

Determining the Impact of Social Media Intensity and Celebrity Culture on Conspicuous Consumption with Mediating Effect of Materialism

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate the effect of social media intensity and celebrity culture on conspicuous consumption in the context of collectivistic society of Pakistan, where materialism is intended to play a mediating role. The study is explanatory in nature, in which data were collected from HEC recognized higher educational institutes in Lahore, Punjab Pakistan. Questionnaire was adapted to serve the data collection purpose from youth as primary source. Data analysis was done using AMOS and SPSS. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis has been employed to test the reliability and factor reduction in the study.

The results have been supported the hypotheses in the study indicating that social media intensity and celebrity culture have direct positive effect on conspicuous consumption. The mediation effect of materialism is significant in case of celebrity culture and conspicuous consumption but mediation effect of materialism in the relationship of social media intensity and conspicuous consumption has found to be non-significant.

The study fills the academic gap and enhances the body of knowledge in the field of consumer behavior by addressing conspicuous consumption and its relation with social media intensity, celebrity culture, materialism and peer pressure. Results will enable marketers to better understand the opportunity reside in social media and celebrities in successful promotion of their products and capture the potential gap.

This study also has gone through time, budget and resource constraints; therefore, the findings of the study would only be generalized to the apparel industry in Pakistan as the research has only explored apparel industry. The study has also suggested future research and implications.

Key words: Social Media, Celebrity Culture, Conspicuous Consumption, Materialism, Higher Educational Institutes

INTRODUCTION

Marketing is expected to contribute considerably in human and societal welfare since past decade. Research-based publications are a significant proof of implications of marketing and consumer behavior in the lives of people. Consumer behavior differs from one geographical area to the other and individualistic society to a collectivistic one. Marketing is sometimes blamed for given rise to a certain phenomenon, for example materialism and conspicuous consumption (Sangkawasi & Johri, 2007).

Brands are strategic assets (Aaker, 1996) and seen as "heuristic device" that can enable a consumer to make swift and proficient purchase choices (Pich & Dean, 2015). Likewise, advertising is a necessary requirement in establishing brand's image and make people aware of brand name; without advertising, a brand will remain indistinguishable and cannot secure the intended meaning that allows conspicuous consumption (Krahmer, 2006). Material goods like clothing and household items have become a symbol of social and individual identity in collectivistic society (Trentmann, 2004).

In Pakistan, where people were used to know the true worth of relationships and people around them have

had started to judge each other on the basis of number of servants, expanded business, number of trips abroad, piles of jewelry, property and money. This research is mainly addressing consumer behavior in the collectivistic society of Pakistan when making choices in an environment where peer pressure is a most influential power in the lives of people.

Conspicuous consumption, interchangeably used for "Status Consumption" (O'Cass & Frost, 2002), is "the pretentious parade of wealth for the purpose of attaining or sustaining status or prestige" (Chipp, Kleyn, & Manzi, 2011). Social media intensity including Face book, twitter, YouTube, Whatsapp etc. and celebrity culture including advertisement, TV serials, fashion blogs etc. has been extravagantly widespread around the globe and exacerbated the situation. Additionally, media promotes materialism with a continuous bombardment of materialistic content, affluent lifestyle and put an emphasis on one's fame and success through materially embellished life in the minds of consumers (Handron, 2013). All these factors lead consumers to conspicuously consume. The whole situation becomes even worst when people start consuming to "keep up with Joneses". Research has indicated that Peer pressure have strong negative role in promoting

materialism and conspicuous consumption (Verhoef, et al., 2009; Banerjee & Dittmar, 2008; Robert, Monalis, & Tanner, 2008).

In collectivist or Asian cultures, like Pakistani culture, where “interdependence, “conformity” and social-symbolic role” are cherished, consumers usually use brands to get the approval of their extended environment (Wang & Waller, 2006; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Ahuvia & Wong, 1998). Conspicuous consumption tends to be higher in individualistic cultures as compared to collectivistic ones (Souiden, M’Saad, & Pons, 2011).

Pakistan is one of those countries whose market has grown largely as an emerging one for internationally recognized brands (Dilawar, 2012). With the luxury market expansion in Pakistan, the definition and criteria of luxury has also been stretched (Syed, 2014). The population of Pakistan is above 180 million, with a growing middle class and their expenditures. Amongst which youth is the highly suitable and vulnerable target audience for material goods and products.

Fashion is one of the extensively used phenomena in apparel products and “clothing” is most common product. Because everyone wants to look beautiful, chic and elegant so people use clothing as the best way to distinguish themselves from the crowd. Fashion in apparel industry keeps on changing with a rapid pace in Pakistan (Rehman, Saleem, Akhtar, Ali, & Khan, 2014).

