

## The online buying behavior in relation with facebook advertising: measuring the brand page “like” intention to get information as a mediator.

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**Abstract:** The aim of the study at hand is to academically investigate the impact of widely used social networking site i.e. the Facebook on customers buying behavioral patterns. The construct available in topical literature is the attitude towards Facebook advertising and that has been posed as determinant variable. A relevant addition in proposed model is the introduction of mediating variable which is the liking behavior of surfers seeing the information given on brand pages. The famous Ajzen’s theory of planned behavior guides the study to see the interaction of considered variables. Data pertains to three widely know apparel brands of Pakistan enjoying considerable online viewership on their websites and Facebook fan pages. For testing purpose, the structural equation modeling was employed. The data health was checked by using approaches of reliability and validity testing. To find the ultimate model fit and relationships of proposed constructs SEM was performed using smart PLS Software.

The linear relationship between determinant and ultimate variables were found significant and positive. Mediation was also confirmed through embedded testing approach of mentioned software. The attitude towards Facebook advertising did impact the buying decision and this relationship routed through the liking intent to get information on brand page. Findings can work as torchbearer for academics to research the interesting but mysterious area of online advertising efficacies at various platforms. For practitioners it could be helpful to formulate effective strategies to cope up with online competition and tap countless opportunities to promote brands. Other websites with similar services can be investigated in such future endeavors.

**Keywords:** Facebook, brand pages, attitude, ‘like’ intention, information, purchase intention.

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### Introduction:

Social networking sites (SNS) have become an important component in daily lives of the people, which can be termed as a platform for building relationships and exchanging information among segments of masses (Xu, Ryan, Prybutok, & Wen, 2012). Evolution of the platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus and LinkedIn has transformed the way users interact with companies and is also attracting innovative modalities for both electronic and traditional businesses (Xu et al., 2012). Due to the impressive growth of

its customer base, Facebook has become an attractive online advertising platform for 21st-century commercial marketers trying to reach potential customers. Businesses place their Facebook ads to create awareness and influence the customer behavior. Many such radical developments are attributed to the popularity of Facebook (Rehman, Ilyas, Nawaz, & Hyder, 2014).

Facebook employs the strategy of promoting through online communities by providing easy access and user friendly environments and techniques. For companies, social media such as Facebook provide excellent tools to connect with customers through fan pages of the brand (Beukeboom, Kerkhof, & de Vries, 2015). Due to increased contribution in sales, companies' brand pages are becoming noticeable marketing channels (Kudeshia, Sikdar, & Mittal, 2016). These Facebook brand pages consist of primary brand content and extra information about special events, new products/services and campaigns (Halaszovich & Nel, 2017). The liking of the brand fan page shows the positive feedback and behavior of the followers towards the brands. Due to the rise in use of social media (Facebook), it is essential to study user's liking intention behavior. According to literature, researchers have identified the intention to get information as one of the intended behaviors to like a brand page (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012; Halaszovich & Nel, 2017). Facebook users "like" fan pages to become "fans" by showing their promising attitude towards advertising on Facebook and receiving more information.

Several previous research studies have shown that attitude is one of the most important variables that measure the response to the advertisement. Those visiting the fan pages and getting information may click for further and deeper information and thus can ultimately be customers of the brand (Sanne & Wiese, 2018). Social-psychological models are linking attitudes and intent behavior according to the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Consequently, the attitude is reported to influence the brand page like intention pattern on buying behavior. It appears logical that interest of academics and researchers would grow to understand the user's behavioral responses for liking a brand page and lead further for a purchase response.

Further research on Facebook fan page followers has been proposed by recent studies (Pongpaew, Speece, & Tiangsoongnern, 2017), as the fans vary in number and intentions with the degree of their perspective (Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012). This paper differs from prior research studies primarily because of the consideration of the Facebook brand page liking to get information as linking the attitude towards Facebook's advertising with purchase intention.

### **Literature Review and hypotheses development:**

A bird eye view on social network sites would depict that communities pursued by various brands for promotion purposes are those who remain well connected with brand pages. They are convenient to boost the business relationships and harness improved customer support (Zaglia, 2013). Such platforms are designed in a way that sharing of brand information with connected communities and keeping a productive interaction is always convenient (Hajli, Shanmugam, Papagiannidis, Zahay, & Richard, 2017).

