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## Consumers Increasing Confidence towards Social Commerce: The Role of Social Media Marketing, Trust and Social Media Engagement

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### Abstract

Recent research shows peoples are spending more time on digital online platforms like Facebook, and others. Of which business organization sees as an opportunity for expanding businesses. This study aims to investigate the driving factors behind the increasing confidence of social commerce consumers to social media engagement, social media marketing effectiveness, and social/self-identities, along with their increasing confidence level for social commerce. With the help of structure, online survey data were collected from 200 respondents and were analyzed using Smart PLS3 software. Results revealed that social media engagement levels significantly affect the trust level, which consequently results in increased confidence level for social commerce. Furthermore, it was also found that social media marketing activities and social presence positively affect the trust of social media community members.

**Keywords:** social commerce; social media marketing; consumer confidence; engagement.

### 1. Introduction

Indeed, today the world is embracing digital commerce, which Peter Drucker once predicted that businesses will be significantly impacted by e-commerce the way that is done [1].

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The Global Online Consumer Report KPMG (2019), revealed that about a quarter of the world's shopping is now being done online. E-commerce Online Consumer Report KPMG (2019) account now for an estimated one-tenth of total retail sale worldwide [2]. While social commerce has also witnessed tremendous growth globally [3]. A recent Algharabat and Rana [4] report, shows that 55 percent of consumers out of 3.5 billion internet users conducted online shopping, via three leading online social commerce platforms i.e. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The mass participation in these social networks Yahia and his colleagues [5], has become people the major source of interconnection in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Zhu and his colleagues [6], and has become a part of peoples normal daily routine activities [7]. There is a lack of academic research available to examine how engagement in social media platforms and social media marketing nests are experienced by consumers. However, insight into experiences to engagement substantiates marketers' decisions about the message to deliver and to determine on which platform channel vendors may select to be active. This may result in the better theoretical background on how social media marketing program works on social media platforms. The majority of available existing studies about marketing mainly focus on social networking in general [8-10], or others focus on some specific marketing campaign on these social platforms for the achievement of pre-defined objectives. Such as Facebook one specific social media platform[11, 12], Twitter [13, 14], YouTube [15, 16], or Pinterest [17]. Consequently, few studies are using a holistic approach to directly compare engagement in social network platforms [18, 19]. Furthermore, this study also suggests that social media platform engagement spills over consumer engagement and reacts to marketing in the platform, which consequently affects vendors marketing campaign evaluations. The primary motive of this research is to investigate the relationship between social media marketing effectiveness about social media engagement level. However, to do so, we first need to understand the social media platforms' engagement of the consumer. Therefore to advance our knowledge and understanding of consumer engagement in social media and consequences for social marketing embedded in these social networking online platforms, we adopt the framework of engagement experience, which suggests that digital experiences are developed from engagement in digital activities [20]. The engagement experience framework is also supported by available literature of media engagement, and by explaining media consumer interaction, this help in better understanding of the scare knowledge on the engagement of social media. Furthermore, our adopted framework also differs from previous quantitative intensive approaches that focus on engagement intensity or specific responses to positive or negative reviews or comments in response to the vendor's specific marketing program. This engagement was also demonstrated by Davis Mersey and his colleagues [21] and predictive for the marketing effectiveness. This makes further advances our knowledge and understanding of the relationship between social media engagement and social media advertising more specifically. We can say that that this study investigates uniquely engagement aspects with social media more qualitatively with social media marketing concept in the context of these social networking online platforms.