Pakistanis rely more on local brands over imported ones, therefore manufacturers and designers have to successfully place their brand image in the minds of customers for which they use advertisement and promotion of brands or through endorsement of celebrities (Rehman & Khan, 2012; Saeed & Baig, 2013). Pakistan’ apparel and fashion industry; includes clothing, footwear and other accessories like cosmetics and even furnishing (Bohdanowicz & Clamp, 1994) which is also in the limelight all across the globe.

The following study focuses on apparel industry because clothing is a way through which people in Pakistan try to get in the limelight and use it as a mean to reflect their social status by engaging in conspicuous consumption (Rehman, Saleem, Akhtar, Ali, & Khan, 2014). They also admire and follow others who are trendy and stylish. There is little literature available on conspicuous consumption in the context of Pakistan and especially its relation with social media is non-existent which is considered a large gap to be addressed for academic and social good.

This study employs social media intensity; celebrity culture as independent variable and investigate their

relationship with conspicuous consumption. While model consists of materialism as mediator between conspicuous consumption (DV) and social media intensity, celebrity culture (IVs). This research fills the research gap for academicians by adding knowledge to the body of consumer behavior field. The study findings serve the market practitioners by providing them more insight into the advanced modes of marketing.

Research Gap

This research investigated the literature regarding social media intensity, celebrity culture, conspicuous consumption, and materialism specifically in the context of Pakistan and explored the literature gap. The literature concerning social media intensity and its relation with conspicuous consumption in the context of Pakistan is found to be non-existent.

Secondly, the variables with reference to this research are not set up as a whole to be examined previously in literature. Consequently, study aims to fill these literature gaps in the field of consumer behavior by exploring relationships among variables in the study.

Problem Statement

“Social media intensity (Ahmad, 2014; Hashmi, 2011) and celebrity culture (Azwer, 2015; Feerasta, 2015; Dao, 2014; Farooq, 2015) in Pakistan is responsible for increased materialism (Khurram, 2013; Zafar, 2012) leading consumers to conspicuously consume in Pakistan’s apparel industry (Rehman, Saleem, et.al, 2014). Thus resulting in wastage of resources (AAP, 2015) and decreased well-being (Arshad, Nawaz, & Hassan, 2014; Shoaib, Bilal, Iqbal, Hassan, & Falak, 2012; Khan, Khan, & Aziz, 2012)”.

In a nutshell, social media intensity and celebrity culture are investigated in relation with conspicuous consumption in the presence of materialism as mediating their relationship.

Research Objectives

The overall aim of this study is two-fold. Firstly, to identify the key role that is played by social media intensity and celebrity culture in making consumers to conspicuously consume. Secondly, to explore the intervening role of materialism in the direct relation of social media intensity and celebrity culture with conspicuous consumption.

Research Questions

- Does social media intensity lead people to conspicuously consume in Pakistan?
- Does celebrity culture drive people to conspicuously consume in Pakistan?

- Does materialism mediate the relationship of social media intensity, celebrity culture and conspicuous consumption?

Scope of the Study

This investigation is conducted to determine the impact of social media intensity and celebrity culture on conspicuous consumption in apparel industry of Pakistan. The study targets youth of Pakistan as they found to be more prone to peer pressure by being conscious about their social status.

Novelty of the Study

There is little literature available on conspicuous consumption in the context of Pakistan and especially its relation with social media is non-existent which is considered a large gap to be addressed for academic and social good. The more conspicuously the people consume, the better it is for the business man. But if one critically observe this excessive spending then it would be inferred that excessive spending is actually a mean of wastage of resources which is not only endangering the resources to be scarce but also horrific to the social good. So this study is highlighting some of the major causes that lead people to conspicuously consume in apparel industry. Secondly, the study fills the academic gap and enhances the body of knowledge in the field of consumer behavior by addressing effects of materialism in relation to conspicuous consumption.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conspicuous Consumption

Since the ages, people have desire to show the world how well off they are. Even back in the history, kings had built statues, designed palaces and accumulated piles of jewels just to show their peers, subordinates and superiors to get a clear glimpse of their social status. This aspiration of ostentatiousness has never changed and then classified under marketing umbrella and called "Conspicuous Consumption".

The definition and introduction of "Theory of Conspicuous Consumption" has coined initially by an economist and sociologist Thorsten Veblen. The concept of conspicuous consumption began to take form when he was studying the social factors that encourage economic behaviors and then realized that people's purchasing decisions are based on their social surroundings (Bagwell & Bernheim, 1996). Conspicuous consumption is a deed of consuming money to advance social status and to amaze others by signifying that one has enough money to devote in perky, lavish and extravagant goods (Veblen 1899; stated by Griskevicius, et al., 2007).

Conspicuous consumption involves the consumption of extravagant and luxury products to show off

wealth signal their status and consumption of symbolic products, besides, feed their thrust for social-recognition and self-concept (Zeb, Rashid, & Javed, 2011). As Veblen said that valuable possession that are visible to others are a signal of people's wealth, status and success. Now a day, people have acknowledged that spending decisions are highly swayed by the desire to "keep up with the Joneses" (Wharton, 2014).