Contemporarily, the interaction of organizations and consumers surging the fan pages of social media websites both existing and prospective ones the chances are evident that a sense of recognition and trust shall increase (Kudeshia et al., 2016). Brands have got a liberty to create profiles of their own choice on social networks online that become a platform for direct interaction of users. The companies try to keep this interaction on live sites as free of regulatory hurdles as possible. Consumers can share their own response

contents on brand pages that can further stem a thread of communication from and to target market (Luarn, Lin, & Chiu, 2015).

**The attitude towards Facebook's advertising influence on purchase intention through Facebook's brand page:**

It is essential to study attitudes for user's understanding, acceptance and perception of the message advertised (Hadija, 2008). The alignments of consumers personality traits, affective senses and feelings about some product or service would lead to a favorable response towards the purchase intent and referral to others (Hossain, Islam, & Himel, 2014). Couwenberg et al., (2017) asserted that attractive ads would arouse positive feelings towards buying decisions in the same context. The stance was already supported by the theory of planned behavior as it described that extra value of the possible clues if depicted would yield in enhanced probabilities for actual behavior to happen (Sreen, Purbey, & Sadarangani, 2018). The similar studies consulted to establish the literature for work in hand shows the amount of advertising efforts to portray attributes in details were instrumental in earning favorable behavioral responses (Walden, 2012). The actual purchase intent in cases of online advertising is first initiated by the equity of an online intent and that has been established in number of such works (Irshad & Ahmad, 2019). In varying range of products and services and varying lenses of research perspectives the intent has been posed as remarkable ultimate variable (Lee, Lee, & Yang, 2017).

In this specific study we focus on the aspect of Facebook advertising tactics of creating fan pages and tapping the activities of clicking to stream further persuasion and thus use it as a decisive dimension for proposed work and hence formulate the first hypothesis as follows:

H1: The attitude towards Facebook's advertising having a significant impact on the brand's purchase intention through a Facebook brand page.

**Attitude towards Facebook's advertising and brand page like intention:**

Fan pages have turned into an ideal platform for helping and sharing information and associations. Updated content created by fan page to provide and share with other fans (Musser & O'reilly, 2007). The positive correlation between the information factor and consumer attitudes toward the advertisement on SNS. Therefore, this study predicts a direct link between the attitude towards Facebook's advertising and the "Like" intention on the brand's follower's page to obtain information. The followed hypothesis was expressed established on predefined views, to clarify the association between the attitude towards Facebook's advertisement and the "Like" intention on the brand fan's page to get information.

H2: Attitude towards Facebook advertising significant impact on behavioral intention to 'Like' a brand Fan Page to get information."

**Influence of like behavioral intention on Purchase Intention**

The mechanism of liking a page for any reason and thus getting all future streams of information has been described. The strategy is used by companies who have online presence and is often found handy to initiate an intended information flow between company and customer (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Among other social media platforms Facebook had early on opened up avenues for companies and corporate users to flood information and connect at tier ease with variety of customers (Graham & Havlena, 2007). Companies of varying sizes and strengths compete for market share through the use of platforms being used

by the type of segment of their customers(Pöyry, Parvinen, & Malmivaara, 2013). The amount of time and nature of net surfers visiting the websites determine the possible outcome of social media promotional campaigns(Kim, Lee, & Hiemstra, 2004). Facebook with the passage of time succeeded in creating both information base, ethical standards and accumulation of information from other relevant resources of the brands and their companies(Burnett, 2000).

Previous findings are the witness to the fact that surfing time and activity help companies to tap the challenge of customer retention and make new ones. Along the same lines the focus expands to the liking behavior of users to dig out further for search of information and its likelihood to transform into final buying decision. Thus it could be proposed conveniently that:

H3: The behavioral intention to ‘Like’ a brand Fan Page to get significant information impacts the Purchase Intention of the brand."

#### **Mediation effect**

Rungtusanatham, Miller, & Boyer (2014)have pointed out an innovative and convenient approach as far as introducing new variables in existing models is concerned. These are two approaches and are very helpful in mediation relationships i.e. segmentation and transmittal. The former has been used in number of cases relying on the type of relationships that we have proposed for this study(Zhou, Benton Jr, Schilling, & Milligan, 2011; Rungtusanatham et al., 2014). Our mediating hypotheses are also designed at segmentation principles.