### ***1.1 Theoretical background***

Although the only term engagement is quite challenging, however for engagement of brand-consumer various definitions do exists [22]. This study adopts an engagement approach [21]. We in line with Calder and his colleagues [23], conceptualize engagement, which constitutes of multidimensional construct of one thought and feelings or positive experience that direct one to personal goal achievement. However, the central theme of this

approach is that individuals engagement is manifested in many experiences one had [24]. Previous emerging studies demonstrated that for products and services there are different level of engagement. Calder and his colleagues [20] suggested that engagement in TV program is predictive of embedded marketing campaign evaluations. However, this approach is not in line with that approaches which conceptualize intensity of media use or behavior as engagement level (e.g., likes, reads, views). Literature is growing significantly on customer engagement in the scholarly circles especially in marketing [25-27]. There is consensus about the definition of consumer engagement in available literature which describes it as a psychological state of interaction with an object ( Hollebeek [22], with dimension constitute of effective, and behavioral dimensions [28-30]. However, Brodie and his colleagues [31] argued that consumer engagement in social media makes greater the matter of the specific incidence context with greater variation in the level of engagement, therefore further investigation is needed. The same argument was further supported in a previous study [32]. Previous literature categorized social media platforms in various dimensions. For instance, a typology developed by Zhu and his colleagues [6] is based on social media two characteristics: customization level of messages and connection nature. It also enables users to create, interact, and exchange content Kaplan and Haenlein [33]. These social media features encourage and facilitate users to interact with brands and other users [31, 34]. Regarding social commerce construct in recent studies [35, 36] asserts the three dimensions; referrals and recommendations, reviews and different rating scores, and communities and forums, that enable the consumer to not only create content but to also influence another consumer in buying decision. Social commerce platforms thus facilitate users to share their experiences by spreading WOM (word-of-mouth) related to the firms' provided goods and services [37]. Hence as discussed above, social media platforms provide the social media marketing context. The medium engagement can be view as an important characteristic of the context that results in responses to the marketing campaign [24]. Previous empirical studies support that engagement to Tv program, or engaging with a magazine affects the consumer's reactions to marketing campaign embedded in these platforms [23, 24, 38]. These research studies suggest that there is carryover engagement effect to marketing campaign evaluations, we can say that the more engaged consumers in this vehicle which carry the message i.e., seeing the magazine, engagement in Tv programs, or online views the advertisement embedded the more favorable evaluation. However, we believe that the direct relationship between social media engagement and social media marketing effectiveness is implausible due to the possibility of other intervening variables may explaining the relationship. About theoretical background explanation for the marketing program evaluation and social media influence, an explanatory role assumed, however, but it seems like never tested before. While in literature [39, 40], proposed three theoretical explanations for the reason why context, in this case, social media engagement influences the advertisement evaluation. This theoretical explanation behind the concept are well summarized and shows how social media engagement influences the social marketing campaign or program. This study, hence postulates that engaging in social media platforms and social media embedded are positive to the evaluation of a marketing campaign or program. This likely to have a positive fit relationship with regard evaluation of certain marketing programs [41]. However, there may be some other variables that may complicate the relationship, but we focus on the study objectives and assume that embedded advertising and social media platforms both have a positive influence and as a result increase the positive image of the vendor's product or services in social commerce construct.