In the leisure class theory (1899), Thorsten Veblen argued that accumulation of wealth do not signal one's status, rather it's the indication of wealth that requires wasteful exhibition of resources a behavior known as Conspicuous Consumption (Thorstein, 1899). According to Veblen, possession of wealth or anything in excess of normal extent has become a signal of reputability and well social standing in the eye of community which is laudable.

Conspicuous Consumption in Pakistan

The household surveys have revealed an astonishing increase in the middle class of Pakistan with a ravenous appetite in consumption. The Asian Development Bank report has estimated total consumption spending by affluent, educated and urbanized middle class of Pakistan at \$75bn which is \$80.5 million change in yearly expenditures by middle class (Haq, 2014).

Pakistani consumerism story is not cyclical, but has structural foundations. "Pakistanis A young, mobile and spirited population entering the workforce, global connectivity via internet, social media and cable TV are all driving aspirations and conspicuous consumption" said by former economic advisor and macroeconomic consultant SakibSherani (Sherani, 2012). People are consuming more resources thus endangering the wellbeing by wasting those resources, said by Federal Secretary of Climate Change Arif Ahmad Khan (AAP, 2015).

Celebrity Culture

Academic definition of celebrity is quite vague. Celebrities are described as "a few, known by many" (Evans & Hesmondhalgh, 2005); and in audience or consumer's notion a celebrity is "a possession of the actor's relationship with an audience, instead of a characteristic of the actor him/herself" (Rindova, Pollock, & Hayward, 2006). "Celebrities may belong to a universe of sports, politics, science or they may come from show-businesses or just an information geek. Wherever they come from, though, all exhibited celebrities put on demonstration the world of celebrities a world whose chiefdistinguishingarticle is precisely the worth of being watched by many; in all corners of the globe: of being global in their capacity of being watched" (Bauman 1998stated by Blackshaw, 2010).

Celebrity Culture and Conspicuous Consumption

Celebrities can help the fashion campaigns to increase the brand awareness (Dao, 2014). Consumers derive considerable meaning from the advertisement which are advertised by celebrities (Ritson & Elliott, 1999) and aim to develop closer relations with their chosen celebrities by engaging in consumption activities (O'Guinn, 1991). Celebrities can represent "an enhanced fantasy reflection" and pass information to consumers about consumption patterns and practices to come up with "best of their appearance" (Pringle, 2004). They are potentially ascribed as "super consumers" who play exemplary inspirational role to consumers (Carroll, 2009).

Celebrities encourage the consumers to engage in some sort of liking for a particular brand or advertisement (Hsu & McDonald, 2002). Consumers actively engage in using a brand to construct or reinforce identity (Holt, 2002) or specifically seek out celebrities with whom they share fellow feeling (Boon & Lomere, 2001). Consumer' engagement in conspicuous consumption via choosing a celebrity reflects a range of factors such as lifestyle, attitude, looks, personality and consumption practices which solely depends on consumer' affiliation with celebrity (Banister & Cocker, 2014).

Celebrity culture annihilates and put away reality, as reality is grounded on differences and celebrity culture wiped off all the differences, leaving only indifference to anything other than accretion of wealth (Lee J., 2009).

Celebrity Culture and Materialism

Today consumerism, celebrity culture and television play a central role in people' lives where one have to pay a huge price in terms of well-being (Ryan, 2008). Whenever one turn on the television or pick up a famous magazine there is a never-ending parade of famous, beautiful people who are trying to sell something (Green, et al., 2014).

Inadvertantly, in malls the message of "buy, buy and buy" comes from every direction and "buying more will make one more happy" is drilled into our heads; on media all the campaigns and advertisements have something in common, linking materialism and happiness through visualizing celebrities using materialistic stuff (Zafar, 2012). It is easy to get the impression that the celebrities who are endorsing expensive products are actually using them too.

Promoting Celebrity Culture via TV serials, advertising, fashion shows and fashion blogs in Pakistan

Media is an imperative institution of "modernity" which increases the scope of consumerism by highlighting "desirable" high level upper-middle class lifestyles, materialism and exhibitionism.

(Mankekar, 1999; Varman & Vikas, 2005; Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2006; Varman & Belk, 2008). Symbolic-representation of diverse modes of consumption are being internalized to consumers via multiple modes of communication in media like gestures, words, sounds, visuals and expressions (Varman & Vikas, 2005).

Television programming is a rich source of texts that are apropos to the ideology of consumption (Hiarschman, 1988). A satellite television channel has been started to influence and continues its impact on young consumer's choices (Mirzaie, Sadighi, & Hanzaee, 2012). Specifically taking Pakistan into account, media has a huge effect on young consumer's healthy lifestyle and they experience more adverse impact (Arshad, Nawaz, & Hassan, 2014; Shoaib, Bilal, Iqbal, Hassan, & Falak, 2012; Khan, Khan, & Aziz, 2012).

