



The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumers' Online Clothing Purchase Intention during COVID-19 in Azerbaijan

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Abstract

This research study aimed to explore the impact of social media marketing (SMM) on consumers' online clothing purchase intention during COVID-19 in Azerbaijan. In comparison to most existing literature reviews, this study is dedicated to the explanation of the branding process that occurs on various social media platforms. For this purpose, different social media-based branding components, namely brand trust, brand awareness, brand community, interaction, emotional attachment, and e-WOM were combined to measure their impact on online clothing purchase intention in Azerbaijan. Considering previous studies did not demonstrate how these factors affect purchase intention, and similar research has not been conducted in Azerbaijan, this research carries more significance, and it will have a significant contribution to the existing literature reviews. The data was collected from the people living in Baku and the analysis was conducted using this data to identify a correlation between these variables. It was found that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between SMM antecedents (brand trust, brand community, and brand awareness) and online clothing purchase intention. On the other hand, the result of the study helps us to conclude that there is a negative relationship between other social media branding items (emotional attachment, e-WOM, and interaction) and online clothing buying intention during COVID-19 in Azerbaijan. Furthermore, it has been assumed that some variables can affect the strength of this relationship; therefore, research controlled their effect. As a result, it has been determined that the inclusion of these control variables (age, gender, and income) did not change the outcome.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Purchase Intention, Brand Trust, Brand Awareness, Emotional Attachment, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM), interaction

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Chapter 1. Research Objective, Research Questions & Outline

1.1 Introduction

The creation of World Wide Web in 1989, connection, and mass usage of the internet provided an opportunity for people to contact and exchange knowledge, experiences, and information regardless of geographical place and time. The umbrella term for the exchange of knowledge or information through the Internet and mobile platforms is social media, which is a collection of websites and applications that enables users to attend to social networking or achieve specific purposes (Lloyd, 2014). One of the main advantages of social media for the whole world is offering a brilliant chance to arrange business relationships for different industries. Before this invention, people had only a chance to see an advertisement on TV about a certain product or service to become informed, but they could not express their personal experiences and ideas related to these concepts due to the absence of online communication platforms (Prenaj, 2016). The advancements in information technology and wider usage of social media as an effective marketing tool assist businesses to develop their brand, products & services and increase reachability. It is a recent and creative marketing strategy adopted by the majority of businesses to gain easy access to their consumers on virtual networks. It is important to consider that consumers play a significant role in business transactions, and they held more power and are always busy with their work; therefore, companies should increase their performance by being reachable and available on every social media communication channel if they desire to gain popularity (Gordhamer, 2009). As the consumers carry more significance for the business world, they can influence the direction of the branding process (Constantinides and Fountain, 2008; Hutter et al, 2013).

The active participation of consumers/customers in social media contributes to both opportunities and difficulties for marketers since customers' purchase decisions are mainly based on peer interactions (Hutter et al.2013). The users prefer to express their personal experiences regarding specific brands or products on various online platforms. (e.g., blogs, podcasts) which seems a more reliable and objective source for other people (Ioanas & Stoica, 2014). Building on this idea, the latest research also demonstrates the reality of this fact by depicting that recent customer behavior on social media platforms has transformed from information acquisition to post-buying behavior which includes positive or negative feedback about a specific product &

service or a company itself (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Furthermore, prior research has also proved that only a few amounts of dissatisfaction statements can completely change not only buying decisions but also consumers' attitudes toward the brand (Schlosser, 2005).

Although most given literature reviews theoretically indicate the significance of building strong and effective relationships between consumers and companies, they lack empirical evidence. Furthermore, consumer purchase intention has been continuously investigated by many researchers for a long time, but only a few studies have narrowed this concept by demonstrating the type of purchase intention and within which time (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2011; Morinez et al, 2007). Even though the concept is widespread and has been investigated by other researchers, it has not been examined in Azerbaijan. Being added to this argument, it is also crucial to highlight the fact that COVID-19 has an enormous impact on various aspects of our lives which is today's research area; however, few studies have analyzed how purchase intention has been influenced because of this situation. Coming to the context of social media, few prior studies have analyzed dimensions of social media, that offer an impressive chance for marketers to connect with customers (Godey et al, 2016; Almohaimeed, 2019). Nevertheless, research studies demonstrating the impact of social media marketing (SMM) lack empirical evidence.

Taking the above-indicated factors into consideration, the main objective of this research study is to analyze the impact of social media marketing (SMM) on consumers' online clothing purchase intention during COVID in Azerbaijan. Though previous studies have only indicated only a few elements of social media-based branding items, they have not combined all these elements to examine their impact on online clothing purchase intention. Building on this idea, the concept of brand community has been analyzed (Laroche, Habibi & Richard, 2013), brand trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), and interaction (Muntiga, Moorman, and Smith, 2011). This evidence shows that there is a huge gap in the given literature reviews to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research topic. Furthermore, since there does not exist similar research on the given topic in Azerbaijan, it is quite a new and undiscoverable topic. Finally, this research study carries more importance for managers, as it demonstrates the crucial need for companies to control and analyze customers' purchasing decisions through different SMM tools.

