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***“Impact of Social media usage on Brand consciousness in Gen Y”***



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## **ABSTRACT**

This study attempts to understand the impact of social media usage on brand consciousness. The sample selected for the study includes Gen Y (individuals falling within the age bracket of 25-40 years). A quantitative survey was conducted on a study sample of 211. All the survey responses were taken on close ended questions and responses were carefully recorded and analyzed using SPSS. The social media usage was measured using two dimensions, namely “Social Integration and Emotional Connection” (SIER), and “Integration into Social Routine” (ISR). Moreover, brand consciousness was measured using a 7 item “Brand sensitivity measure”. The study findings indicated that there exists a positive correlation among brand consciousness, social media usage, and SIEC. While a non-significant correlation exists between brand consciousness and ISR. Moreover, findings also revealed that there exists no significant group difference on brand consciousness based on gender. The study findings tend to have numerous practical and theoretical implications. For instance, the study results can help businesses design marketing policies and attract potential consumers. .

**Keywords:** social media, Brand Consciousness, Marketing, Gen Y

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# Chapter 1

## 1.Introduction

Social media, which has become an essential instrument in today's age of innovation, is also becoming an unavoidable communication medium. Due to its far-reaching benefits and effectiveness, it is increasingly being used by numerous firms for marketing purposes. Its effectiveness is attributed to its supremacy over traditional communication methods and the simple mode of interaction, it provides to firms to reach their potential audience. Social media has emerged as the newest corporate trend. It is the intermediary that outperforms the traditional intermediaries and links businesses and clients directly. Hence, the impact of new generation communication technologies on brand consciousness has become increasingly crucial as the usage of social media (SM) platforms has increased (Akbar, & Özgül, 2018). Therefore, whether it's multinational firms like Starbucks and IBM or a small burger joint, nearly every company is using "social media marketing" (SMM) to expand their businesses. Initially, the firms were enigmatic about "social networking sites" (SNS). But with the passage of time, businesses realized the relevance of the social media wonders in the business world. Now there is complete consensus that in this highly technology-driven era, social media platforms are the most suitable option for increasing brand awareness, consciousness, and loyalty (Akbar, & Özgül, 2018)

Thus, guided by the increased social media usage, people are becoming more aware of brands. Every day, a new brand is added to the ever-growing pool of fashion. It is a common perception among people that trademarks make them look more appealing, funky, and elegant. Employees choose branded items, which make them appear more credible, engaging, and fascinating. So, the well-known brand names in shoes, clothing, and accessories try to meet and satisfy the demands of their conscious customers (Kaiser, Chandler, & Hammidi, 2001).

Owing to the mushrooming social media trend, investigators have sought to create tools to measure social media usage intensity to observe the extent of integration of SNS into consumers' life (Maree, 2017). This pertains to the need to explore the phenomenon.

## **1.1. Background**

The impending developments in the area of "information technology" (IT) have had a significant effect on firms' core marketing tactics and customer interaction tactics. The growth of social media has given today's highly competitive businesses a huge opportunity to interact and build strong connections with their potential clients (Ahmed et al., 2018). As social media has evolved into a lifestyle, one third of the world's population is currently believed to be connected through it, which makes it the most popular mean of communication (Nelson-Field & Taylor, 2012). It is characterized as a "group of Internet-based applications that build on Web 2.0's ideological and technological foundations and allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). A regular user's aim of notifying his/her social circle about upcoming things, products, companies, and celebrities effectively generate, develop, distribute, and apply new information pillars through SNS. (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Marketing experts suggest shifting the engagement resources from traditional to electronic means, with SMM leading the way. In this regard, Facebook seems to be the most popular channel, with over one billion individuals and over fifteen million brands connected internationally (Koetsier, 2013; Ismail, 2017). There are over 25 million active Facebook users in Pakistan, with 2/3rd of population under the age of 24 (SocialBakers, 2016 as cited in Ahmed et al., 2018). In addition to Facebook, Instagram is also one of the most prominent social media platforms with 700 million users worldwide (Instagram Press, 2017) Till January 2021, there were approximately 42 million active Instagram handles in Pakistan. For Pakistani netizens, particularly the youth, SM usage has become a style. Over 80 percent of people stay online for approximately an hour throughout the day, with the average session lasting around 5 minutes. In addition, in Pakistan, YouTube surpassed sites like tune. pk and dailymotion.com as the most popular content-based community forum since its official unbanning in February 2015. The extremely passionate yet dynamic youth of Pakistan have one of the biggest daily hits on Twitter and Instagram (SocialBakers, 2016 as cited in Ahmed et al., 2018).

The word 'social' is crucial in "social media marketing" (SMM), "social media advertising" (SMA), and "social networking". If potential consumers respond and contribute to a business's social media activity, there are increased odds of favorable customer sentiments and purchase intent. The strength of SNS also allows digital marketers to collect customer data based on the social media handles he/she follows as well as his/her interactions with others (based on comments, likes, etc.). Evidence suggests that consumers who are exposed to online advertisements may develop brand awareness and consciousness and perceive them as a mark of prestige and uniqueness. So, companies are

carefully using social media to reach the loyal and brand-conscious audience through minimally integrated marketing campaigns (Ismail, 2017). This implies that social media is now a days used as an advertising platform to achieve corporate objectives like branding, market analysis, and publicity (Thoring, 2011). The most active organizations have made excellent use of SNS to expand their range; so, a key question that needs to be answered is how does social media usage impact brand consciousness. The current study aims to answers this question by studying the impact of social media usage on the brand consciousness of Gen Y.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Although wearing a glamorous and well-advertised brand is no more a new trend for individuals of the new age, it has shown a remarkable increase during the previous decade. With the growing economy and increased social media usage in Pakistan, people are taken over by the concept of brand consciousness and are willing to invest their time and money for local as well as international brands (Memon & Dean, 2018). Additionally, after the emergence of Covid-19, not only did the people's social media usage increase but the pandemic drastically changed consumer behavior and attitude. Owing to this, the current study aims to explore the impact social media usage has on the brand consciousness of Gen Y.

## **1.3 Research Gap**

In the past few decades, a lot of research has been done on brand loyalty, brand awareness, etc. But only a few tapped the construct of brand consciousness. Moreover, a lot of research on the subject falls under the domain of consumer research while only a few pieces of research attempted to cover the psychosocial aspects of the phenomenon. Since the growing fashion mantra calls for a need to understand the concept more thoroughly, the current study will attempt to fill this existing gap in the literature.

Moreover, many studies related to the study topic have concentrated solely on social media usage and significance, gathering replies from Facebook, which yielded comparable results and were hard to generalize. Thus, in order to thoroughly explore the topic, it is necessary to investigate various social media platforms to obtain more diverse evidence regarding their impact on people. To bridge this gap, our study will be based on users on various media platforms and not just Facebook. Moreover, even though SNS has gained worldwide notoriety, there has been only limited research of South Asian marketplaces (Goodrich & De Mooij, 2014; Naqvi et al., 2019). Pakistan, for instance, is a developing economy with minimal exposure to e-commerce and SNS (Tariq et al., 2017). The existing study has largely focused on the frequency of usage and adoption of SNS in America and



EU countries because these nations have high IT proficiency in comparison to South Asia in general and Pakistan in particular (Sheldon, 2017). Thus, the key goal of the current research is to collect data on social media usage in Pakistani samples and study its impact on their brand consciousness. People use social media platforms to express themselves, learn about services and products, exhibit their creativity, and interact with others. (Koc et al., 2013; Nadkarni et al., 2012; Yang et al., 2017).