Celebrity culture is intently promoted via print advertising and billboards, TV commercials, celebrities and social media/bloggers (Dao, 2014). Celebrities work as brand ambassador and not only help promoting the campaigns but also create a brand image in the minds of the customers. People usually pursue a brands that is advertised by a celebrity because they think it would be of higher quality than its counterpart.

Junaid Jamshaid, Chef Zakir, Sajjad Ali, Waseem Akram, Shahid Afridi, Fawad Khan, Shan, Faisal Qureshi and Sahir Lodhi etc are well known as brand ambassadors of different drinks, Zong Hajj Campaign, chicken cubes and others. Q-Mobile has kicked off Pakistani faces from their ads and introduced Indian faces Kareena Kapoor, Aditiya Roy Kapoor and recently Arjun Kapoor (PAS, 2014). Pepsi, Coke, Pantene, Head & Shoulder and Lux use regional campaigns in which they strongly use Indian Actors like Katrina Kaif and Slipa Sheethi (Zaidi, 2012). Katrina Kaif was brought to Pakistan advertisement in 2008 and then the list goes on. She has been the brand ambassador of Veet for a long time.

Similarly, Sonam Kapoor, Depika Padukone and Kareena Kapoor are the brand ambassadors of Firdus Lawn; Crescent Lawn has opted Shasmita San and Karishma Kapoor; Nargis Fakhri for Elan as their brand ambassador (Sirinivas, 2013; Qamar, 2014). A leading designer Fahad Hussayn has choosen Paryanka Chopra as his brand ambassador for Ittehad (Hassan, 2013).

Indian soaps and operas, tv channels like Star plus and Urdu TV are very popular among Pakistani audience; besides Turkish drama serials have also gained popularity in last years (Farooq U., 2013). ZEE TV on air Indian serials like "Jamai

Raja”, “Kumkum Bagiya” etc (ZEE TV, 2015). “Kio k saas bhi kabhi bahu thi, Ek larki anjaani si, Thori khushi thora gham” were the big hits of the time in Pakistan. “Salaam Namaste” is on aired on Aaj TV where Indian stars and singers are invited. GEO has started “Morning with Nadia” in which Indian actors are frequently invited to attract Pakistani audience. ARY off-and-on arranges musical and stage shows in UAE where Indian actors, singers and models are invited and then on aired on ARY to lure the audience. “Pakistan Idol” is also a replica of “Indian Idol” and “American Idol” (Bollywood, 2014).

Zara Shahjahan has set to showcase a new collection of luxury pret titled “New Vintage; an ode to modern Pakistani women” at PFDC Sunsilk Fashion Week 2015 after showcasing “Forever Boho” at Pakistan Fashion Week SS 2015 (Farooq U., 2015). Nida Azwer showcased the most sparkeling and glittery “The IZNIK Collection” at PFDC Sunsilk Fashion Week 2015 (Azwer, 2015).

TDAP fashion show has given a platform to the top designers of Pakistan like Deepak Parwani and Sana Safinaz and other designers notably Nida Azwer, Zaheer Abbas, Karma, Naushaba Brohi, Sadaf Malaterre, Faraz Mannan, Madiha Riaz, Adnan Pardesy and Ali Xeeshan (Feerasta, 2015). Fashion magazines are another rich source of fashion advertisement campaign and every fashion campaign try to appear on the cover of magazines like Vogue or Bazaar where they can get the first sight attention of the consumers (Dao, 2014). Burberry was one of the first brand that brought its fashion week live experience to the masses (McCrea, 2013).

Social Media Intensity

Technologies have greatly transformed human behavior and thus social systems and structures. With the rise of media tools the power of media has emerged intensively especially television and later on internet altered the scene of consumption patterns altogether. According to an online analysis steered by Insight Express (2004), it was found that internet is most preferred media among 40% respondents, while television, newspapers, radio and magazines were 39%, 8%, 4% and 2% preferred (Eijaz, 2013).

Fashion week is no more a reserved pleasure for highly influential buyers or fashion editors; bloggers, celebrities and socialists flock instantly share their memorable moments via social media like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook (McCrea, 2013). Hugo Boss, a German Designer promoted its spring fashion show heavily via social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter (Finocchiaro, 2010). In the Asian countries like Pakistan, communication technology has also evolved rapidly especially in last decade (Wassan, 2008).

Social Media Intensity and Conspicuous Consumption

Social networks have become global sensation which has engaged more and more people of all age groups by offering meaningful ways and tools. The trend of social networking has also increased with rapid pace due to amplified use of tablets and smartphones.

Social networks are found to engage people, on which they control the information to be shared, disseminate more positive image about themselves (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). Thus solicit positive feedback from friends and acquaintances leads them to enhance self-esteem, other social benefits and excessive spending (Ellison, Steinfield, & Sigauw, 2007; Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006; Gonzales & Hancock, 2011).