According to the study by (Van-Tien Dao, Nhat Hanh Le, Ming-Sung Cheng, & Chao Chen, 2014), information has a positive impact on the advertising perceived value on social media, leading to a positive impact on its online purchase intention. As mentioned earlier, the brand pages as social media channels are a tactic for managers to increase and advance the customer association with the brand by keeping and developing loyal consumers. Besides, the adoption of social networks by users has grown and is now part of the daily life of the user. Hence, this study expects that the same intention of fans can mediate the impact of the attitude towards Facebook's advertising on the intent to purchase. Because the intention of the user to participate in social media channels can be reflected in the customer's decision-making process factor and affect the whole purchase intention(Edelman, 2010). This research purpose is to determine whether the intention to get information mediates the relationship between attitude towards Facebook's advertising and purchase intention. The hypothesis has been formulated as followed to evaluate the confirmation of the mediation effect:

H4: The behavioral intention to 'Like' fan page to get information mediates the relationship between Attitude towards Facebook's advertising and Purchase Intention.

#### **Theoretical Framework:**

The mentioned literature support and spotting of the grey areas in previous sections help to establish the theoretical model as depicted in the figure above. The amount of work on the efficacy of social media websites and fan page development provided enough strong evidences to position the attitude toward Facebook fan page liking intention as determining variable. The theory of planned behavior has been used previously to guide towards Facebook's advertising and Purchase intention. Furthermore,the hypothesis was developed to evaluate the impact of Attitude towards Facebook's advertising on purchase intention.

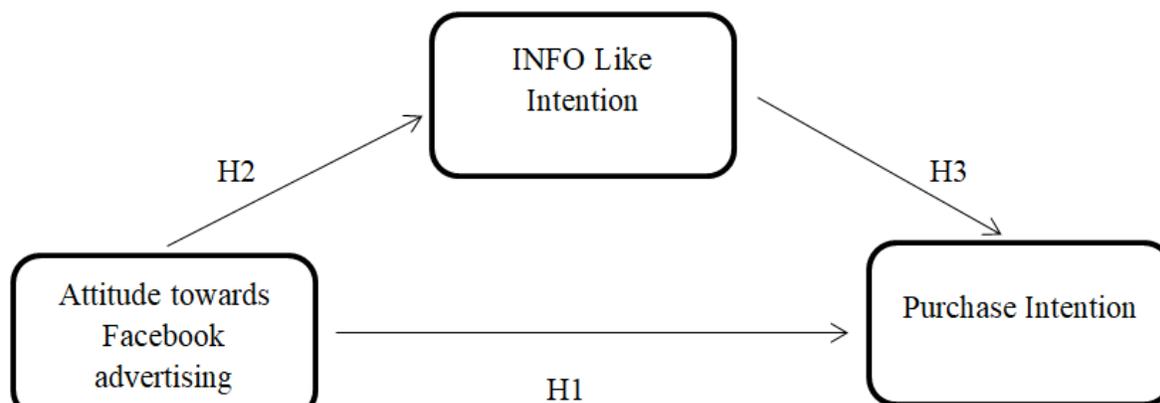


Figure 1: Theoretical framework of the study

### Methodology:

We conducted online surveys asking the responses from users of social media brand pages. Criteria for respondents selection was behavioral patterns and user frequency (Elliott, 2011). As mentioned earlier three main clothing online stores were targeted for response collection. This selection was based on the strategy for these brands for having maximum promotional contents on their brand page on Facebook and high user activities. The number of subscribers, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority's statistics and mass popularity as recorded were also the decisive components of sampled brand selection (Rahman, Moghavvemmi, Suberamanaian, Zanuddin, & Bin Md Nasir, 2018).

The online survey tools were used to send the questionnaire to the proposed respondents. They were found to be more active online, outspoken and expressive on the attributes of the brands. The strategy was devised to reach out to the active respondents through google forms. Out of 414 responses that we received around 388 were found fit for running the tests. All had already liked the fan pages under question and answered the key questions to navigate the results further. The research instrument had Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) and was analyzed through the Smart PLS Software.

### Findings:

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics:

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	83	21.4
	Male	305	78.6
Domicile	Rural	180	46.4
	Urban	208	53.6
Age	18 - 24	111	28.6
	25 - 34	210	54.1
	35 and above	67	17.3
Employment Status	Employed full-time	95	24.5
	Employed part-time	42	10.8
	I'm a student	124	32.0
	Self-employed	63	16.2
	Unemployed	64	16.5

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Liked brand pages	Alkaram Studio	98	25.3
	Gul Ahmad	164	42.3
	J. Junaid Jamshed	126	32.5
Total		388	100

**Measurement Model:**

The model as shown in figure above required a quantitative analysis. For that a regression model best suited while there were already available instruments. Next step was to have a tailor made questionnaire. It was trimmed only for one variable i.e. Attitude towards Facebook's advertising. It originally had 6 items where one had to be omitted to have an acceptable figure for reliability. A check was performed to confirm the validity as well. The initial data health was checked in the light of suggestions of Ringle, Wende, & Becker (2015) as the measurement model measured the construct validity. Construct validity can be measured by assessing convergent validity and discriminant validity.