## **1.2 Social Media Marketing**

Marketing principles in social media marketing are the same as those followed in commercial marketing. Nanda [42] argued that due to the principle of commercial marketing the focus of social media marketing has been shifted to change in attitude from behavior change of the audience. Andreasen [43] emphasized the understanding target audience perception and needs are important for effective communication in a campaign designed message tailored to the interests, concerns, and needs of the audience targeted [44]. For successful communication, the efforts must be directed to know people's believe along with their perceived expectations from the process of communication [45]. McDermott and his colleagues [46] suggested for the appropriate channel of communication, the target audience must be defined. Organization [47], observed that target audience-specific needs can be met easily by selecting the audience's preferred media. Freimuth and his colleagues [48] suggested that to reach the target audience trusted channel of communication among consumers should be used. However, Ridings and Gefen [49] argued that people are interested more in other user recommendations about the product or services, rather than merely vendor information. In marketing customer involvement through social media has become an important factor in generating key information and influential recommendations [50]. By availing different marketing opportunities social media provide a firm can enhance the brand image [51], which may result in increased sales [52]. This also generates social support for consumers which ultimately results in increased confidence in e-commerce [53]. According to Ridings and Gefen [49], people are interested more in other user recommendations about the product or services, rather than merely vendor information. Virtual information sharing through the internet facilitates individual interactions for both commercial and social purposes [54] (Mueller and his colleagues 2011). However, these increasing social media widespread use faces issues like anonymous user posting which become challenging for marketers for data analysis as well as its effect on the brand image [55]. According to Kim and his colleagues [56], companies can improve trustworthiness by high quality product and services in the e-commerce transaction. However, to measure a company e-commerce trustworthiness, three beliefs are dominant in views in literature most often are: act in customer interest, integrity by keeping promise and the company must have the ability to address customer needs [57]. Previous research shows social media build social trust and reduce risk, different user-friendly apps, customer ratings, reviews, and product information somehow tackle the barriers. And increase trust in connected users among social network sites [58]. The more trust consumers perceived, the more intention is likely to result in buying [59]. Thus, trust is likely to affect intention to buy [60]. While Cha [61] stated that perceived security matters and affect in attitude towards social networking sites shopping. However, McCole and his colleagues [62] added network influence that online e-commerce enhances buying intentions [63], consequently willingness to buy (Han & Windsor 2011). However, trust and perceived usefulness relationship in positive [64]. McCole and his colleagues [62] argued that the consumer trust relationship lies in assessing risk in overall transactions. Aljifri and his colleagues [65] argued that trust plays an important role in e-commerce transactions. The more trust consumers perceived the more intention is towards buying [59]. Thus, trust is likely to affect the intention to buy of the consumer [60]. According to Cvijikj and Michahelles [66], these social websites play a dual role by providing marketing information as well as it serves as a community online platform where a customer of certain brands with similar interest can share information. The dissemination of information increases the trustworthiness of online social websites among customers.

According to Pletikosa Cvijikj and Michahelles [67], it should be based on information, accuracy, quality, and objectivity. Eriksson, (2004), argued that trust has been recognized as a strong factor and plays a significant role in internet studies, due to the high level of uncertainty in social commerce [68]. Alshibly and Chiong [69], proposed security and reliability as a dominant factor in building trust in the internet. However, Mulero and Adeyeye [70], user perception of internet security significantly affect the user intention to use. The above arguments suggest that trust among communities online may be built on the greater benefits, the information and knowledge providers in the online community by applying social marketing principles. Therefore, this study identified trust as a component of consumer confidence level which may be increased with the level of engagement in social networking. Furthermore, Valenzuela and his colleagues [71] found in their study that users with a high level of trust are more likely to trust and use Facebook more frequently. Social network users' willingness to recommend products or services to other members depends on their perceived value of online connection Han and Windsor [59], which affect user e-commerce intention [64]. Therefore, user-perceived useful social networks encourage user buying intention in these sites [61]. Reference [72] distinguishing social shopping and social commerce factors by arguing that the former is a network of online shoppers, while social commerce acts as a platform for online business. Further added, that social shopping is as a result of increasing attraction and applications on internet encouraged and established social networking websites. According to [73], consumers gain confidence in products, views, can comment, and can rate the vendor. This leads to more satisfaction and interactions with other community members. McKnight and his colleagues [74] stated that there is lack of consensus among researchers on a trust concept because various researcher defines it from different angles. For example, Mayer and his colleagues [75] defined trust as the expression of enduring beliefs from the opponent's action. Reference [76] stated that trust is someone's confidence against the other. However, a business good reputation can be created by giving the consumers a high level of care and service quality between consumers and social commerce companies [77, 78]. However, according to [79], in both social commerce and e-commerce transaction safety plays the main role in trust by giving consumers a high level of security, because of the lack of face-to-face interactions in online environments. However, to measure a company's e-commerce trustworthiness, three beliefs are dominant in views in literature most often are: act in customer interest, integrity by keeping the promise and the company must have the ability to address customer needs [57, 74]. According to Kim and his colleagues [56], companies can improve trustworthiness by high-quality products and services in the e-commerce transaction. Reference [61], stated that perceived security matters and affects attitude towards social networking sites shopping. However, McCole and his colleagues [62] added network influence online e-commerce enhances buy intentions, consequently willingness to buy [59].