Such high level self-esteem from social networks lessen one’s self-control and push them to more impulsive behavior (Wilcox, Kramar, & Sen, 2011; Khan & Dhar, 2006) such as excessive spending. Intensive use of social media and reliance on electronic word of mouth lead people to make absurd choices and consume extravagantly on luxurious (conspicuous) products (Wilcox & Stephen, 2013; Thourunroje, 2014).

Social Media Intensity and Materialism

Conspicuous consumption via social media can be better defined as “sharing, creating and receiving of ideas and messages” by the means which are visible to others, aiming to showcase their identity and leaving them materialistic (IMG, 2014). This way people has new and trendy ways of showing off, as conspicuous “over-sharing” usurps conspicuous consumption. “From “stealth boasts” on Facebook to the fine art of a 140 character-filled brag on Twitter, “sharing” is used by consumers as a status symbol” (Bainbridge, 2013).

Youth is particularly involved in using online media especially Facebook to promote friendships, individual autonomy and engage in sharing interests and socialize by frequently being online (Ito, et al., 2008). For example, Lamborghini’s 10.1M and Ford’s 1.5M likes on Facebook; yet certainly more people use Ford than a Lambo, is a clear indication of why people like luxury products on social media i.e just to signal their “wealth”, or their self-image as “cool” and even “smart”. The same holds true for other social networking sites like Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr and Snapchat, LinkedIn and Blogger etc (Nielsen, 2012; Gornick, 2010; IMG, 2014).

Social Media Intensity in Pakistan

Social media has been intensively used among youth even in Pakistan. Social media is the most silent broadcaster the world has ever seen (Noukhaiz, 2012). Cheap smartphone and mobiles have made it

easier for youngsters to engage on social networking sites like facebook, whatsapp, skype, twitter etc. and it has worsened the moral and ethical values among Pakistani youth (Ahmad, 2014). Such a rigorous use of social media is actually making the Pakistani youth mentally ill and damaging their live brains (Hashmi, 2011).

Materialism

Materialism has commonly been concomitant with Western lifestyle (Cleveland & Chang, 2009) however, in recent times more people in developing countries have started to imitate substantial culture as westerns (Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008; Podoshen, Lu-Li, & Jungfeng, 2011; Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012). Materialism is defined as “the importance a consumer attaches to a worldly possession” as a combination of three dimensions- possessiveness, nongenerosity and envy (Belk, 1984). These factors are assumed to encapsulate the degree to which one values his/her material items, dislike to share his/her items and feel jealous when others acquire more valuable items (Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012).

In general, materialism is known as negative value structure which includes retaining possession and their acquisition at the core of life with the belief that acquiring more of such possessions will lead to happiness. This way it can lead to making judgements about one-self and others both in terms of quality and quantity (Ahuvia, 1992; Veer & Shankar, 2011). Research has shown link of materialism with a variety of consumer behaviors including social consumption motivation (Fitzmaurice, 2008), compulsive buying (Robert, Manollis, & Tanner, 2003); lack of confidence and social uncertainty (Chang & Robert, 2002). Materialism evidenced to be inversely connected to well-being, satisfaction and quality of life (Roberts & Clement, 2007).

Materialism is known as a “Personal Value System” in which possessions and their acquisition lie at the central point in ones life (Richins & Dawson, 1992). Such material possessions and their attainment provide meaning to their lives, in turn, satisfaction, well being and happiness are acquired as per their mindset by having such possessions. Ultimately, these possessions define “Success”, signify accomplishment and project a sought after image about their personalities and lifestyle (Sigal, 2015). At then, people not only value material possessions but also appraise them as a receiving pleasure from conspicuous consumption of these possessions (Richins, 1994).

Materialism and Conspicuous Consumption

Status or conspicuous consumption is often associated with consumption of luxury products

(O’Cass & Frost, 2002) which is characterized by self-related personality traits (Giovannini, Xu, & Thomas, 2015), desire of uniqueness, social visibility, individualism, and materialism (Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, & Ghosal, 2011). The findings indicate a connection between materialism and conspicuous consumption as a behavior in which an individual display wealth through top-notch luxury disbursements on consumption (Trigg, 2001). Consumers sometime conspicuously consume just to gain a high rank at social status spectrum (Mullins, 1999), in low power situations (Rucker & Galinsky, 2007), or when they feel a lack of self-worth (Sivanathan & Pittit, 2010).

Materialistic people do not tend to keep variety of possessions, they actually seek out acquiring more quantities of the same products thus indulge in conspicuous consumption (Troisi, Christopher, & Marek, 2006). They use possessions for portraying and managing impression, engage in self-indulgent buying behavior, and especially use fashionable clothing for impression management and to convey their success status to other (O’Cass A., 2001). Consumers with strong materialistic drive tend to believe that success is linked to consuming in “showy, displaying manner”, leads to take pleasure of stylishness of their possessions and admiration from others (Tatzel, 2002).