1.2. Research Questions

Considering the main rationale of the research, different sub-questions about social media-based branding items have been formulated. They can be summarized as:

- **How did brand trust affect consumers' online clothing purchase intention during COVID in Azerbaijan?**
- **How has brand awareness influenced customers' online clothing purchase intention during COVID in Azerbaijan?**
- **What was the impact of brand community on consumers' online clothing purchase intention during COVID in Azerbaijan?**
- **What was the contribution of emotional attachment to online clothing purchase intention during COVID in Azerbaijan?**
- **How has social media-based interaction affected buyers' online clothing purchase intention during COVID in Azerbaijan?**
- **What was the effect of e-WOM on buyers' online clothing purchase intention during COVID in Azerbaijan?**

The result derived from the above-given questions will guide us to answer the main research question.

1.3. Outline of Study

This research study will consist of the following sections.

- In Section 2, Literature Review will be indicated. This part starts with the identification of social media marketing antecedents indicated as brand trust, brand awareness, brand community, electronic word-of-mouth, emotional attachment, interaction, and purchase intention. It will be followed by a demonstration of the relationship between these independent variables and dependent variables by providing empirical evidence from other researchers and constructing of hypothesis. At the end of the Literature Review, the conceptual framework is drawn in which the relationship is graphically represented.

- Section 3 will describe the Data Methodology part which includes information about the data collection stage, the methods used in a research setting, and the reason behind the selection, and measurement of research constructs.
- Section 4 will consist of Findings. To test the given research hypothesis, an SPSS analysis will be conducted. The type of relationship, including control variables, will be analyzed to analyze whether they have a significant impact on the outcome.
- Section 5 will be the Discussion part which summarizes the outcome extracted from SPSS. Furthermore, a general response to the research question will be presented.
- Section 6 will include Limitations which include any type of possible difficulties and challenges encountered in conducting a research study. It will further indicate how the research could be improved and what are its practical implications.

Chapter 2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Online Purchase Intention during COVID-19

Purchase intention is a decision made by a consumer to buy a particular brand (Shah et al, 2012). It is defined by Morinez et al. (2007) as a “situation in which a consumer intends to buy a specific product in a certain circumstance. Ghosh (1990) points out that purchase intention is a significant factor in determining buying process and it can be affected by the price, perceived quality, and value. Researchers consider that there exist six essential stages before purchasing a specific product which are: awareness, knowledge, interest, preference, persuasion, and purchase (Kotler & Armstrong, 2003). It is a complex process. The recent advancement of World Wide Web has led to the establishment of a new kind of retail transaction-electronic retailing or web shopping. Thus, electronic commerce (EC) is a modern form of business that includes non-physical, online interactions, and the establishment of online business relationships through the exchange of knowledge and information. The emergence of electronic commerce has not only changed many aspects of people’s daily life but also caused researchers’ attention to study different facets associated with the usage of online shopping (Aityoussef, Jaafari, Belhcn, 2020). Compared to offline stores, online stores can meet consumers’ long-term expectations due to unlimited storage space. Additionally, with the development of ‘online overseas agencies’, nowadays consumers can

make purchases from some stores situated in foreign countries (Zhang, Leng, Liu, 2020). In this regard, it is important to highlight the effect of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) on consumers' online purchase intention.

Nguyen et al. (2020) studied consumers' purchase intention in the case of online book shopping during a pandemic and found out that the COVID-19 pandemic has a significant impact on consumer intention to buy books from online platforms. Furthermore, Eti, Horaira, and Bari (2020) empirically proved that social media marketing (Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube) became a dominant factor affecting consumers' online purchase intention during the Covid-19 outbreak in Bangladesh. Apart from the given studies, Sosanuy et al. (2021) considered various settings on social media affecting consumer purchase intention and measured the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and consumers' perceived value. According to the result findings, social media marketing has a positive influence on purchase intention during COVID-19, and the eWOM in these settings intensifies the strength of the relationship with these variables. On the contrary, the result of research conducted by Nguyen et al. (2021) demonstrates that product, security, time, and fraud risk associated with food products affected negatively online purchase intention during an outbreak in Vietnam. Finally, Xu et al. (2020) also undertook comprehensive research on the given topic. They indicated that customers' online purchase desire for care products in China has increased during COVID. Considering the results of previous studies on the given topic, I construct a general link between social media marketing and consumers' online purchase intention.