On the basis of above discussion the following hypothesis have been derived and tested.

H1: Social media marketing activities significantly affect the trust level of the consumer.

H2: Social identity has a significant effect trust level of social commerce consumers.

H3: Social media engagement has a significant effect on the trust level of social commerce consumers.

H4: Trust has a significant effect on the confidence level of social commerce consumers.

## 2. Proposed Research Model

This study considered different developed theories in building and proposed research model, such as social support theory of Lakey and Cohen (2000), and support theory Liang and his colleagues (2011), trust transfer theory Stewart and Zhang (2003), specifically, community trust (Zucker, 1986).

### 2.1 Social Support Theory

The current study adopted Lakey and Cohen (2000), social support theory because of its ability to impact consumer emotion, cognition, and behavior. Rozzell and his colleagues (2014) stated that social support is related to consumer's information, and as a result, the action created by consumers' feeling of being cared for and valued. Moreover, social networks facilitate users to exchange their feelings and individuals can experience the help and support in a social group (Sheikh, Yezheng, Islam, Hameed, & Khan, 2019). Social commerce construct provides the user with information and social support such as; referrals, recommendations, and reviews in forums and communities We assumed that this theory plays a significant role in creating motivations among social network users. Therefore, we believe that users' engagement in social media is a result of users' identity and social support (Liang and his colleagues 2011).

### 2.2 Trust Theory

This study in building the proposed model, applied trust transfer theory Stewart and Zhang (2003), specifically, community trust (Zucker, 1986). Furthermore, social commerce platforms reflect user trust in the community, while motivating interaction in specific social networking platforms (Uslaner, 2002). In previous studies for example; Lindstrom (2014) in their study used the trust of this type to outline members' community of social network. However, we also assumed that linkage between individual trust and construct of social media engagement (communities and forums, referrals and recommendations, reviews and ratings). In other words, increase trust among social commerce consumers as a result of greater engagement with social media platforms.

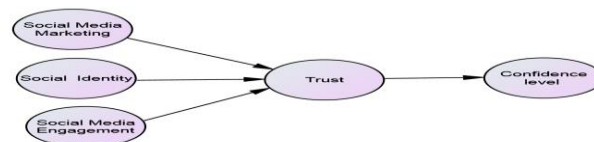


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

## 2.3 Methodology

### 2.3.1 Measuring Instruments of the survey

We used quantitative methodology to assess the hypothesized component with a self-administrative online survey consisting of mainly two sections. The first section has further two parts, first part represented instructions and introduction to respondents as well as conformation to use the collected data for a scientific framework for the researchers of the study. The second section consisted of designed questions seek to the demographic information of the respondents such as; gender, age group, working status, and social commerce consciousness. The final and third part of the study consists of total of 30 items to measure constructs of the study defined as “social media marketing” (measured with five items), “social identity” (measured with four items), “engagement level” (measured with six items), “trust” (measured with five items), and lastly, “confidence level” of social commerce consumer (measured with five items). The items used were formulated from previous studies to ensure the validity of the survey. To quantify independent variables a five-point Likert scale was utilized (between 1= Never True and 5= Very True).

### ***2.3.2 Sampling Technique for data Collection***

A total of 200 responded to the online questionnaire survey, all usable responses thus resulting in a 100% percent response rate of the survey. Table 1 presents respondents demographic profile, we used a convenient sampling technique, where management science department students at NUML University, Peshawar campus, who were taking research methodology subjects were asked and given the online survey for the collection of data from the respondents, as a part of the assignment (Grine & Saeed, 2017). At the closing date of the survey total of 200 respondent’s responses were collected, in two weeks at the beginning of September 2020. We run two tests, the Bagozzi and Yi (1991) technique and the one-factor test for the determination of the threat of Common-method variance (Bagozzi & Yi, 1991). Which is based on the Spector (2006) assumption that it might accrue in quantitative investigation research in the case where information is collected from a single source. CMV (Common-method variance) can occur between items and constructs at different levels and can affect the reliability of the structural associations (Huppert & So, 2013). The result from the Harman one-factor assessment confirms that no CMV issue raised, and the correlation between every two variables was much less than 0.9.