**Convergent Validity:**

As the name indicates, this type investigates and confirms the overall impact of items on expected responses. Three pillars of data checking i.e. Cronbach alpha, composite reliability and variance measurement help in statistical validation. In the following table the score for C.R ranged from 0.838 to 0.889, is acceptable and well above the minima of 0.70 (Henseler et al., 2014). The C.A score range of 0.760 to 0.832, is also well above the threshold and confirms that internal consistency is evident for the use of research instrument and its valid items. The scores in columns of respective loadings are also crossing 0.6 (Hair, Sarstedt, Pieper, & Ringle, 2012). Score in the AVE column is also up to the mark and furthers the model fit.

**Table 2** Convergent Validity (Loadings, internal consistency, CR and AVE).

Construct	Indicators	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Attitude towards Facebook advertising	A1	0.705	0.760	0.838	0.509
	A2	0.736			
	A3	0.707			
	A4	0.745			
	A5	0.672			
Like INFO	Info1	0.862	0.832	0.889	0.671
	Info2	0.623			
	Info3	0.884			
	Info4	0.878			
Purchase Intention	P1	0.801	0.781	0.851	0.535
	P2	0.810			
	P3	0.644			
	P4	0.723			

P5 0.663

**Discriminant Validity:**

Fornell&Larcker criterion and heterotraitmonotrait (HTMT) matrix were the two criteria used to assess the Discriminant validity. To measure model external consistency, the discriminant validity was analyzed. In Table 3, the discriminant validity is achieved because the diagonal values are larger than the vertical and horizontal values. All the variable values are compared with the AVE square root as the relationships between variables are less than the mean square roots (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) as bold values shown on the table.

The second criterion to measure discriminant validity is Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT). This is based on the thresholds of 0.90 (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001). A value less than this limit indicated discriminant validity.

**Table 3** Fornelllacker and HTMT

FornellLacker				HTMT			
	Attitude	PI	Like INFO		Attitude	PI	Like INFO
Attitude	<b>0.713</b>			Attitude			
PI	0.655	<b>0.819</b>		PI	0.784		
Like INFO	0.63	0.606	<b>0.731</b>	Like INFO	0.803	0.734	

**Structural Model:**

Once the reliability and validity of instrument in confirmed and measurement model is justified, next step is to have a balanced structural model. Both measurement and structural models were supporting the proposed relationship of two linear variables relationships. The other important dimension was of a mediation between main variable of Facebook advertising and its impact on buying behavior of internet surfers.

The hallmarks of measurement were path coefficients. Apart from that coefficient of determination, Cohen<sup>2</sup> and predictive accuracy measure also helped the analysis. Procedure of bootstrapping was performed to further strengthen the inferences. Iterations run were 5000 while the signs of values remained unchanged. The confidence intervals were calculated for bootstrapping while running a two tailed test and keeping a significance statistics on 0.05% as informed by other researchers of the field.

The model predictive accuracy was measured by r square (R<sup>2</sup>) coefficient of determination. The R<sup>2</sup> value for key targeted constructs should be greater than the 0.25. The values of R<sup>2</sup> 0.25, 0.50 and 0.75 respectively described the key endogenous variable as weak, moderate and substantial respectively (Hair Jr et al., 2016). In this research study, the model has a weak ability to predict purchase intention as a key target construct (R<sup>2</sup> = 0.462).

Statistics of predictive relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>) can be seen in the table below. The Q<sup>2</sup> column in the table yields good predictive relevancy and all the values above 0 are evidences for a model fit that is highly supportive for the type of relationships proposed in our model.

**Table 4** Coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) and predictive relevance (Q<sup>2</sup>)

R Square	Effect	Q Square
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INFO	0.429	Weak	0.269
PI	0.462	Weak	0.231

(f<sup>2</sup>) is the effect size showing how strongly the prediction variables alter the dependent ones. We have already noted that corresponding yields in table are around 0.02 is small, and 0.15 is medium, and 0.35 is large (Hair Jr et al., 2016). Below table summarized the values guiding the study to inferences of proposed model.