2.2. Social Media Marketing Activities

In the age of communication, the wider usage of the Internet and, especially, of social media where Internet users interact, and exchange opinions and experiences are the significant phenomenon of the last decade (Mari, 2016). As a consequence of digital transformations in recent years, websites explored more functionality which provided an opportunity for users to easily participate in conversations and share different contents, turning the entire web into a more social place. The main types of social media are weblogs, social networks, micro-blogs, and video and photo-sharing sites (Laksamana, 2018). Online connections have a significant role in shaping our collective social behavior not only as consumers and social beings but also as managers and

employees since the people, we contact have a real presence and this has a crucial impact in forming many aspects of behavior (Kozinets, 1998). For this reason, more and more global organizations use social networking services (SNS) in customer relationship management because of their tremendous impact (Okazaki et al, 2015). They start to emphasize the importance of social media not only for the promotion of sales but also for the development of brand loyalty. However, many companies to turn their clients into interconnected “brand communities” have failed to achieve this target in the SMM setting (Fournier & Lee, 2009). To build strong customer relationship management, the companies should first understand the individual and social needs of members and support them. SMM is a type of relationship marketing where individual firms shift their main objective from “trying to sell” to “building strong bonds” with customers by using the cultural context of society (Gordhamer, 2009). Building on this idea, establishing an effective relationship with the community in different SMM settings leads to repeated purchases and improved brand loyalty for global companies. The positive contributions of SMM to marketers have been indicated in the literature, for example, reduced cost (Weinberg, 2009), the speed of flow of information between customers (Zarella, 2010), and a desirable association between e-commerce tactics and a company’s creativeness (Aghaei & Sokhanvar, 2019).

Extensive social media research has been undertaken to analyze the behavior of social media users. As a result of the literature review and relevant studies, I have identified appropriate variables affecting SMM. Therefore, the given research extracts some relevant variables to the research setting and created a conceptual framework to test the hypothesized relationships.

Development of Hypotheses

2.3. Brand Trust

Nguyen (2003) defines brand trust as a “*feeling of security by a consumer in his/her relationship with the brand, which is based on the belief that the brand is reliable, secure, and responsive to the interests, needs, and welfare of the consumer*”. It is brand reliability, which means a consumer has confidence that the product will respond to the needs and expectations and the brand is capable to identify the needs of customers. Incorporating different perspectives (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), the maintenance of trust is a core strategy of the brand since it creates an effective and long-lasting relationship with the community. In the

given studies, buying behavior is not necessarily focused on the purchase alone, but it depicts the internal position and behavior toward the brand which in its turn guarantees valuable relationships. The importance of brand trust is further supported in the study by Urban, Sultan, and Qualls (2000), who consider that consumers make purchasing decisions based on trust.

Apart from theoretical definitions, several practical implications have been undertaken to analyze the type of relationship between these two variables. Korchia (2003) researched French women consumers to analyze the impact of their brand trust on purchasing intention by using an appropriate measurement scale. The result indicates a strong positive relationship between brand trust and consumer commitment to the purchase of products. Furthermore, Zboja and Voorhees (2006) examined the perception of brand trust and repurchase intention and depicted that customer trust and satisfaction with a retailer mediate the influence of brand trust and satisfaction on customer repurchase intention. Moreover, Cuong (2020) empirically tested the impact of brand trust on purchase intention for branded phones in Vietnam. As a consequence of this recent study, a positive correlation was detected between given variables. Similarly, Afsar (2014) investigated the influence of an increase in perceived quality and trust on brand preference and found out the improvement in these factors leads to a repeated selection of the same beauty brand as a customer preference. In social media, marketers develop an acquaintance, that could affect purchase intention. Hence, the hypothesis,

H1: During Covid, brand trust in social media had a positive and statistically significant influenced on customers' online clothing purchase intention.

2.4. Brand Community

A brand community is a specific, non-geographically bound community and it is based on social interaction among brand lovers. These social entities connect consumers to a brand and consumer to consumer (Muniz & O' Guinn, 2001). In recent years, the increased motivation for joining social media platforms and building online brand communities for both people and managers contributed to the intersection of these concepts. Thus, the junction of social media and brand community contributed to the concept of social media-based brand communities (Ulusu, Erdem, Durmuş, 2016; Laroche, Habibi, and Richard, 2013; Hasan and Sohail,2010). Nowadays, both international and local companies realize the importance of virtual communities for the

development of their brand; therefore, they started to use this tool as a successful brand marketing strategies to create close and friendly relationships with consumers (Palmer, Koenig, and Lewis, 2009). The creation of virtual brand communities on social media has a significant role in reaching information, exchanging different perspectives and experiences about the specific product or service, and making social interaction unrestricted by time or space (Palmer, Koenig, and Lewis, 2009; Hasan and Sohail, 2010). Even though some researchers consider that online presence on social media platforms leads to weaker connections because of the lack of proximity (Constant, Sproull, and Kiesler, 1996), recent research indicate that bringing people together from all parts of the world increases the level of social engagement in the society (Tardini & Cantoni, 2005). Several empirical research has been conducted to analyze the impact of social media-based communities on purchasing behavior.

According to the result of a study by McClure and Seock (2020), involvement with the brand's official page on social media platforms contributes to a positive attitude which in its turn affects future purchasing behavior. Going further, Erlangga et al. (2021), who analyzed the effect of digital marketing and social media on purchasing behavior of SME food products, found out that consumers collect information about food products by joining social media groups of the brand and make their buying decision based on it. The findings of this study are the same with Balakrishnan's et al. (2014) research, indicating that online brand communities have a significantly positive impact on brand loyalty and purchase intention. The positive correlation between social media-based brand communities and purchasing behavior was further supported in the given research studies (Yadav and Rahman, 2017; Sheth and Kim, 2017; Hutter et al, 2013). Hence, we posit,

H2: During a pandemic, social media-based brand communities had a positive and statistically significant impact on consumers' online clothing buying intention.