### ***2.3.3 Structural equation modeling (SEM)***

PLS, sometimes called “composite-based SEM” or “component-based SEM”, help researcher to relate the set of multiple dependent variables (response) to multiple set of independent variables. However, Ginsburg (1997) characterized it as a most suitable technique in research aimed at certain predictions and especially preferred by researchers when the focus is on confirmatory modeling. This approach has become the prime alternatives of CB-SEM for many researchers and is deployed in various research fields such as marketing and behavioral sciences (Ringle, Sarstedt, & Straub, 2012). And today it is considered one of the best techniques for evaluating hypothesized relationships in a complex design (Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). The structural equation model comprises two sub-models: the relationship between the independent and dependent latent variables is determined in the inner model, whereas the outer model specifies the relationship among the observed items and latent variable (Anderson & Gerbing, 1982). Smart PLS application 3.2.0. were used to assess the measurement model and structural model of the structural equation model is used in the study.

**Table 1:** Respondents profile

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	170	85
Female	30	15
<b>Ages</b>		
Below 20	05	4.5
21–265	40	20
27–35	105	52.5
36–41	44	22
Above 42	06	3
<b>Education Qualification</b>		
Below 12 years of education	05	8.0
Up to 14 years of education	120	60
Up to 16 years of education	70	35
16 Plus years of education	05	2.5

**3. Measurement model**

**Table 2:** validity and reliability

Constructs	Item	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Confidence	BS1	0.887	0.933	0.947	0.750
	BS2	0.768			
	PS1	0.861			
	PS2	0.885			
	PS3	0.896			
Engagement	PS4	0.894	0.926	0.944	0.771
	SO1	0.892			
	SO2	0.863			
	SO3	0.878			
	SO4	0.862			
SMKTNG	SO5	0.897	0.897	0.921	0.662
	BS3	0.825			
	BS4	0.880			
	BS5	0.856			
	BS6	0.797			
IDENTITY	PP1	0.771	0.882	0.919	0.738
	PP2	0.743			
	DQ1	0.850			
	DQ2	0.888			
Trust	DQ3	0.864	0.928	0.944	0.736
	DQ4	0.834			
	SI1	0.826			
	SI2	0.876			
	SI3	0.866			
	SI4	0.847			
	SI5	0.885			
	SI6	0.847			

The reliability for the measurement model was conducted by examining the Cronbach alpha and composite reliability (CR). According to Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2006), the Cronbach alpha and the



composite reliability of the constructs should be higher than 0.7. The results validate that the values for all variables in terms of Cronbach alpha and composite reliability values of the measured all constructs of the study exceed the recommended 0.7, which indicates a high internal consistency. Validity measurement includes the average variance extracted (AVE) assessment and the factor loadings of the items. The values for the average variance extracted also exceed the recommended value of 0.5 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

**Table 3:** Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Engagement	Identity	SMKTNG	Trust	confidence level
Engagement	0.878				
Identity	0.677	0.859			
SMKTNG	0.656	0.723	0.814		
Trust	0.824	0.734	0.740	0.858	
confidence level	0.662	0.758	0.873	0.717	0.866

**Table 5:** Discriminant validity; Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Engagement	Identity	SMKTNG	Trust	confidence level
Engagement	0.878				
Identity	0.749				
SMKTNG	0.718	0.811			
Trust	0.765	0.811	0.809		
confidence level	0.711	0.801	0.812	0.868	

The discriminant validity was assessed by examining the Fornell–Larcker and loading and cross-loading criteria to ensure that the constructs are not measuring different things and do not relate in any way. Table 5 shows that the Fornell–Larcker criterion was achieved as the values for each construct are higher than its corresponding coefficient. Furthermore, Table 4 exhibits that the loading of items of a certain construct varies from other constructs in a model. According to Gold, Malhotra, and Segars (2001), the variance shared among a set of items measuring a construct is higher compared to the variance shared with the rest of the other constructs in a model. Therefore, the discriminant validity of the constructs is achieved. The HTMT (the heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations) is used to detect better discriminant validity when the values are above 0.9 (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). HTMT values, as presented in table 5, are below the threshold value. Therefore, there is no discriminant validity issue found with this test.