#### **1.4 Study Significance**

The value of social media in a business setting is evident from the cost-effective and immediate contact it provides between customers and businesses. Internet forums, blog posts, and social networking sites have all become essential parts of people's lives in this era. Their value can be gauged by the fact that these platforms serve as alternative communication tools, enhancing users' experiences by boosting existing connections and activities. Furthermore, the use of augmented social media has evolved into a platform for brand nurture, which has an impact on the consumer's buying behavior (Akbar & Özgül, 2018)

There is a great deal of evidence that digital word of mouth has a significant impact on a customer's attitude about a product or a company (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Thus, it is very important to pay attention to and analyze the impact of social media on brand consciousness. This will help businesses re-frame their marketing strategies by placing enormous emphasis on social media marketing. Appel et al (2020) also stressed that social media marketing is the future of marketing, hence, rather than being considered a substitute, social media marketing should be gradually integrated into every company's marketing effort. He went on to say that combining social media marketing with other marketing techniques can help businesses get better outcomes. Thus, the current study pertains to the relationship of brand consciousness with social media usage,

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between social media usage and brand consciousness in Gen Y?
2. What is the impact of social integration and emotional connection (SIEC) on brand consciousness (BC) in Gen Y?
3. What is the impact of ISR on brand consciousness in Gen Y?

4. What is the role of demographics (gender) in relation to the variables of the study?

## **1.6 Research Objectives**

- 1.To understand the relationship between social media usage and brand consciousness in Gen Y.
- 2.To understand the relationship between social integration and emotional connection (SIEC) and brand consciousness (BC) in Gen Y.
- 3.To understand the relationship between ISR and brand consciousness in Gen Y.
- 4.To understand the role of demographics with the study model.

## **1.7 Underpinning Theory**

The theory examines the psychosocial factors that influence a person's activities and thoughts (Bandura, 2001). The assumption behind the social cognitive theory is that social structures have the power to impact behavior. Social cognitive theory, as per Bandura (2001), highlights the factors that influence human behavior or conduct. Individual (cognitive thinking), behavior (others' activities), and environment-related (social context) variables are the three factors that make up a person's relationship with others. These factors are based on the process through which individuals perceive others and build socially constructed meaning, which determines a person's behavior.

Human thoughts, emotions, and conduct are influenced by “social cognitive theory”, which identifies reciprocal causation between personal variables (which include cognitive, affective, or biological aspects), behavioral patterns, and environmental factors (Bandura, 2002a, 2002b). The core idea is that through interaction and interplay among these 3 components, people tend to maintain, adapt, modify, or solidify their ideas, emotions, and behaviors, which form the intrinsic nature of humans, also known as “plasticity,” (Bandura, 2002).

Individuals display a distinct aptitude constituted of 4 human capabilities when isolated from others. These capabilities include symbolization, self-regulation, self-reflection, and vicarious capability. Symbolization denotes a person's ability to “symbolize” his or her encounters with the outside world through mental processes. Humans tend to generate symbols relating to their experiences during this process. This mental capacity is linked to a person's ability to understand the surroundings and regulate external factors (Bandura, 2001). The ability to respond to external restrictions and

requirements is referred to as self-regulatory capability. The ability to steer oneself when reacting to the world or environmental events has an impact on the process. “Self-regulation” is usually displayed in the form of “proactive or reactive control. “Reactive pertains to one's attempts to fill the gap between perceived performance and a personal standard, whereas proactive control refers to inspiring and leading one's actions by defining and carrying out higher goals (Bandura, 1991a, 199b). Self-reflective competence is the ability to examine oneself retrospectively, including behaviors and thoughts, by comparing them to reality signs. By examining themselves, people can recognize and authenticate thoughts guided by the 4 modes, "enactive, vicarious, social, and logical forms" (Bandura, 2001, 2002). So, one's beliefs are supported by explicit or implicit experiences, societal conventions, and interpretations based on the available information (Khang et al., 2014).

The influence of perceived self-efficacy on various parts of cognitive process (–pessimistic or optimistic), behavior selection, and outcome expectancies are regarded as crucial elements of self-reflective thought (Bandura, 2002). The concept of vicarious capability is based on the idea that learning can be accomplished through both direct and indirect experiences offered by the media. Tv, magazines, and the Web, for example, supply people with a wealth of information about views on life, ethical code, and behavior tendencies. By observing others' acts and the outcomes transmitted and depicted by media platforms, affective, cognitive, and behavioral learning can be done vicariously. In fact, Bandura (2001) discovered that indirect experiences have a significant impact on people's conceptions of social reality (Khang et al., 2014).

As per Bandura (2001), individuals are greatly influenced by their social circumstances through both textual and visual signals, which shape their thought processes and behavioral outcomes, and media is considered as an environmental tool. Hence, this theory is suitable to understand the impact of media (Khajehpour et al., 2011). So, the current study will be grounded on this conceptual framework to explore the impact of social media usage on consumers' brand consciousness.

## Chapter 2

### 2.Literature Review

#### 2.1 Brand Consciousness

Before discussing the concept of brand consciousness, it is necessary to define the term 'brand'. A brand is a trademark, slogan, symbol, logo design, or a mix of these concepts that are used to identify and distinguish one company's products from others (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010)). The essence lies in the fact that every brand offers a distinct identity and individuality to its products. A few decades back, there were only a few unique products, so consumers had little choice; brands were also few, and people were forced to buy whatever was available. But as technology evolved at a breakneck speed, people are starting to become "brand conscious" (BC) in order to maintain their social position. Scholars believe that with increased social media usage, street trends will become obsolete. Since people want to be accepted in society, they follow the current trends via modern mediums like SNS (Siddique & Rashidi, 2015).

Brand consciousness, also known as brand sensitivity, refers to the psychological proclivity to choose branded things that are more extensively marketed or advertised, and it has a considerable impact on usage patterns (LaChance et al., 2003). The terms "brand sensitivity" and "brand consciousness" have been seen to be used interchangeably. So, it alludes to the fact that these can be used interchangeably (Workman & Lee, 2013). Nelson and McLeod (2005) defined BC as the belief that the titles or labels of brands are crucial in the cognitive process that underlies purchasing decision, which is congruent with Kapferer and Laurent's (1983) definition of "brand sensitivity." The measures revolve upon apparel labels, and Nelson and McLeod (2005) acknowledged and admitted that some questions on their BC measure were identical to those on Kapferer and Laurent's brand sensitivity scale (Workman & Lee, 2013).