Materialism in Pakistan

People in Pakistan living in a collectivist society, have developed an obsession for material goods like I-phone, luxurious cars, branded shoes, designer clothes, expensive wristwatches, imported perfume and designer bags etc. People are heavily bombarded with ads on media and through social networks that their happiness, satisfaction and endless wishlist can only be fulfilled through bulk of such materialistic possessions (Khurram, 2013). In today’s world, even in Pakistan where people were used to know the true worth of relations and people around, has started judging each other on number of servants in the house, number of trips abroad, expanded business, piles of jewelry, designer clothes, expensive luxurious cars, and smartphones (Zafar, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

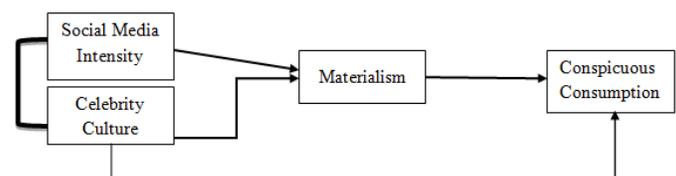


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

This study has employed following theoretical framework in which social media intensity and celebrity culture are independent variables and has a positive effect on conspicuous consumption which is a dependent variable, at the same time materialism having positive effect on conspicuous consumption, is mediating the relationship between dependent and independent variables.

Research Hypotheses

H1: Social Media Intensity has a direct positive effect on Conspicuous Consumption.

H2: Celebrity Culture has a direct positive effect on Conspicuous Consumption.

H3: Materialism has direct positive effect on Conspicuous Consumption.

H4: The effect of Social Media Intensity on Conspicuous Consumption is mediated by Materialism.

H5: The effect of Celebrity Culture on Conspicuous Consumption is mediated by Materialism.

METHODOLOGY

In current study research philosophy is phenomenological (applied research), applied research is conducted to investigate specific questions or to solve specific and practical problems. Deductive research approach is used in this research which is referred to move from general to the particular and finding support or to modify a theory (Gulati, 2009). The nature of this research is explanatory which is carried out to understand phenomena by discovering and measuring causal relations among variables. Current study is quantitative in nature. Unit of analysis were individual young males and females in Pakistan from higher educational institutes in Lahore city. Target population was the educated youth in Lahore. The students enrolled in higher educational institutes (HEIs) in Lahore are considered as educated youth to serve the data collection purpose.

In the following study, sample size is based on convenience sampling which is non probability including undergraduate, graduate and post graduate students from business schools in Lahore. Data were collected from higher educational institutes in Lahore, including Lahore School of Economics, The Superior College, Lahore, The University of Central Punjab, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Lahore, University of Management and Technology; and Institute of Management Sciences Lahore which are among Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) recognized by Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan in 2014.

Data were gathered from August till November 2015 via questionnaires distributed among student. Total

550 questionnaires were distributed out of which 390 were returned. Incomplete questionnaires were removed to avoid missing values in data set Data were collected using self-administered questionnaire surveys both in-person and by mail from the primary sources.

The questionnaire was organized in two sections. The first section contains demographic questions including gender, age, education level and family income etc. The second section includes adapted questions to measure the variables in the study. These questions in second section were developed on 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree as used in other studies (Souiden, M'Saad, & Pons, 2011; Thourmrunroje, 2014).

Items measuring conspicuous consumption were derived from studies by O'Cass & Frost(2002), Park & Burns(2005), Bertrandias & Goldsmith (2006), Henry (2002); and Chung & Fischer (2001). The social media intensity scale was adapted from Bush & Gilbert(2002), Ellison, Steinfield, & et.al(2007); and Gonzales & Hencoc(2011). Instead of using most commonly used scale for measuring materialism, developed by Belk (1985) and Richins and Dawson (1992), this study employed "Possession Satisfaction Index" developed by Scott & Lundstorm (1990) as used by Gorp(2007). To measure the celebrity culture, two scales were adapted, developed by Kaseer, Ryan, & et.al. (2004) and McCutcheon, et.al. (2003) as stated by Kwan, (2013).

In current study total 364 responses were treated in Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) v21 and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), has been run on Amos (Analysis of Moment Structures) graphics for quantitative inquiry of results, hypotheses testing and finally accepting or rejecting them to conclude the study results.

DATA ANALYSIS

Demographics

There were some questions to obtain demographic information of respondents including their gender, age, education and family income. Out of 364 responses 39.2 percent were males and 60.7 percent were females; 48.9 percent respondents belonged to age group of 20-24 years, 44.5 percent from age group of 25-29 years while age group of 15-19 and 30+ years have shown only 0.3 and 6.3 percentage respectively. 56.1 percent respondents were reported as "Graduate" while 43.9 percent as "Post-graduate". In terms of family income 8 percent reported "20-30K", 26.9 percent reported "30-40K", 18.1 percent reported "40-50K", 47 percent reported "50+K".