2.5. Brand awareness

Brand awareness refers to the degree of familiarity with the business and its products among customers and potential customers. International and local companies implement different strategies and tactics to increase the level of brand awareness of their business and differentiate it from existing competitors (Gustafson & Chabot, 2007; Bilgin, 2018; Hasan & Sohail, 2020).

According to Aaker definition (1991), brand awareness is “*the ability of a potential customer to recognize and recall that the brand from a member of a specific product category*”. Building on this idea, a high level of brand awareness decreases the time and risk that the customers are spending on the selection of products that they intend to buy. Brand awareness includes two essential components, brand recognition, and brand recall. While brand recall refers to a customer’s capability of recalling a brand name after seeing a certain product category, brand recognition is the capacity to recognize the brand when there exists a brand cue (Hasan & Sohail, 2020; Farjam & Hongyi, 2015; Aaker, 1996). According to the study by Hoeffler and Keller (2002), brand awareness has two key dimensions, and they are different from each other. The depth of brand awareness depicts how easily the customer recalls and recognizes a certain brand; brand breath indicates the situation in which the brand comes into the mind of the customer in consumption situations. When the brand has both dimensions, it will certainly influence customers’ purchasing decisions.

The prior research on the given topic also highlighted that brand awareness plays an important role in the purchasing decision of consumers (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000). The cruciality of brand awareness for purchase decisions is related to consumers’ usage of heuristics in the process of consumption since they tend to “purchase the brand they have heard of” or “choose the brand that they already know” (Keller, 1993). Furthermore, Hoyer and Brown (1990), empirically tested the effect of brand awareness on purchasing intention and concluded that brand awareness is a dominant choice among awareness group subjects. In addition to the studies, Perera and Dissanayake (2013) analyzed the impact of brand awareness, brand association, and brand quality on female consumers’ foreign makeup products. Furthermore, Chi, and Kuang (2019) practically tested the impact of brand awareness on the purchase intention of cellular phones and found a positive relationship between these variables. The findings support the evidence that brand awareness is the most influential variable among them, affecting purchasing behavior. For this reason, I create the link between brand awareness through social media and clothing purchasing intention.

H3: social media-based brand awareness had a positive and statistically significant influence on consumers’ online clothing purchase intention during Covid Crisis.

2.6. Interaction

As a result of the emergence of social media as a powerful marketing tool in recent years, the interaction between firms and customers intensified and new options and modifications created on traditional options (Gallaughner & Ransbotham, 2010). Under this circumstance, consumers communicate with each other more freely and businesses have less control over the information available about them; therefore, consumers' online brand-related activities (COBRA) have a considerably high impact on firms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Cova & Dalli, 2009; Muniz & Schau 2007). The concept of COBRA was categorized into three dimensions that include consuming, contributing, and creating. Social media interaction happens with users who have their brand or use such brands that are associated with a social media platform to exchange their feedback and thoughts about the brand or its products with the people who prefer the same brand or product (Muntiga, Moorman, and Smith, 2011). Apart from user-based interaction, the companies also interact with customers by offering different content. When people find the market content unrelated and meaningless, they stop following it which negatively affects the brand image and gives more power to consumers (Hutter & Hautz, 2009). On the other hand, successful creation and usage of the brand page, and treatment of users based on ethical standards increase purchase intention. It is also important to highlight that social media-based interaction makes an opportunity for marketers to become informed about the expectations and needs of customers; therefore, they generate user-inspired topics on these platforms (Daugherty, Eastin, and Bright, 2008). So, consumers become connected to the brand and the relationship between consumers and firms (both direct and indirect communication) is facilitated.

The study initiated by Jamali and Khan (2018), investigating the relationship between consumer interaction on social media platforms and purchase intention in the case of Samsung, indicates that there is an indirect relationship between these variables. Furthermore, Onofrei, Filieri, and Kennedy (2022) stated that social media interaction influences perceived source credibility, content quality, and consumption intentions. Thus, I hypothesize,

H4: Interaction in social media influenced positively affected consumers' clothing buying intention during the Covid crisis and it had a statistically significant effect on it.

2.7. Emotional Attachment

The emotional attachment theory suggests that the high degree of familiarity and fulfillment of customers' expectations and needs contribute to stronger bonds between firms and consumers. In a consumer-brand relationship, a more accustomed brand becomes their comfort zone and enhances the feeling of consistency and psychological comfort (Patwardhan, 2010). When emotional attachment is developed toward a specific brand, people can easily fulfill their emotional, symbolic, and experiential needs (Joo-Park, Kim, and Cardona Forney 2006). Therefore, nowadays, both international and local companies try to implement successful strategies to increase the level of attachment since it causes repeated purchases. Brand attachment is also defined as the strength of the emotional bond that connects the brand with the self (Park, Macinnis, Priester, 2006). The given studies prove that the concept of emotional attachment extends beyond the person-person relationship. Thus, consumers can build a strong attachment to gifts (Mick and DeMoss, 1990), celebrities (O'Guinn, 1991), and brands (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). Even though Fournier (1998) articulates many types of consumer-brand relationships, he considered the emotional attachment "core of all strong brand relationships". Since social media influences every sphere of people's lives, users start to build strong bonds with social media brands. In this process, marketers aid brands to perform based on online users' needs and expectations (Jenkins-Guarnieri, Wright, and Johnson 2013; Harrigan et al. 2017).