The extent to which buyers choose a specific brand name when making purchases is referred to as "brand consciousness" (BC). Customers' attitudes toward purchasing pricey and well-reputed brands are referred to as BC (Sproles and Kendell, 1986). It's not just a question of brand awareness or whether to choose one brand over another when it comes to being brand savvy. It is a question of a brand having a unique image, value, and features in terms of its identity and services. Shoppers of the new age consider brands to be an important influence in purchase intentions, and they are drawn

to a tag or a well-known name. Brands tend to seek the attention of their potential clients which has given advertisers a fresh perspective (Siddique & Rashidi, 2015). Today, people are being provided with products of exceptional quality, perceived benefits, and attractiveness by various brands. People strongly believe that a certain brand they use represents their identity and a sense of contentment. With innovation and technology rapidly mushrooming, Pakistani customers are becoming more obsessed with branded products; not just the local brands are becoming more popular, but so are international ones. Scholars assert that consumers can now afford to pay a premium for well-known brands. People's awareness of brands is developing in tandem with their socioeconomic mobility. The street fashion trends are no longer relevant. Hence, people who are looking for a specific image, design, trend, or diversity are more likely to choose brands (Siddique & Rashidi, 2015).

Evidence suggests that different age groups have different brand preferences. The youth are obsessed with brands, and it is becoming an addiction for them. When it comes to apparel, accessories, shoes, and other items, they choose brands and are willing to pay a lot more for them just to look special and fashionable. Wearing brands is becoming more popular among people of all socioeconomic backgrounds. It has not only grown in prominence but has also taken on the form of a social dilemma. Consumers buy brand names and are prepared to pay a higher price for them, according to Kohli and Thakar (1997). This implies that brand-conscious individuals buy brand names rather than products.

The use of a brand is found to be associated with personal and social factors. People frequently use brands to express their personal characteristics and preferences (Manrai et al., 2001). Moreover, brand labels have distinct sociological aspects (Wang, 2007). Buyers place a greater emphasis on branded things, believing that brands represent one's status symbol and reputation, as well as a means of expressing superiority in society, and hence gravitate toward purchasing expensive and widely publicized items. Brands also provide customers a sense of belonging to their purchases and reduce risk while buying (Ismail, 2017).

As different brand labels ultimately acquired a sense of identity (Friedman, 1985), brand awareness has become a significant aspect in buyers' lives, particularly for those in Eastern societies that value economic well-being and repute (Hofstede, 2001). For instance, Fan and Xiao (1998) found that among Chinese youth, brands have become the most important determining factor in a purchase decision. Another example is that women in China's terrain have been noted to be quite brand aware. They think about well-known brands, especially those that aren't local. They regard foreign brands as more deserving, valuable, and superior to domestic brands. They weave together reputation and

the brand's label without regard for the item's value (Tai & Tam, 1997). The same concept applies to Pakistani society.

Since a brand is a technique of expressing one's personality and interests (Sontag & Lee, 2004), Marion (2003) asserts that the topic of youth belongingness must be addressed from a marketing perspective anchored in both personal (individual) and social (group) factors. Young individuals appear to acquire products or potential brands specific to their social group (power of social identification), but they may also seek to distinguish themselves from others by purchasing innovative items or brands to assert their individuality (maintaining individual personality) (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004). Marion, as cited in Badaoui et al (2018), claims that adolescent clothing decisions are influenced by both social character (group process) as well as individual personality (internal process). Chattaraman et al (2010) also asserted that people's brand consumption is influenced by their social identities, whereas Zollo (1997) asserted that adolescents reduce the likelihood of error or risk when selecting appearance-related products such as clothing because they regard these items as important. Hence, based on the existing body of literature, one can safely say that brand consciousness is not only growing rapidly but is highly influenced by social factors and the external environment.

## **2.2. Social media usage**

The phenomenon of social media usage has been a topic of discussion and attention for many scholars across the globe. Several studies have been conducted on this topic, including the study of SM outcomes (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011), the relation of technology with youth (Lenhart et al., 2005), a comparative study of online and traditional communication tools among teenagers (Pierce, 2009), and many others. Today, there are numerous social media platforms, including Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Google+, Pinterest, and so on. Hence, due to increased SM usage and so many social media platforms, technology-mediated communication has taken the place of face-to-face interactions. SNSs have transformed the way society connects and live their everyday life. For people, it has become more than merely a means to connect with their social circle. With the use of SM comes a wide range of outcomes, including benefits, risks, interactivity, etc. The SNS provides a type of online environment in which users generate, view, share, and save content while also focusing on interacting with each other. These platforms essentially allow for any type of information-sharing activity, like exchanging ideas and discussing hot topics (Saodah Wok et al. 2012). For example, Facebook provides an online platform for people to establish profiles, write comments, produce and share views, and engage with others (Byod &

Ellison, 2007). Studies show that Facebook has grown in importance as a medium for social engagement, self-identity, and the formation of connections among academics since its establishment in 2004. As there are a good response and engagement from internet users, specifically social media, this implies the new technological advancements are mushrooming. Furthermore, the popularity of SNS such as Twitter, YouTube, Blog posts, Facebook, and others prompted an effort to create many other platforms (Mustafa & Hamzah, 2010). This opens a new avenue for connection and conversation in virtual space (Omar et al., 2016).

Social media usage has its pros as well as cons. Many studies highlighted the disadvantages and consequences of social media use. There are numerous physical and psychological health issues associated with social media usage, for example, anxiety, sadness, unhealthy eating behavior, insufficient physical activity, short attention. spans (de Zwart et al., 2011). Barnes (2009 as cited in Omar et al., 2016), on the other side, claims that SM platforms have altered the educational environment. Since childhood, the present generation of high school graduates has been given access to online platforms. In this age of interaction and hyper-engagement, the way young adults and teenagers acquire, and digest content has dramatically altered. Aside from that, Jacobsen and Forste (2011) conducted a study on the new generation and the usage of electric media, which yielded a noteworthy result. They discovered a link between SM usage and academic achievement among college students. Approximately 2/3 of the respondents said they used online media in classrooms during lectures and at home while completing homework. This multitasking is likely to have raised distraction, which has been demonstrated in a previous study to be negatively related to academic achievement (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011).

On the other hand, studies show that SNSs have been utilized by people from all walks of life, which include housewives, students, and government and non - governmental employees. Moreover, Rasit (2011) argues that the benefits of SNS that make them a popular choice among netizens worldwide are that they allow people to effortlessly generate personal space using their profiles and communicate with others through various activities. Users can participate in virtual conversations and exchange ideas independently. Furthermore, individuals have the freedom to express themselves by their posts on social platforms (Omar et al., 2016).

With the advent of social media platforms, the strategies techniques for connecting with customers have also evolved dramatically. Consumers and advertisers post media (contents) on social networking sites (SNS), in the form of a picture, slide show, video clips, blogpost. Social media refers to "citizen media" or "consumer-generated media" because it is a 2-way interaction media, unlike traditional media which offers only one way of communication. Prior research illustrates that consumers tend to utilize social networking sites more than other platforms. Social media uses

mobile applications and web-based technology to provide a highly dynamic environment to the users (Siddique & Rashidi, 2015).

This suggests that currently, social media (SM) is one of the most prominent digital marketing tools, which is attributable to its rapid popularity. People's interactions have been influenced by SM, which has shifted the traditional communication style. Because it is a one-to-one contact, marketers communicate their brand idea directly to their potential buyers. Owing to this, advertisers are paying close attention to this new normal in order to attract clients, as it offers a new terrain for businesses. As a marketing medium, social media differs from traditional media in several aspects, including ease of use, quick reaction, effective accessibility, spontaneity, and prominence. Social is described by Mangold and Faulds (2009) as a digital/virtual "word-of-mouth" platform. Massive amounts of information are disseminated beyond geographical borders, and this transmission is known as "online word of mouth". Hence, SNS virtually draws people from across the globe under one roof. Customers express themselves through comments, likes, shares, blogs, conversations, and other means. It provides new metrics and trends concerning customers' preferences, and this information is used by many marketing gurus (Siddique & Rashidi, 2015).