**Table 5** Effect size (f2)

Relationship	f-Square	Effect Size
AT -> PI	0.176	Medium
AT -> INFO	0.752	Large
INFO -> PI	0.122	Small

We examined the weighted path coefficients as per their outcomes in the form of p value and corresponding scores of t statistics. This was initially through bootstrapping efforts. The structural path coefficients without weights were also examined. The varying scores of coefficients ranging between +1 and -1 are indicators of strong relationships which may be positive or negative. The data health earlier checked and verified helped in acceptable score that helped in establishing relationships. Weak relationships are mathematically fall around zeros. A 2 tailed test embedded in software yields the route coefficients that are contrasted with p and t values while keeping at 0.05% significance level. The table also show that t-values remain more than 1.965 and p values under 0.05.

Apparently the sum up of mathematical yields support the model as AT -> PI (0.655), AT -> INFO (0.407) and INFO -> PI (0.339) at the 0.05 % significance level (Table 4). Without further statistical measures by this point of analysis the first three hypotheses could comprehensively be accepted

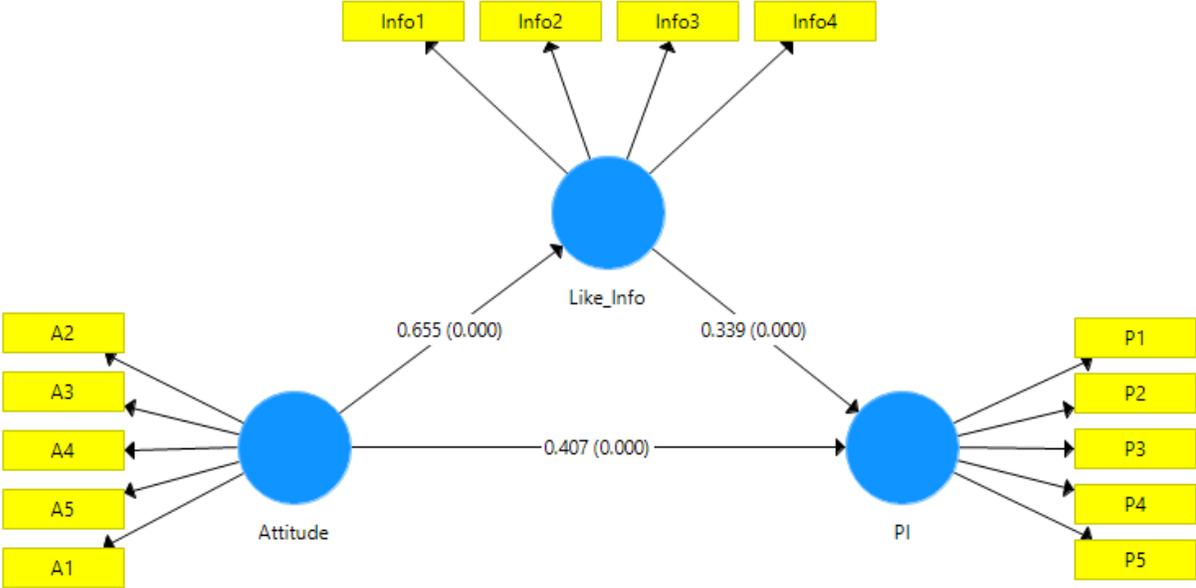


Figure 2 Structure assessment model

**Table 6** Structural model assessment (Direct effect results and decisions)

Hypothesis	Original	Sample Mean (M)	Standard	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values	Decision
	Sample (O)		Deviation (STDEV)			
H1. Attitude -> PI	0.655	0.657	0.033	19.72	0	Supported
H2. Attitude -> INFO	0.407	0.409	0.044	9.172	0	Supported
H3. INFO -> PI	0.339	0.339	0.05	6.802	0	Supported

Through the use of an up to date software of smart PLS, it was convenient in initial modeling to establish the proposed mediation effect. It allows for bootstrapping at a not parametric testing environment where data nature supports the indirect effect of ( $p$ -value  $< 0.05$  and  $t$  value  $> 1.96$  for two tails) and widely used to prove the mediating nature of proposed constructs (Zhou et al., 2011). For further confirmation of mediation the assessments of confidence intervals is another milestone achieved at this stage. Its already advised by previous researchers that non zero results of confidence intervals would lead to the conclusion of mediation and its backward effect is also confirmed.

