional SMA such as user-shared ads.

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