A study by Want (2009), also indicates that the purpose of the messages delivered by media is to generate a sense of comparison in the viewers. This comparison eventually leads viewers to think about the differences between them and the ideal images portrayed by the media. This approach motivates individuals to buy the products advertised in the media messages in order to reduce the difference and grow closer to the standard.

### **2.3 Study sample: Generation Y**

The use of social networks is not restricted to interaction purposes. University students are increasingly using social media to help them succeed academically by joining, spectating, commenting, criticizing, uploading, and sharing. As a result, university students account for a significant number of "social media users". Given the pervasiveness of SNS in the present era, it's no wonder that pupils in connected environments are attracted to use the technology, even when they're supposed to be doing something else (Young, 2009). It is quite evident that one of the primary disadvantages of using social media is the excessive amount of attention and time it consumes (Wang et al., 2011). The amount of time they spend on various activities has the tendency to guide their actions (Van Dijk, 2005). This implies that it is critical to examine the societal impacts of social media on different spheres of life, including consumer behavior.



As per Rosen (2011), individuals born between 1965 and 1979 (Gen X) spent about 13 hours a day on social networking sites (SNS); individuals born between 1980 and 1989 ("Net Generation") on average spend about 19 hours a day on social networking sites (SNS), and individuals born between 1990 and 1999 ('I Generation') give about 20 hours to social networking sites (SNS) daily. These findings were based on research on the daily usage of all SNS combined. A person born between 1980 and 1990 was statistically classed as Generation Y. Many other titles, such as "Millennial", "Y Generation", and "Generation We", are commonly used to define this generation of people. Although the name Generation Y is widely used, establishing the exact birth years is a source of contention around the globe. When scientifically evaluating this generation, advanced economies like Canada, America, Australia, and England all have a range of year differences. Although the United Kingdom and the United States describe Gen Y as children born between 1980 and 1990, it is defined by the "Australian Bureau of Statistics" as children born between 1983 and 2000 (Gibson, 2013).

## **2.4 Relationship between study variables**

### **2.4.1 Impact of Social media usage on Brand consciousness**

Web retail, online shopping, and e-shopping are various terms that refer to different ways of purchasing things through online sites and through SM. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the SNSs had become one of the brand's favorite techniques. It has turned out to be a modern tool for SMM in today's technology-driven era (Nanji, 2015). As elaborated earlier, almost all businesses have expanded their use of SMM to reach their consumers. The way firms do business has been completely altered, and it is the need of the hour for businesses to adapt and incorporate this new normal. In today's world, academics, entrepreneurs, and policymakers utilize IT to efficiently advertise and sell their services and products (El-Gohary, 2012). In the current e-marketing environment, SNS and pages are crucial. (Zeng et al., 2009). SNSs are excessively used to increase product approval (De Vries et al., 2012). Consumers utilize the internet to view dealers' items and other well-known 3rd-party portals with retailers. (Ramanathan et al., 2017). Studies have extensively started looking into how SM usage affects customer attitude and thinking patterns (Colicev et al., 2018) and "consumer behavior" (De Vries et al., 2017). According to the most recent cultural press research, SM influences 32 percent of shoppers' purchasing decisions (Kim & Johnson, 2016). SM also has a major impact on the retailer's business. Around 71 percent of retail executives believe social media has a significant impact on their businesses (Larson & Dolan, 2013). A

significant majority of customers who connect with shops on social networking sites like Facebook utilize this new advertising aspect (Rapp et al., 2013). As SMM has grown in importance as an advertising medium, scholars are becoming more interested in its prospects. Nevertheless, research on the effectiveness of SM platforms in the commercial sector is still limited (Rapp et al., 2013).

Nelson and McLeod (2005) given their possible effect on branding, advertisers, and sponsors have utilized media as a device/apparatus to create positive brand associations with youth purchasers by spreading publicizing messages on all media stages. Research findings revealed that brand-conscious consumers observe and enjoy the media and celebrities for information on the latest trends and fashion. Consumption of commercial media (e.g., movies) has a positive relationship with brand awareness. Information on normative styles of clothing usually comes from individuals' interactions with others (Kaigler, 1979). However, if people's interpersonal experiences diminish, they can turn to the media for information (Wright, 1960). A study by Chu and Kamal (2011) also depicted that social media usage has a significant impact on millennials' brand consciousness and purchase intention.

#### **2.4.2 Social media usage and brand consciousness in Gen Y**

SNSs began as leisure for some technology proficient individuals and have since evolved into a social convention and a lifestyle for people all over the world. Youth, particularly those in their academic years, have welcomed these platforms to stay in touch with friends and family (Boyd & Ellison 2007), They could exchange information, publish and discuss images of their everyday routines on different sites. Evidence suggests that the most active users include the pupils who spent considerable time on social networking sites, making profiles, updating, or researching their profession or academic tasks. While others only used it to connect with peers, update about the happening events in life, etc. Young and colleagues (2009) explored how these individuals communicate with one another, share details about their preferences, start new conversations, and keep up with the news about certain subjects on various social media (SM) platforms.

Jacobsen and Forste (2011) found in their study that current students are much more active on the digital platform than any prior generation. They communicate with one another through online means like instant messaging (IM), e-mail, smartphones, SNSs, online gaming, and watching television or movies. Therefore, it is unavoidable to conclude that, the Y generation, mostly youth, and students are heavily involved in the usage of social media than other age groups. Chen and Bryer conducted a study in 2012 and found that Facebook has more than .75 billion users globally; LinkedIn has more than 0.1 billion members; Twitter generates more than .177 billion tweets daily;

and YouTube has more than 3 billion views daily (Chen & Bryer, 2012). Evidence also suggests that young adults aged 18 to 29 were among those who used social networking platforms (Rainie, 2011). Conversely, a study conducted in Nigeria found that youngsters use social media to meet their social demands, much more than other age groups. Most of their activities revolve around amusement and camaraderie. According to most studies, Facebook is currently one of the most popular social media sites among teenagers (Anderson et al., 2012 as cited in Wok et al., 2012). According to a survey by Wok and colleagues (2012), 95.3 percent of young people who have access to social networking sites (SNSs) use Facebook, with 42 percent using Skype, and 75.1 percent using Yahoo mail. According to this finding, Facebook is the leading new social networking platform among youth, But the popularity of Instagram re-shaped the world of social media to a certain extent. Individuals' social media usage can be attributed to a variety of reasons, with benefits like encouraging more social contact via digital means, offering better accessibility and sources of information, promoting innovative thinking, establishing a feeling of belongingness among users, offering advanced options to improve engagement, and bringing down constraints to socialization (Rosen, 2011).