The researchers practically measured the impact of brand attachment on purchase intention. Krukowski et al (2021) asserted that brand attachment has a direct positive influence on purchase intention. They further point out that the brand is significant for consumers only if they feel emotionally connected to them. Furthermore, in the study conducted by Hwang and Kandampully (2012), emotional attachment has the highest influence on consumer-brand relationships among three emotional factors (self-concept connection, emotional attachment, and brand love). Apart from these studies, Kaufman et al (2016) identified the moderators of brand attachment for purchase intention of original vs counterfeits of luxury brands. According to the result, brand attachment has a positive influence on purchasing original products and it reduces the purchase of counterfeits. In addition to these studies, Tseng, Baker, O'Briend, and Pillay (2020) also decided to empirically test the effect of emotional attachment on purchase intention in the luxury streetwear industry. They found that emotional attachment has a positive impact on purchase intention and

personality factors play an essential role in determining the strength of the relationship between these variables. Thus, consumers' emotional attachment toward the brands on social media contributes to repurchase intentions. This leads to hypothesize,

H5: social media-based emotional attachment positively influenced consumers' online clothing purchase intention and it had a statistically significant effect on it.

2.8. Electronic word-of-mouth

The recent improvements in information technology and the emergence of online social network sites have transformed the way information is transmitted between individuals (Jalilvand, Esfahani, and Samiei, 2010). Researchers have indicated that personal communication and informal share of experience among acquaintances have a significant role in determining consumption choices, customer expectations, pre-usage, and even post-usage attitudes (Anderson & Salisbury, 2003). Traditionally, consumers exchanged their product-related opinions, thoughts, and experiences through conventional WOM; however, new modifications made personal communication possible via e-WOM activity. Hennig-Thurau et al (2007) define e-WOM as a positive or negative statement made by customers about a specific product & service or brand, that is available for people on the Internet. This form of communication occurs in different settings, such as on weblogs (e.g., xanga.com), discussion forums (e.g., zapak.com), review websites (e.g., Epinions.com), newsgroups, and social networking sites (Cheung & Thadani, 2010). Electronic word-of-mouth has several advantages over traditional word-of-mouth which mainly include its uniqueness, scalability, accessibility, and persistency. In fact, the majority of studies demonstrate that e-WOM is an effective tool for determining product success factors and is one of the most efficient in attracting new consumers and making them loyal. Consumers communicate with one another through online social media tools to reduce risk and become aware of the service provided by a specific firm (Iuliana-Raluca, 2010). In other words, people feel comfortable interacting with people closer to their age, sex, and social status.

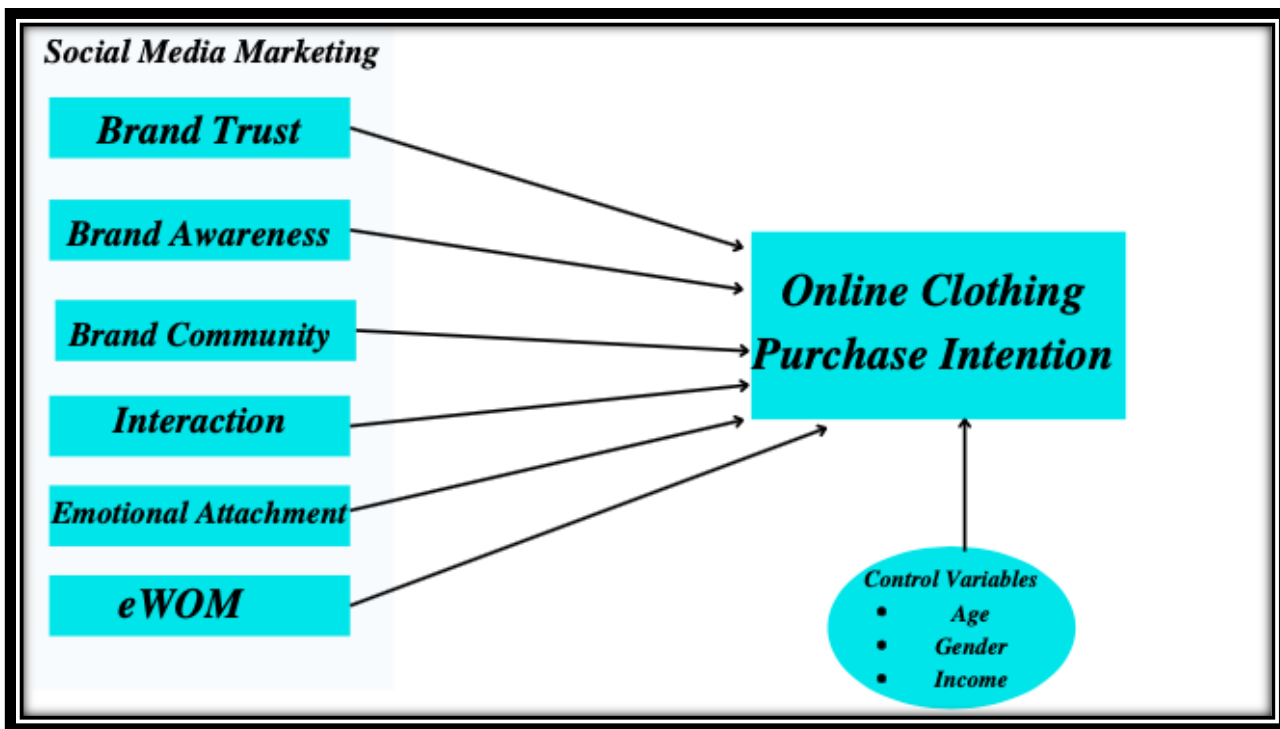
The researchers, Kazmi and Mehmood (2016), investigated the effect of brand image and e-WOM on purchase intention. They practically proved that technology is a key factor that can change consumers' perspectives at the point of purchase and online WOM communication can