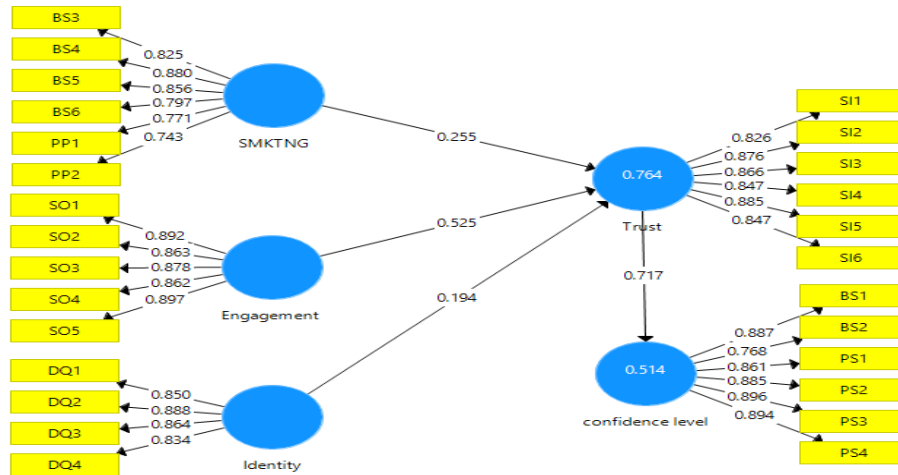


Figure 1: Results of measurement model

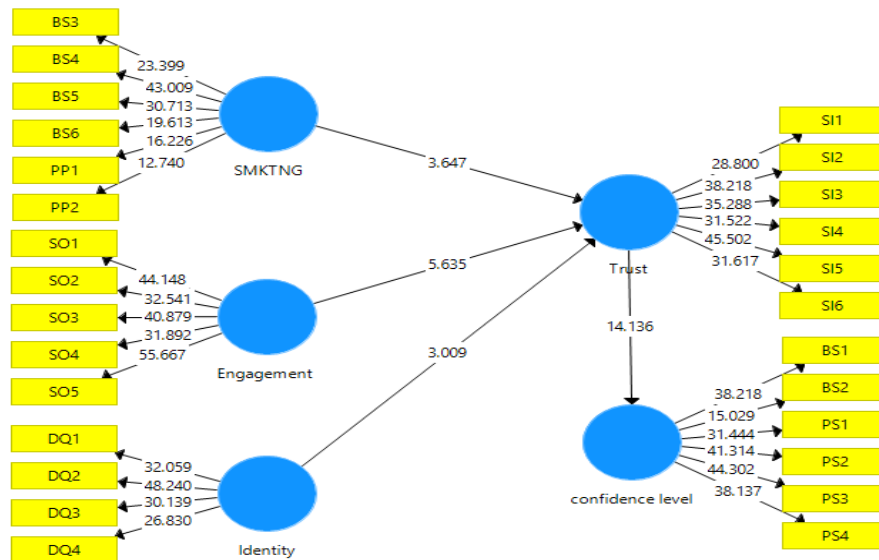


Figure 2: Results of Bootstrapping

#### 4. Structural model

The structural model assessment is examined by running the bootstrapping with 5000 samples. This assessment is done by examining the  $R^2$  of the structural model and the predictive relevance of the model by using  $Q^2$  (Geisser, 1974). The coefficient of determination, the  $R^2$  is the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent variable. Cohen (1988) recommended an  $R^2$  greater than 0.26 shows a substantial model. Table 6 of the study shows that the  $R^2$  values are all higher than the recommended value of 0.26: Social marketing, social media, engagement, trust, and confidence level of social commerce consumer. Social media marketing, social media engagement, and social identity explain 76.4% of the variance in consumer trust-building ( $R^2 = 0.764$ ), and consumer trust explains 51.4% of the variance in consumer confidence level ( $R^2 = 0.514$ ).