In addition, the connection between brand consciousness and Gen Y also needs to be explained to understand the choice of the study topic. The dramatic rise of online stores creates enormous demand (Okonkwo, 2005) and sales prospects for luxury brands (Okonkwo, 2009). Consequently, brands are using advanced modes to engage with Millennials. Giorgio Armani, for example, uses SNSs to reach out to young people who want to be engaged and inspired (Silverstein, 2010). Furthermore, the rise in upscale Internet users emphasizes the relevance of luxury e-Retail (Okonkwo, 2009). This is especially true for the newest SMM platforms, such as "social media advertising" (SMA). Social media advertising (SMA) can help promote luxury businesses by acting as a source of brand aspiration for prospective consumers, like Gen Y (Balwani, 2009). Gen Y is a frequent user of social media and hence is a target market for premium brands (Lenhart et al., 2010). Therefore, social media advertising (SMA) can be a beneficial technique in forming attitudes and perceptions toward the brands, as well as influencing behavior (Palda, 1966). Millennials spend a lot of time on social media (Pew Study, 2010a as cited in Chu et al., 2011), and previous studies have found that higher media usage is directly correlated with high "advertising beliefs scores" (Richins, 1987). This implies that the amount of time Gen Y gives to social networking sites (SNS) may have an impact on their views, ideas, and habits towards marketing on these platforms. Because brand consciousness reflects an individual's proclivity to purchase well-reputed branded goods (Nelson & McLeod, 2005), it is believed that this construct may influence how users pay attention to and comprehend advertisement in various media portals like social media. A study by Chu and Kamal (2011) also depicted that social media usage has a significant impact on millennials' brand consciousness and

purchase intention. Based on literary evidence mentioned above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1:** Social media usage will be positively correlated with the brand consciousness in Gen Y

Moreover, as the research model depicts, the independent study variable i.e., “social media usage” has two dimensions. These dimensions are “social integration and emotional connection” (SIEC) and “integration into social routines” (ISR). The study by Akbar and Ozgul (2018) indicates that SIEC and ISR are positively correlated with brand awareness. For the independent variable to completely impact brand consciousness, both aspects i.e., SIEC and ISR should impact brand consciousness positively. So, the proposed hypothesis for the study will be as follows:

**H2:** SIEC will be positively correlated with brand consciousness in Gen Y.

**H3:** ISR will be positively correlated with the brand consciousness in Gen Y.

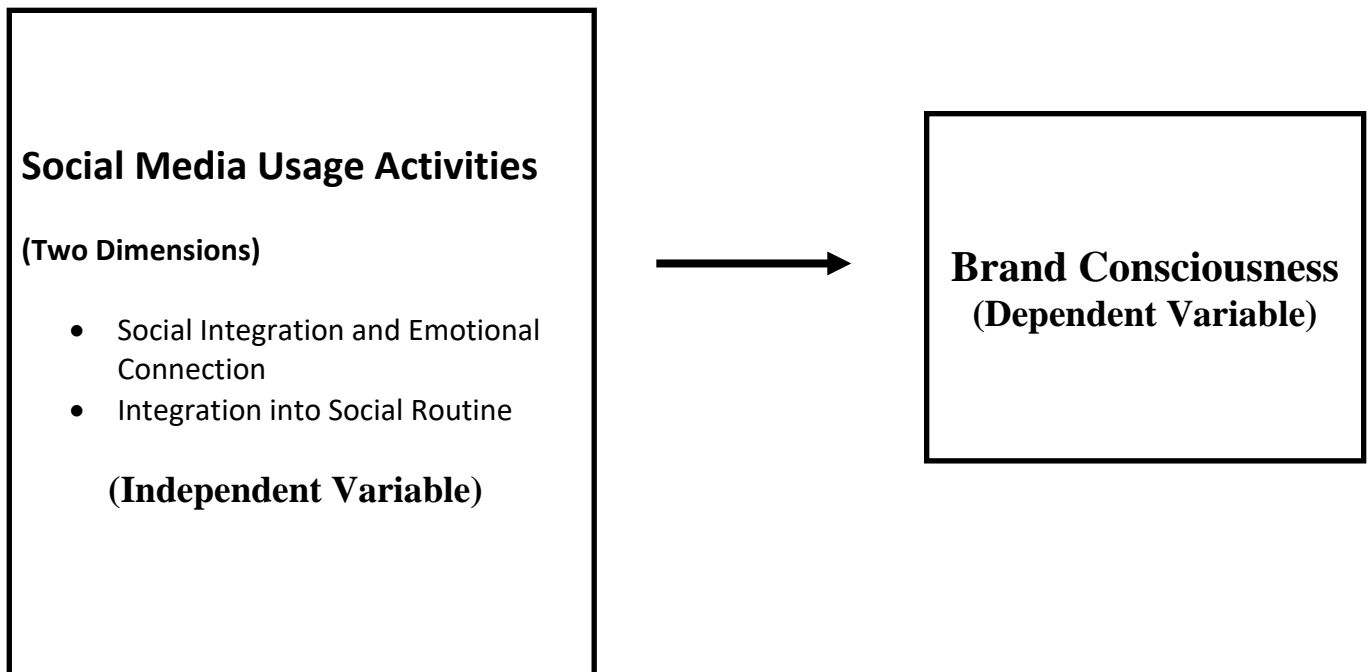
### **2.4.3 Relationship between gender and brand consciousness**

With respect to the connection between sexual orientation and clothing, girls have been observed to be more inspired by apparel than boys (Haynes et al., 1993), and furthermore; they are more oriented toward brands (Shim & Koh, 1997). As per literature, men behave differently while making decisions, including the decisions related to purchasing. Shim and Koh (1997) found those teenage girls are more socially and conspicuously conscious than teenage boys. This conspicuousness may lead to females being more brand conscious as compared to males.

Other research reveals that men do not perceive shopping as pleasant and desirable (Dholakia, 1999), spend less time shopping as compared to women and usually avoid taking the responsibility of purchases related to clothing and food (Miller, 1998), show less interest in clothing and fashion (Cox & Dittmar, 1995), show a less consideration to the opinions given by friends (Shoaf et al., 1995), go for quick/careless decision making (Campbell & MacKinlay, 1997), and are more self-sufficient, externally motivated, competitive, and keener to take money related risks (Prince, 1993). This indicates that men are less considerate about the current trends and hence are less likely to be influenced by them. All this research elucidates the fact that in male consumers decision-making attributes will not be the same as in females. Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed.

*H4*: Brand consciousness will be higher in females as compared to males.

## 2.5 Research Framework



## Chapter 3

### 3.Methodology

#### 3.1 Nature of the study

This study tends to understand the impact of social media usage on brand consciousness. The study will be conducted through an online survey. The questionnaires in the form of a google document will be shared with the potential respondents.

## **3.2 Time Horizon**

Based on the time horizon, the current research is a cross-sectional study in nature. This means that the study variables will be studied at one time. Evidence suggests that cross-sectional studies are cost and time effective.

## **3.3 Research Approach**

The research approach adopted for the study is quantitative. Both primary and secondary data will be used. The primary data will be based on the data collected directly from the study participants through a survey. Secondary data on the other hand will be comprised of the existing literature related to the study topic. It includes the data published online including journals, magazines, articles, books, etc.

## **3.4 Operational Definition of Variables**

**3.4.1 Brand consciousness.** Laurent and Kapferer (1983) defined brand Consciousness as a psychological variable that affects consumer decision while purchasing a product and refers to the importance given to a brand name when choosing a product. The variable is operationalized based on the score obtained on Laurent and Kapferer's brand sensitivity scale. A higher score on this measure indicates more brand consciousness and vice versa.