contribute to purchase intention is more important for consumers. Moreover, Alfina et al (2014) found that the adoption of e-WOM increases brand trust, which results in continuous purchases. Similarly, Alrwashdeh, Emeagwali, and Aljuhmani (2014) also found a positive correlation between these variables. According to the answer of respondents, they look through online reviews and recommendations about the brand when they are uncertain about the brand. As a result, they feel comfortable and ensured to purchase the product or service of a specific brand. Finally, Still, Barner, and Kooyman (2015) also found that consumers' online review prior to purchase decision contributes to low-risk product decisions. Considering all of these findings, I construct the link between these variables and hypothesize,

H6: e-WOM had a positive and statistically significant impact on consumers' online clothing purchase intentions during a pandemic.

2.9. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Source, Aytaj Babayeva, 2022

As a result of the given hypothesis, the graph demonstrating SMM antecedents and their impact on online clothing purchase intention is drawn. It includes six components which are: (1) brand trust, (2) brand awareness, (3) brand community, (4) interaction, (5) electronic word-of-mouth, and (6) emotional attachment. In the given research mode, they are independent variables affecting online clothing purchase intention. Furthermore, this research will be studied under the consideration of control variables, such as age, gender, and income to acquire the most reasonable and accurate output. The graph is illustrated in Figure 1.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

In the given research study, the data was collected by using convenience sampling. It is a non-probability form of sampling in which representatives of the target group are identified. This method is preferred when the behavior and perspective of a certain group of people are expected to study rather than the entire population (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). This research is concentrated on data collection from consumers who made an online clothing purchase during the COVID outbreak. To ensure that the expected target group of people is filling out the questionnaire, it is deliberately asked from respondents to check whether they have ever purchased apparel online during a pandemic, and the questionnaire is automatically stopped on getting negative answers. In total, there are 239 respondents, and they are valid and reasonable. All the relevant questions that are expected to be answered by respondents are clear and understandable. Furthermore, some explanations and guidance are provided insight into the questionnaire to reduce any type of possible misunderstandings by the side of consumers. The participants are not limited by time; therefore, they can look through all questions carefully and respond accordingly when it is convenient for them. All the participants' contributions are highly appreciated, and they were thanked for

their valuable contributions. Although it was expected that the data would be collected and finalized within one month, it became ready after 2 months which is longer than the expected time.

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part consists of multiple questions which are constructed to collect information from respondents about their background, demographics, and online clothing consumption behavior and preferences. Moreover, considering the research study consists of six independent and one dependent variable, and it was intended to measure the impact of each of these variables separately, the second part itself is divided into seven main parts. The statements about each construct were depicted by using a 5-point Likert scale in which participants are expected to specify their level of agreement with the given statement based on five points: 1) Strongly disagree; 2) Disagree; 3) Neutral; 4) Agree; 5) Strongly agree. These statements are about participants' points of view about social media antecedents which are: brand trust, brand awareness, brand community, interaction, emotional attachment, and electronic word-of-mouth. The main reason behind the selection of the Likert scale is to operationalize respondents' perceptions about the topic of interest (Nemoto, Beglar, 2014).

Another important factor affecting the outcome of the questionnaire is language. Even though it was designed in English, then it was translated into Azerbaijani (native language) to increase the reachability of the questionnaire. After this step, piloting was done in both languages to ensure that questions have the same meaning in both languages. Piloting is an important step in the data collection process by which comments about constructs and the questionnaire itself are gathered and taken into consideration by a researcher. After the revision provided by 5 exclusively selected professionals who are familiar with given research constructs, it was decided to make some adjustments to eliminate any type of possible misperceptions since they can completely change outcomes. Apart from it, a pre-test was conducted with a small group of people to ensure the validity of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire has been distributed both online, on social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp), and offline, via hard copy version at different places. Regardless of the data collection method, all the participants had an opportunity to ask further questions and provide feedback about the study. The data was collected under the consideration of ethical principles, and all participants were treated with respect and kindness. Therefore, it is assumed that all the responses are valid, and objective and they will be a vital source in addressing the research question.