Further, the results for the predictive relevance of the model ( $Q^2$ ) (Table 6) are greater than zero, as suggested by (Hair Jr and his colleagues 2016). These results indicate that the model has good predictive relevance for all of the endogenous variables. Additionally, the effect size ( $f^2$ ) technique is used to examine the substantive influence of each independent construct on the dependent construct. The  $f^2$ , represent small, medium, and large effects, where values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 respectively, while effect size values lower than 0.02 indicate that there is no effect (Cohen, 1988). Therefore, the results confirm that the effect sizes of Trust and consumer confidence are considered strong ( $f^2 = 1.057$ ) and that social media marketing, social identity, and social media engagement have an effect (0.118, 0.064, and 0.54, respectively). This indicates that social media engagement had the biggest effect on the latent variable trust (Table 6).

**Table 6:** Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	( $\beta$ )	SD	T Statistics	F2	P Values	Results
Engagement -> Trust	0.525	0.093	5.635	0.564	0.000	Supported
Identity -> Trust	0.194	0.064	3.009	0.065	0.000	Supported
SMKTNG -> Trust	0.255	0.070	3.647	0.118	0.000	Supported
Trust -> confidence level	0.717	0.051	14.136	1.057	0.000	Supported

The results of the inner model of the structural model verify that social media marketing, social media engagement, and social identity significantly influence the trust level of social commerce consumers ( $\beta = 0.255, 0.525, \text{ and } 0.194$ , respectively), which are supporting hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, respectively. While trust also significantly and positively influence ( $\beta = 0.717; p < 0.001$ ), thereby giving support to H4. Figure 2 and Table 7 show the results of the hypothesis testing.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Digital technologies changed the way enterprises understand and create value for customers. It has reshaped the key domain strategy for business. Customer increasing participation in dynamic communication using online platforms has become a critical driver for business success. Customer reviews and communication influence greater than traditional advertisement (Ridings & Gefen, 2004). It has changed the way enterprises connect and value their customer. Customer increasing participation in dynamic communication has a critical driver place for business success in this technologically advanced world. However, this digital advancement in technology transforms the thinking of competition. Digital technology generates data at an unprecedented rate, moreover, cloud-based systems are developed to store, and easy to use. However, the biggest challenge especially in developing economies face is to turn an enormous amount of data into valuable information (I. Ali and his colleagues 2019). Consumers with their ever-evolving needs and wants are continuously challenging to the business especially the retail sector. Digital consumers are noticed to spend more on-demand experiences rather than on products. The idea of owning less and sharing more like trends, for example, sharing car ride services, and many more varied across the demographic groups. However, there is little doubt in increasing opportunities for energetic entrepreneurs up across the region. Opportunities are there for entrepreneurs with creative skills, advances in technology, and social media can easily get a competitive advantage. Future research, bound to the

type of product used, might vary with customers on the knowledge of attributes. The diversity of products and services offered by vendors are needed to be considered in upcoming research studies in the area. While social commerce may experience a positive economy because of the consumer frequency of purchase about the discounts in price that social commerce businesses claim. The other important aspect that needs to explore that consumers expecting social commerce as a means of excitement and convenience are not enough satisfied after the actual use. This should be a focus for future studies to explore factors like high/low customer expectation and low/high service/product quality.

## **6. Contribution of the study**

The study makes a useful contribution to the existing literature by advances digital engagement research on presenting insight into consumer's social media platform engagement. Furthermore, we also demonstrated that engagement in digital platforms is highly context-related specific. This study also connects the available literature in digital engagement and social media marketing within the context effects. We demonstrated the social media marketing evaluation about social media engagement. This study provides useful finding that various types of experiences as a result due to the exposure to social media marketing and engagement level affect the marketing campaign evaluation in social media different platforms.

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