**Table 7** Specific indirect effect (Mediating effect)

Hypothesis	Original	Sample Mean (M)	Standard	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values	Decision
	Sample (O)		Deviation (STDEV)			
H4. Attitude -> INFO -> PI	0.222	0.223	0.036	6.094	0	Supported

The determining variables i.e. attitude toward Facebook page liking infers considerable amount of our dependent and mediating variables as evident from indirect effects and paints a positive and significantly strong model ( $p$  value = .000 and  $t$  value = 6.094) at  $p < 0.05$ , while on the same lines a non-zero interval of variation (0.151 and 0.295) confirms out support for hypothesis 4.

### Discussion:

As mentioned earlier and stressed throughout the proceedings, the basic premise of the study was to test a theoretical model based on evaluation of the efficacy of social networking sites towards purchase intent of consumers. The study at hand is instrumental to position the most decisive antecedents to determine purchase response in the light of previous works and at the context of Pakistan which is still in emerging phase in spread of online marketing platforms. The academic purpose of this investigation was twofold. Firstly, it described the case of social media fan page strength in driving a stable attitude which can further transform to make the users purchase the pursued product. Secondly it checks the extent to which the liking behavior to mediate the main relational lines connecting the ultimate variables. These depictions were also evident from the research questions. The liking behavior of a fan page on social sites were to measure the intent of seeking further information about the brands. So conclusively seeking more information may lead to further interest and thus may ultimately yield in buying decision. To reach this overall goal it was imperative to devise a strategy which is valid in research speak and can answer the questions jotted out at the start. First step was to trawl through available literature, strength of established

relationships and appeal of the model according to face value. So theoretically it was established that a surfing activity on fan page of sites like Facebook may lead to the action stage. The novelty was to introduce a relatively new construct of seeking info, which in turn influence on the purchase intentions of brand page users. The descriptive powers of these variables according to the Coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) results are as the attitude towards Facebook advertising explained 42.9% of the variance in like intention to get information. All the variables as attitude towards Facebook advertising and like intention to get information combine value causing about 46.2% variance in purchase intention.

The results through Smart PLS showing positive significant relationships between the variable. First, attitude towards Facebook advertising had a significant positive influence on purchased intention. According to the findings, it has been observed a significant positive influence with a path coefficient value ( $\beta = 0.657$ ,  $t = 19.72$ ). Next, attitude towards Facebook’s advertising influenced like intention to get information. This indicated that the relationship between attitude towards Facebook advertising and like intention to get information ( $\beta = 0.409$ ,  $t = 9.172$ ) were significant positive. The like intention to get information proved to be having a strong influence of buying decision which symbolically is ( $\beta = 0.339$ ,  $t = 6.802$ ). the tabulated outcomes clearly support that liking behavior of fan page surfers would lead to their activity as disseminators of word of mouth to further the sale of the products ( $\beta = 0.223$ ,  $t = 6.094$ ).

#### **Conclusion:**

The ultimate proposed relationships among our configured constructs of purchase intention, surfing behavior, liking of Facebook brand page and intent to get information were supportive for most existing stances of researchers. It also showed slight variations in the magnitude of coefficients and effects. This is often caused by variations in research set ups, human errors and some outliers. The mediation proposed was of also significant academic value as it clarifies the construct of intention to like a brand page to get information in bridging the relations of attitude towards Facebook's advertising and purchase intention. This study will give a better guidance for brand managers and marketers an opportunity to focus on the Facebook better content strategy. The brand page owner can come up with a better strategy to hire and engage more netizens on companies’ product intro pages after learning about the benefits of a large community of followers and behavioral intentions of interest. The intent of liking the brand page and be a follower of the intent to purchase is an area of great interest to social media marketing managers. It is important to understand the user intent of sharing or "liking" aninterface on social media and getting a virtual approval of product potential market value (Halaszovich & Nel, 2017).

Expect for the current research, and each research has its limitations. First, Pakistani Facebook users are included as a sample. Studying through cultures should suggest future probable avenues of investigation in same direction. Study is also limited by the fact that it focuses only on behavioral intentions, such as the purchase intention and the like intention, and it only struggles to find vivid traces about what actually happens once the respondents actually make a buying decision. Only a cursory look that too only at the apparel brands and their Facebook brand pages could be assimilated from the study. The upcoming endeavors can go as far as considering pages from other brands as well as other available platforms on social net for different results. The work in hand augmented well the existing stance of the literature for mediating one intention with a similar intention, and additional interesting extensions can be added by taking some other independent variables or mediating the model.

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