**3.4.2 Social Media Usage.** Social media usage according to Jenkins-Guarnieri et al (2013) refers to “the integration of the social behavior and daily routines of users, along with the importance of and emotional connection to this use”. The variable is operationalized based on the score obtained on Jenkins-Guarnieri et al’s (2013) “Social Media Use Integration Scale” scale. A higher score on this measure indicates higher social media usage and vice versa.

## **3.5 Survey Questionnaire**

In the first part of the questionnaire will be a consent form guiding participants of the study and seeking their consent to participate. In the second part, there will be a demographic section including gender and age. The third part will include the questionnaires to measure study variables namely brand consciousness and social media usage.

## **3.6 Instruments**

A brief description of the scales is given below

### **3.6.1. Social Media Use Integration Scale**

To measure social media usage, the "Social Media Use Integration Scale" (SMUIS) which was developed by Jenkins-Guarnieri et al. (2013) will be used. It is a 10 items measure comprising two social media use dimensions (subscales), which are mirrored in two sub-scales. Those two dimensions are "Social Integration and Emotional Connection" (SIEC) and "Integration into Social Routines" (ISR). The responses will be recorded using 5 points Likert scale.

*\*Note:* When creating the instrument, the developers focused on Facebook.com and used Facebook in each of the questions. However, the scale was designed so that Facebook could be replaced with other social media platforms (Jenkins-Guarnieri et al., 2013). Lawdermilt (2020) in his study replaced the word "Facebook" with the words "social media". The current study will also adopt and use the term "social media" instead of "Facebook"

**3.6.2 Brand sensitivity scale.** In order to brand consciousness of respondents, Laurent and Kapferer's brand sensitivity scale (1983) was used. This scale is comprised of seven items in total, out of which, six are five-point Likert scale items and the seventh item asks the participant to rank the importance of five criteria in clothing choice including price, fabric, color, print, and brand). The scores for each individual item were summed up to obtain an overall score.

### **3.7 Study Sample**

The sample of the study will be Gen Y. In literature, there is a lack of consensus regarding the year range of Gen Y. As elaborated earlier When scientifically evaluating this generation, advanced economies like Canada, America, Australia, and England all propose a different range. While the United Kingdom and the United States describe Gen Y as children born between 1980 and 1990, the "Australian Bureau of Statistics" characterizes it as children born between 1983 and 2000 (Gibson, 2013). Hence, based on this contradictory evidence the current study will choose individuals aged 25-40 as the sample. The target population of the study was social media users within the age bracket of (25-40) residing in the twin cities of Pakistan. Generally, sample sizes between 200-300 participants offer an acceptable margin of error (Bagrowski & Gutowska, 2022). So, the study sample is 211 ( $N=211$ ).

### **3.8 Procedure**

The data was collected from participants using online google form. Participants were asked to fill the questionnaire according to their personal experience and true feelings. Before presenting the

questionnaire, they were informed of the research and its purpose and instructed on how to complete the questionnaire. Respondents were assured of the anonymity of their answers and the confidentiality of their data. In the end, the participants were appreciated for their time and their responses. Later, the data was analyzed using the Statistical Software Package (SPSS).



# CHAPTER 4

## RESULTS and FINDINGS

The current study aimed to study the impact of “social media usage” on “brand consciousness”. The inclusion criteria for the sample of the study where the participants should fall in the category of Gen Y. To analyze the collected data suitable statistical procedures were employed. This section will attempt to present the summary of all the statistical analysis carried out using SPSS. Reliability coefficients were attained to examine the internal consistency of the all the measures used in the study. The correlation analysis was performed to understand the link between the variables. Regression analysis was also conducted. In addition, to understand the group differences in brand consciousness based on gender, t-test was conducted. The results are tabulated as follows:

### 4.1 Data Analysis

#### 4.1.1 Descriptive Frequencies

**Table 1**

*Demographic Profile of Sample (N=211)*

| Gender | <i>F</i> | %    |
|--------|----------|------|
| Male   | 100      | 47.4 |
| Female | 111      | 52.6 |

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentage of males and females in the study sample. The percentage of females is 52.6% while that of males is 47.4%.

### 4.1.2. Reliability Analysis

**Table 2**

*Descriptive and reliability values of all study variables*

| Variables | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-----------|------------------|
| SMUIC     | .87              |
| SIEC      | .86              |
| ISR       | .63              |
| BSS       | .79              |

*Note* SMUIC= Social Media Use Integration Scale ; SIEC= Social Integration and Emotional Connection; ISR= Integration into Social Routine; BSS= Brand Sensitivity Scale

Table 2 illustrates the values of alpha reliability for all the study scales and sub scales. Reliability of all the variables range from .63 to .87. The value of reliability for scale used social media usage measure (SMIUC) is .87 while for its sub scales SIEC and ISR is .86 and .63 respectively. Moreover, alpha reliability for scale used for measuring brand consciousness, i.e., BSS is .79.

### 4.1.3 Corrélation Analyses

**Table 3**

*Correlation between all study variables*

| Variables | SMUIC | SIEC | ISR | BSS |
|-----------|-------|------|-----|-----|
| SMUIC     | 1     |      |     |     |
| SIEC      | .95** | 1    |     |     |

|     |       |        |     |   |
|-----|-------|--------|-----|---|
| ISR | .84** | .64**  | 1   |   |
| BSS | .18** | 1.94** | .11 | 1 |

Note SMUIC= Social Media Use Integration Scale; SIEC= Social Integration and Emotional Connection; ISR= Integration into Social Routine; BSS= Brand Sensitivity Scale \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

The table 3 reveals that there exists positive correlation between all the study variables except ISR and BSS. This shows that ISR although positively associated with brand consciousness has a statistically non-significant relationship. Apart from this, brand consciousness is found to have a significant positive correlation with overall measure of social media usage (SMUIC) as well as the sub scale SIEC. Moreover, the level of significance is ( $p < 0.01$ ) indicating strong correlation. This implies that if the social media usage increase, brand consciousness will increase and vice versa.

#### 4.1.4. Regression Analysis

**Table 4**

*Regression coefficients of social media use on Brand Consciousness*

| Variable | B        | $\beta$ | SE   |
|----------|----------|---------|------|
| Constant | 19.45*** |         | 1.74 |
| SMUIC    | .12***   | .18     | .04  |
| $R^2$    | .03      |         |      |

SMUIC= Social Media Use Integration Scale \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 4 shows the impact of social media use on brand consciousness. The  $R^2$  value of .03 revealed that SMUIC accounts for 3% variance in the outcome variable with  $F(1, 209) = 7.20$ ,  $p < .001$ . The findings reveal that SMUIC positively predicts brand consciousness ( $\beta = .18$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

#### 4.1.5 Group Differences: Independent sample t-test Analysis

**Table 5**

*Group Differences based on Gender among Variables of the Study (N = 211)*

| Variables | Male<br>(n = 100) | Female<br>(n = 111) | CI (95%) |
|-----------|-------------------|---------------------|----------|
|           |                   |                     |          |

|       | <i>M</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>S</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>LL</i> | <i>UL</i> | Cohen's<br><i>d</i> |
|-------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|
| SMUIC | 35.50    | 7.93     | 35.92    | 8.98     | .36      | .71      | -2.74     | 1.88      | -                   |
| BSS   | 24.44    | 5.45     | 23.59    | 6.30     | 1.03     | .30      | -.76      | 2.45      | -                   |

*Note* SMUIC= Social Media Use Integration Scale; SIEC= Social Integration and Emotional Connection; ISR= Integration into Social Routine; BSS= Brand Sensitivity Scale

Table 5 shows the results of *t*-test for measuring gender differences among the study variables (social media usage and brand consciousness). The mean scores on both independent and dependent variable show non-significant results for gender differences. This indicates that males and females do not differ significantly on social media usage and brand consciousness.