Descriptive Statistics and Assessment of Normality

To assess the distribution of scores, skewness and kurtosis were performed on construct variables in the study (Pallant, 2005). Skewness is an indication of symmetry of the distribution while kurtosis informs about “peakedness” of distribution. Various researches have suggested that skewness and kurtosis values should fall within the range of ± 3 for the data considered being normal (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). The following table shows that data were normally distributed as the values of skewness and kurtosis fall within recommended range.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics & Normality Assessment

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Skewness | | Kurtosis | |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error |
| Celebrity Culture | 364 | 2.66 | .658 | .346 | .128 | -.724 | .255 |
| Social Media Intensity | 364 | 2.63 | .755 | .149 | .128 | .096 | .255 |
| Conspicuous Consumption | 364 | 2.71 | .546 | .039 | .128 | -.464 | .255 |
| Materialism | 364 | 3.19 | .775 | -.264 | .128 | -.041 | .255 |

Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the research instrument was tested before detailed analysis of data using SPSS. Findings of reliability analysis have shown that all the constructs have high reliability. The Croanbach's Alpha (α) was used to check the reliability of instrument. Table below represents the values of croanbach's alpha which are all greater than 0.7 thus considered as best for internal consistency (Kaplan & Kaiser, 2006).

Table 2 Reliability Statistics

| Sr. no | Variable constructs | Cronbach's Alpha coefficient | Number of Items |
|--------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. | Celebrity Culture | 0.830 | 11 |
| 2. | Social Media Intensity | 0.804 | 8 |
| 4. | Conspicuous Consumption | 0.787 | 14 |
| 5. | Materialism | 0.781 | 6 |

As above table indicates that the cronbach's' alpha values ranged from 0.781 to 0.837, implied that all the constructs are highly reliable.

Structure Equation Modeling Path Analysis

SEM is a technique which is run on AMOS to analyses the causal effect relationship among the variable which are used in the study. Table 8 provides the analysis of path analysis in which regression specify the estimate (β), C.R (t-value) and significance (p-value). The acceptance and rejection of the hypothesis testing is base on these results. In current study celebrity culture and social media intensity have been taken as independent variables, Conspicuous consumptions has been taken as dependent and Materialism has been taken as mediating variable

Path Analysis of Mediator

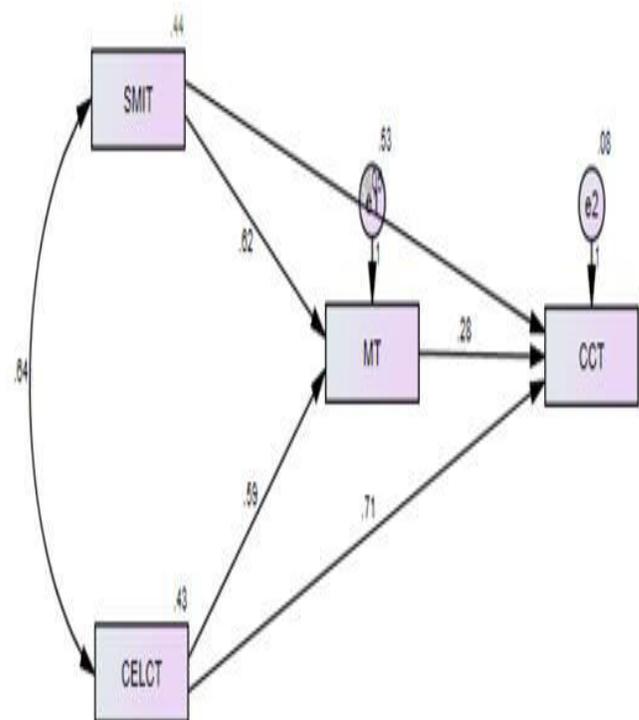


Figure 2: Path diagram of Mediator

Model fit indices for the mediator in the study have been calculated including Goodness of fit index value 0.997, incremental fit index 0.993, chi-square / degree of freedom 2.232, normed fit index 0.988, comparative fit index 0.993, root mean square residual 0.008 and root mean square error of approximation 0.058. All the values lie within the acceptable range of these indices, evidencing good model fit for the study.

Table 3 Summary of Model Fit Indices

| Indices | Recommended values | Obtained values |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) | >0.9 or greater | .997 |
| Incremental Fit Index (IFI) | >0.9 or greater | .993 |
| CMIN/DF | < 3.0 | 2.232 |
| Normed Fit Index (NFI) | >0.9 or greater | .988 |
| Comparative Fit Index (CFI) | >0.9 or greater | .993 |
| Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) | < 0.10 or closer to zero | 0.008 |
| Root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) | <0.10 | .058 |

The following table shows the summary of path analysis performed using SEM, it contains regression weights or estimates (beta: β), C.R is the t-value and significance of hypotheses is p-value. The conclusion regarding hypotheses acceptance or rejection is based on significance of p-values.