3.2. Respondents' Background

In the research study, the representation of frequency analysis helps to easily identify the demographic characteristics of participants by demonstrating tables. Thus, the below-given tables have been constructed to show background information about the research participants.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics: Gender

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Female	148	62.2	62.2	62.2
Male	90	37.8	37.8	100.0
Total	238	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey data (Aytaj Babayeva, 2022)

Table 1 shows a general description of the gender variable. According to the table, the number of female participants equals 148, which is observed at 62.2%. Coming to the male attendees, it is 90, which is 37.8% of all participants.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics: Age

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age:	238	18	59	22.8	6.339

Source: Survey data (Aytaj Babayeva, 2022)

To provide detailed information about nominal variables of the research study, which is age and income factor, descriptive statistics are conducted. The result of the analysis is summarized in above-given Table 2 (age) and Table 5 (income). Thus, the minimum age is 18 and the maximum is 59. The

mean is the average of all given values, and it is calculated by summing all given values divided by the total number of values given. In this scenario, the average age of all respondents is 22. Coming to the standard deviation, it measures the dispersion of values from the mean (Ayeni, 2014). It equals 6.3 for the

Table 3: Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	High School	41	17.2	17.2	17.2
	Undergraduate	151	63.4	63.4	80.7
	Graduate	38	16.0	16.0	96.6
	PhD	8	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	238	100.0	100.0	

age.

Source: Survey data (Aytaj Babayeva, 2022)

Coming to the educational background, Table 3 depicts that most participants (63.4%) are either getting their bachelor’s degree or have already completed it. On the other hand, high school (17.2%), graduate (16%), and Ph.D. (3.4) are observed at a less distribution.

Table 5: Income

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 0-500	103	43.3	43.3	43.3
501-1000	64	26.9	26.9	70.2
1001-1500	34	14.3	14.3	84.5
1501-2000	22	9.2	9.2	93.7
2001+	15	6.3	6.3	100.0
Total	238	100.0	100.0	

	Income
Valid N	238
Missing	0
Mean	2.00
Std. Deviation	1.22959

Table 5 provides us insight information about income level, and it has been measured in terms of AZN. The income level between 0-500 takes most of the respondents (43.3%). As it is visible from the table that as the income rises, the number of participants decreases. To be more precise, income level between 501-1000 is experienced at 26.9%, 1001-1500 at 14.3%, 1501-2000 at 9.2%, and finally, more than 2001 takes 6.3% of all participants. The mean income level is between 501-1000 and the Standard Deviation is equal to 1.229.

3.3. Data Measurement and Survey Instrument

Several literature reviews related to the given research topic were reviewed to construct an appropriate and reasonable measurement model for all variables. From the standpoint of any researcher, this stage carries more significance since he/she could not acquire effective results in the absence of valid measurement items. After analyzing multiple papers, a well-established scale was identified for measuring given research constructs. Besides, some modifications have been added. Thus, the measurement of e-

WOM has been adopted from (Alrwashdeh, Emeagwali, Aljuhmani, 2019); brand community (Priya, 2020; Srinivasan, Anderson, Pannavolu, 2002; Laroche, Habibi, 2013); brand trust (Priya, 2020; Ling, 2011); brand awareness (Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Shah, 2012); interaction (Park, 2017); emotional attachment (Ferrand, 2009); Followingly, a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was established to collect all responses. This stage is graphically represented in below-given Table 1.

Construct	Item	Measurement	Reference
Brand Trust	BrT1	The clothing brand that I purchase online is trustworthy and honest.	(Priya, 2020; Ling, 2011)
	BrT2	The clothing brand that I purchase online always keeps its promises and obligations.	
	BrT3	The website of the clothing brand that I purchase online offers secure personal privacy.	
	BrT4	I can always trust on clothing brand that I purchase online if I wish to get clothing of high quality.	
Brand Awareness	BrA1	I understand the meaning of a clothing brand that I purchase online.	(Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Shah, 2012)
	BrA2	I am always aware of the characteristics of a clothing brand that I purchase online.	
	BrA3	I can easily recall the symbol or logo of the clothing brand that I purchase online	
	BrA4	I can easily recognize the clothing brand that I purchase online in comparison with competing brands.	
	BrA5	I have no difficulty imagining the clothing brand that I purchase online in my mind.	
Brand Community	BrC1	I always benefit from members of the online clothing brand community.	(Priya, 2020; Srinivasan, Anderson, Pannavolu, 2002; Laroche, Habibi, 2013)
	BrC2	I share a common bond with the online clothing brand community.	
	BrC3	I visit the online clothing brand community continuously.	