#### 4.2. Data Findings

The result findings of the current research and proposed hypothesis specifically is as follows.

**Hypothesis 1** which was “Social media usage will be positively correlated with the brand consciousness in Gen Y” has been accepted. The hypothesis is accepted based on significance level ( $p < 0.01$ ). The correlation analysis shows that there exists positive correlation between brand consciousness and social media usage. The results are in accordance with existing body of literature. The study by Want (2009) shows that media becomes very influential in image or identity formation of consumers. Especially, adolescents may compare themselves with idealized media based on evaluative appearance comparisons with idealized media portrayals and change their behavior accordingly. This can lead to wearing branded clothes to footwear and accessories. Moreover, according to a study by Nelson and McLeod (2005) given their potential impact on branding, marketers and advertisers have utilized media as a tool to generate positive brand relationships with young consumers by promoting advertising messages on all media platforms. Similarly, Khan et al (2019) also attempted to explore the concept of online fashion industry and found that social media marketing plays a significant role in the industry. Moreover, they found that variables like brand consciousness, fashion consciousness, and social media are correlated.

**Hypothesis 2** which was “SIEC will be positively correlated with brand consciousness in Gen Y” has been accepted. The hypothesis is accepted based on significance level ( $p < 0.01$ ). The correlation analysis shows that there exists positive correlation between brand consciousness and “Social

Integration and Emotional Connection” (subscale of social media usage). The results are in accordance with existing body of literature. Akbar and Özgül (2018) study the impact of social media use on the brand awareness using a study sample of young individuals. The study findings showed that SIEC is positively correlated with brand awareness and tends to predict 41% of variance in the outcome variable.

**Hypothesis 3** which was “ISR will be positively correlated with the brand consciousness in Gen Y” has been rejected by the study findings. The correlation analysis shows that the relation with brand consciousness and Integration into social routine (subscale of social media usage) is non-significant. The results reveal that although the two variables are positively related, but the correlation between them is not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ). According to some academics, social media influencers can be divided into two categories: micro-influencers (those with just a few followers) and macro-influencers (those with a massive follower list) (Kay et al, 2020). Due to this knowledge gap, it is crucial to determine whether macro-influencers have a stronger persuasive effect on followers than micro-influencers (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2018, Kay et al., 2020). Studies like these suggest that besides the usage of social, type of information and platform also plays role in how much the user integrate it in real life. This to a certain degree explains the non-significant relationship between ISR and brand consciousness.

**Hypothesis 4** which was that “ Brand consciousness will be higher in females as compared to males” has also been rejected. Independent Sample t-test was computed across mean differences to study responses. The study findings show that there exists no significant difference in brand consciousness based on gender. The non-significance of the results can be understood by taking into consideration the fact that the literature on gender differences in brand consciousness has been contradictory. While much research showed that females are more brand conscious some also assert the opposite. In a study by Shephard et al (2016), it was also found that young males nowadays are more active in shopping, and a wide range of product categories that were regarded purely feminine, such as skin care, cosmetics, and fashion magazines, also offer products for men. One reason for male being more brand conscious can be that choosing products of a particular brand reduces risk and saves them their time as few research showed Brand consciousness is desirable since it lowers search costs for males and can be viewed as a reflection of men's wish to use purchasing as a sign of their superiority and status symbol (Otnes & McGrath, 2001). Additionally, the study by Nelson and McLeod (2005) regarding adolescents’ brand consciousness as well as the study by Chu and Kamal (2011) on social

media usage, brand consciousness, and luxury brand consumption in millennials also show showed non-significant differences in brand consciousness based on gender.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Discussion**

The current study aimed to explore the relationship between social media usage and brand consciousness. Moreover, the study also attempted to understand the gender differences on brand consciousness among Gen Y. Owing to the increased use of social media among Generation Y, the group was selected as the target population for the study. The inclusion criteria for study sample were to lie under the age bracket of 25-40 years. The reason for selecting this age bracket was that, at this age individuals are more likely to be dominated by persuasive social constraints. Gen Y is a frequent user of social media and hence is a target market for premium brands (Lenhart et al., 2010). Out of the four proposed hypothesis, two were accepted while two were rejected.

The data was collected from the twin cities of Pakistan. The reason for selecting this study sample was the ease of data collection as well as scarcity of data. To our knowledge hardly any study on the impact of social media usage on “brand consciousness” in Gen Y are conducted in the twin cities. Although wearing glamorous and well-advertised brand is no more a recent trend for individuals of the new millennium, it has shown a remarkable increase during the previous decade. With the increasing globalization, people in Pakistan are taken over by the concept of brand consciousness and are willing to invest their time and money for local as well as international brands. Another important aspect is that this dilemma of consciousness prevails not only in elite class but also in all socioeconomic classes. If financial situation doesn’t allow them to buy expensive brand labels, they satisfy their urge by buying brand replicas in reasonable prices. This indicated the need to explore the phenomenon. Moreover, in the past few decades, a lot of research has been done on brand loyalty, brand image, brand awareness etc. but only few tapped the construct of brand consciousness. Thus, this research aimed to understand the potential antecedent of the phenomenon. .

The major constructs of the study were assessed using two scales. The independent variable (i.e., social media usage) was measured using the "Social Media Use Integration Scale" (SMUIS) which was developed by Jenkins-Guarnieri et al. (2013). The scale was further divided into two sub-scales namely "Social Integration and Emotional Connection" (SIEC) and "Integration into Social Routines" (ISR). The dependent variable (i.e. brand consciousness) was measured using Laurent and Kapferer's brand sensitivity scale (1983) was used. The satisfactory alpha coefficient range of measures is between .60 to .90 (Bland & Altman, 1997), so the alpha coefficient for all the scales was satisfactory. Reliability of all the variables range from .63 to .87. The value of reliability for scale used social media usage measure (SMIUC) is .87 while for its sub scales SIEC and ISR is .86 and .63 respectively. Moreover, alpha reliability for scale used for measuring brand consciousness, i.e., BSS is .79.