Table 4 Path Coefficients

| Causal Path | | Estimate (β) | S.E. | C.R. | P |
|------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|------|--------|------|
| Social media intensity | → Materialism | .628 | .057 | 1.417 | .247 |
| Celebrity culture | → Materialism | .591 | .066 | .784 | .033 |
| Materialism | → Conspicuous consumption | .287 | .031 | 3.960 | *** |
| Celebrity culture | → Conspicuous consumption | .713 | .036 | 11.983 | *** |
| Social media intensity | → Conspicuous consumption | .053 | .024 | 2.213 | *** |

Results indicates that social media intensity has direct positive effect on conspicuous consumption (estimate=0.53, t-value=2.213, p-value<0.001); and celebrity culture also has direct positive effect on conspicuous consumption (estimate =0.713, t value=11.983, p value <0.001). Thus, H1 and H2 were accepted.

Both independent variables have shown to affect the dependent variable hence fulfilling one condition of mediation (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Materialism

proved to have a direct positive effect on conspicuous consumption (estimate=0.287, t-value=3.960, p-value<0.001), accepting H3. Hence, mediator has shown to affect the dependent variable, satisfying another condition of mediation according to Barron and Kenny, (1986). Celebrity culture has significant relation with materialism (estimate=.591, t-value=0.784, p-value <0.05), thus celebrity culture affecting mediator has satisfied mediation assumptions by Barron and Kenny. While social media intensity has insignificant relation with materialism (estimate=.628, t-value=1.147, p-value >0.05). Thus, it can be interpreted that celebrity culture has indirect effect on conspicuous consumption after introducing materialism in the model, accepting H5. However, for social media intensity, mediation did not exist, rejecting H4.

Discussion

In the study, consumers’ conspicuous consumption is evidenced to be directly and positively related to their engagement on social media and the more they are aspired by celebrities. Social media intensity is found to be directly positively related to increase in conspicuous consumption, as stated in the previous studies (Wilcox, Kramar, & Sen, 2011; Khan&Dhar, 2006; Wilcox & Stephen, 2013; Thoumrungroje, A., 2014). The youth is particularly engaged in social media by using social networking sites like Face book, twitter, Whatsapp, Skype and other micro blogging and video sharing sites like YouTube etc. most of the time. As social media provide space to the people so that they can draw an image about their identities (social status, likes and dislikes, beliefs, interests, background etc.), therefore, people indulge in activities through which they can present themselves in a better way to get more appreciation among friends, peers and family (O’Guinn& Belk, 1989; Croft, 2013).

Materialism is not only highly influenced phenomena in Western Society, it has also engulfed Asian consumption culture. Many of the researches have been conducted all around the globe to investigate the dimensions and causes of materialism. This study has employed materialism as a mediator in the direct and positive relationship of social media intensity, celebrity culture and conspicuous consumption. Where materialism is found to be directly and positively related to conspicuous consumption as stated in literature (Chaudhuri, Mazumdar, & Ghosal, 2011; Trigg, 2001; Troisi, Christopher, & Marek, 2006). It indicates that the more materialistic people are, the more they engage in conspicuous consumption in Pakistan.

In the direct relationship of celebrity culture and conspicuous consumption, materialism found to be fully mediating their relationship, it suggested that when materialistic behavior of people tends to play its role in a person then the direct effect of celebrity culture on conspicuous consumption weakens but still remains off the screen. While in case of social media intensity and conspicuous consumption, the intervening role of materialism is found to be non-existent in the study. It indicated that social media intensity and conspicuous consumption have direct and positive relation but intensity of usage of social media has nothing to do with materialistic behavior in case of youth in Pakistan.

Conclusion and Future Research

The academic offerings of this study lie in the fact that it approves and outspreads both social networking and consumer behavior literature by empirically offering the stimulus of social networks on consumers' choices. In the virtual domain such as Face book, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, people can choose what they want to be presented. Most probably, people choose to expose luxurious and aromatic self-image because they know that their friends, peers and acquaintances from the network are following their activities and whereabouts. When people sense awesomely good about themselves among their peers and friends, they tend to make decisions that are irrational, impetuous, and non-judgmental

In future this study will be conducted uniform celebrities in relation to materialism can be investigated. This study has only addressed apparel industry, while other industries like automobile industry for luxurious cars and jewelry can be targeted. It may also address corporate sector and events like marriage ceremony or birthday parties etc. Gender wise comparisons can be made in future research in the context of similar variables.

Current study has some limitations as First; the data for the study was gathered from higher educational institutes in Lahore. It is probable that attitudes and practices regarding social media intensity, consumption, and materialism and celebrity culture may differ based on geographic regions and family background. An additional restriction is that study relied on one scheme of survey to draw inferences. Future studies employing experimental and qualitative methods will help lend further understanding into the relationships studied here.

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