To gather responses from the respondents' online survey method was opted. Nevertheless, to indicate the rejection or acceptance of the hypotheses of research, significance level was set as  $p < 0.05$ . Based on the significance level, all the hypotheses would be accepted or rejected. So, out all the four hypotheses of the study that were formulated based on existing theoretical evidence only two are being supported by findings. Thus, based on the findings the research questions of the study have been addressed. The first research question "*What is the relationship between social media usage and brand consciousness in Gen Y?*", findings suggest that social media usage is positively correlated with brand consciousness and acts as a predictor of brand consciousness in Gen Y. Regarding the second research question, "What is the impact of SIEC on brand consciousness in Gen Y?", results indicate a significant positive correlation. For third research question i.e. "What is the impact of ISR on brand consciousness in Gen Y?" results indicate a non-significant correlation. Similarly, for fourth research question "What is the role of demographics (gender) in relation to the variables of the study?" findings from independent sample t-test show that no significant group difference exists. This implies that the current study offers a clear insight the topic of brand consciousness

## **5.2. Personal Reflection**

This study is an attempt to understand the prevailing idea of brand consciousness in context to Pakistan. The key aim of the study was to learn Gen Y's brand consciousness is increased via social media usage. In my opinion, social media platforms have now become a part of everyday life. These platforms not only keep people engaged and connected but tend to have significant impact on various aspects of life. Knowledge and information regarding new trends can be easily found through social media. It has evolved into a cutting-edge and current information source for clients (Hamid et al.,

2016). It facilitates user interaction and the dissemination of fresh, current data outside of traditional networking (Wang, 2012). By effectively incorporating social media into their business, brand may reap enormous benefits. It is the quickest and most easy way to target potential consumers if used properly. Another key take away from the study is that it discards the popular opinion that only females are becoming increasingly brand conscious. The study highlights that there exists no gender-based differences in brand consciousness, which implies that social media usage is affecting both the genders equally.

### **5.3. Conclusion**

The research examined how social media use and brand consciousness are interrelated. ISR and SIEC, two dimensions, were used to gauge social media usage. As per the findings of statistical testing, social media usage positively influences customers' brand consciousness. However, on considering both the dimensions separately, only SIEC tend to significantly impact brand consciousness in Gen Y. Similarly, no group differences were found on brand consciousness based on gender. The study's findings suggest that social media marketing can be useful in targeting potential customers. The effectiveness of social media marketing has already been studied by many researchers. Kim and Ko (2010) carried out a similar study to determine the efficacy of SMM. They reached the conclusion that SMM significantly impacts consumers' consumption of luxury brands. Social media platforms are believed to have strong influence on purchase power. Social media is where consumers go to learn about products and then spread that knowledge to others. Hutter et al. (2013) examined the influence of brand social media activity and participant social media participation on consumer purchase decisions. Their findings showed that customers' brand awareness is positively impacted by their engagement with a brand's social media handle. They concluded that social media has attained the status of "electronic word of mouth" (EWOM). Thus, it significantly influences consumer fashion choices. Similar conclusions are revealed by the current research, which also demonstrates a significant relationship between social media use and brand consciousness in order to address the research questions. It implies that consumers learn more about brands when they come across them on social media platforms. This information in no time translates into brand consciousness.

### **5.4. Implications of Study**

The research findings offer numerous practical and theoretical implications. By using a study measure that covers two dimensions of social media use, the study offers a bigger and clearer picture



of social media influence. The dimension of social integration and emotional connections throws light on the pathway through which social media impacts consumers. It stresses the social and emotional aspects of social media impact. This offers great theoretical insight and provides room for more research. Moreover, by stressing the relation between social media use and brand consciousness, the study findings provide knowledge to the businesses. This implies that by efficiently using social media marketing strategies, the brands can reach out potential customers. Moreover, since consumers are being socially and emotionally impacted by social media messages, marketing strategies can be designed accordingly. The results can be used by managers to develop a stronger social media marketing plan that will have a greater impact on consumers' purchase intentions and brand consciousness. However, having mentioned the positive input the findings offer for businesses, it is also worth mentioning that excessive social media use and brand consciousness can also lead to negative consequences. As is evident from the social and emotional integration of social media, that excess can sometimes cause anxiety and stress. The results of the study gave a picture of antecedents' brand consciousness, so, by controlling the antecedents; excessive brand consciousness among people can be reduced. This will lower the burden from lower socio-economic class and will also reduce stress associated with brand consciousness. As media act as a significant predictor of brand consciousness, controlled media programming can reduce the negative effects of media. In conclusion, this study serves as a helpful manual for policy makers as they create their marketing mix and set up the right promotional instruments and initiatives.

### **5.5.Limitations and scope for future investigation**

Despite the wide range of contributions, the limitations of this research must also be addressed in order to provide insight for future studies

- First, the variables may be subject to common method bias because they are based on self-report assessments. The "single-source bias" might provide the impression that there is an actual relationship between the studied variables even when no such relation exist (Garger, 2011). Chan (2010) claims that peer or supervisor evaluation of a dependent variable can increase the reliability of data and counter the bias. Future research should try to obtain study data from numerous, externally verified sources in order to reduce survey bias and provide more objective and trustworthy data collection.
- Second, the cross-sectional nature of study limits its scope. According to Solem (2015), this is especially correct when it comes to the causative linkages between the variables in the model.

Alternative causal relationships might exist, although the study is adequately grounded in the hypothesized paradigm. In future, longitudinal studies can be carried out to offer further understanding.

- Third, the sample size and target population can be expanded to allow for the generalization of the results.
- Since the inclusion criteria for the study was Gen Y (25-40 years) one can say that age grouping was restricted to one category only. This can also serve as a limitation. Future research can also compare different age groups to understand if social media usage differently influences brand consciousness in different groups,
- Fifth, to improve the model and gain a better knowledge of how social media usage affects brand consciousness, various media platforms and marketing strategies can be used and compared to give a more detailed picture , Similarly, as only brand consciousness was examined in the current research. To better understand the process, other mediating and moderating factors should also be taken into consideration.
- Finally, Lastly, the research's demographic was limited to social media users from Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Future research on cross-cultural comparisons of brand consciousness caused by social media usage is also encouraged.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A  
Demographic Sheet**

**Serial number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age(in years):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender**

Male: \_\_\_\_\_

Female: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B**

### **Social Media Use Integration Scale (SMUIS)**

The responses will be recorded using 5-point Likert scale. (1= strongly disagree-5=strongly agree)

- ***Social Integration and Emotional Connection (SIEC)***

1. I feel disconnected from friends when I have not logged into social media
2. I would like it if everyone used social media to communicate
3. I would be disappointed if I could not use social media at all
4. I get upset when I can't log on to social media
5. I prefer to communicate with others mainly through social media
6. social media plays an important role in my social relationships

- ***Integration into Social Routines (ISR)***

1. I enjoy checking my social media account
2. I don't like to use social media (should be reverse scored)
3. Using social media is part of my everyday routine
4. I respond to content that others share using social media

## Appendix C

### Brand sensitivity scale

(Response set: Five-point Likert 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

1. When I buy a piece of clothing or fashion accessories (sport shoes, caps, etc.), I look at the brand.
2. When I buy a piece of clothing or fashion accessories, I take brands into account.
3. I don't choose my clothes or fashion accessories according to the brand.
4. Brand is not important to me.
5. When I buy clothing products, I prefer buying well-known brands.
6. If the store I am shopping in doesn't offer the specific brand of clothes or fashion accessories I am looking for, I prefer to wait.
7. (Response set (1 = most important and 5 = least important) Using the scale reproduced below rank the following characteristics according to the importance you generally place on each one of them when you purchase a piece of clothing or a clothing accessory You must give a different rank to each aspect.

• Fabric \_\_\_\_\_

• Print \_\_\_\_\_

• **Brand** \_\_\_\_\_

• **Price** \_\_\_\_\_

• **Color** \_\_\_\_\_