	BrC4	I am strongly affiliated with other members of the online clothing brand community.	
Emotional Attachment	EMA1	I feel emotionally connected to the clothing brand that I purchase online.	
	EMA2	The clothing brand that I usually purchase online says something true and deep about who I am as a person.	
	EMA3	If the clothing brand that I usually purchase online was no longer available on social media, I would feel disappointed.	
	EMA4	I feel myself desiring the clothing brand that I purchase online.	
	EMA5	There is a certain pleasure when I get apparel from the clothing brand that I usually purchase online.	
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	eWOM1	To select the right clothing brand which offers online sales, I frequently consult online reviews of products provided by other people on social media.	(Alrwashdeh, Emeagwali, Aljuhmani, 2019)
	eWOM2	I always publish my experiences with the clothing brand that offers online sales on social networks at the request of other members.	
	eWOM3	When I spread information about a clothing brand that offers online sales, it influences other people's thoughts.	
	eWOM4	If I do not read consumers' online product reviews when I buy clothes, I worry about my decision.	
	eWOM5	I always try to share my experiences more effectively with clothing brands that I purchase online.	
	I1	When information sharing is possible on the social media of a clothing brand that I purchase online, I don't worry about my decision.	(Park, 2017)

Interaction	I2	When the discussion and exchange of opinions on the social media of a clothing brand that I purchase online, I feel confident in my decision.	
	I3	If the expression is easy on the social media of a clothing brand that I purchase online, I feel confident in my decision.	
Online Clothing Purchase Intention	OPI1	During a pandemic, I was very likely to purchase clothes online.	
	OPI2	I was very likely to return the clothing brand's website for online purchases during COVID-19.	
	OPI3	The usage of social networking sites of clothing brands more frequently during the pandemic increased my intention for online purchases.	

Control variables

Gender: This variable has been added as a control variable to the research study by assuming that females have been more influenced by social media marketing for their online clothing purchase intention during a pandemic. Women in our society tend to do more online clothing shopping than males; therefore, it is quite logical to add this element to further analysis.

Age: Another important strategy in this research is to control the influence of the age variable since the younger generation spends more time on social media and has a different perspective toward marketing tools in comparison to the older generation in our society. Furthermore, it is expected that the younger generation purchase apparels online more frequently than people of the older generation.

Income: Apart from age and gender, income is also controlled by expecting that people having high levels of salary can afford to do shopping more often than others. Therefore, it is decided that the most reasonable and logical output will be acquired if the impact of income is controlled.

3.4. Analysis

To investigate how research variables are correlated with one another under one factor, factor analysis (FA) has been conducted. Before implementation of this stage, it was ensured that all variables are measurable, and the sample size is appropriate for analysis. The research variables have been investigated under conformity factor analysis (CFA) since it is a more complex and practical set of techniques to simplify and improve scale questions. In other words, it is constructed with the purpose of testing hypotheses about the commonality between research variables (Hoyle, 2012). All process has been done via Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

To check the suitability of already gathered data for factor analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test has been applied. In other words, it has been tested the adequacy of the sample size. KMO values between 0 and 1 and the values between 0.8 to 1 demonstrate that the sampling is acceptable. Furthermore, if the values are between 0.7 to 0.79, it is considered middling and values between 0.6 to 0.69 are mediocre (Shrestha, 2021). However, values less than 0.5 (<0.5) mean that the given research data is not appropriate for factor analysis. Therefore, the KMO value should be at least 0.5 to be considered acceptable (Kaiser, 1974). Furthermore, it is important to highlight that according to Barlett's Test Sphericity, which checks the strength of the relationship, the significance should be less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). It means that the data do not produce an identity matrix and are multivariate normal; therefore, the data is relevant for further analysis (Hadi, Ilham, 2016). Apart from it, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Varimax with Kaiser Normalization rotation method has been used to categorize research variables under a few related factors and the Total Variance Explained box has been extracted from this analysis. Coming to Cronbach's alpha, a measurement of internal consistency, it should be at least 0.6 points which is regarded as a sufficient level (Nunnally, 1978). This analysis has been conducted for each component separately to check reliability. Followingly, all results from the analysis are depicted in the upcoming sections:

Table 7: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.942
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4917.661
	df	435
	Sig.	.000

Source: Survey data (Aytaj Babayeva, 2022)

As it is clearly illustrated in the above-illustrated table, based on the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy test, it is possible to say that the collected data is suitable for factor analysis since the KMO value equals 0.942. Under this circumstance, the sampling is highly acceptable. Apart from that, Bartlett's Test of a Sphericity test result, which is at 0.00 levels, demonstrates the relevancy of sampling. Therefore, the given research data is highly acceptable for factor analysis.

As it was intended during the questionnaire development stage, the conducted principal component analysis included seven components. (Appendix, Table 8). Furthermore, it has been statistically proved that the value of cumulative variance >60% is considered successful and in this research study, all the factors extracted explain 72% of the cumulative variance (Appendix, Table 9). Therefore, it can be concluded that the research has a satisfactory level of comprehensiveness.

Before coming to a detailed description of each component, it is important to highlight the fact that factor loading >0.4 means that scale questions are correlated with one another (Shrestha, 2021). From this perspective, in this research study, factor loadings for Brand Awareness (Component 1) are between 0.855-0.768; Brand Trust (Component 2) 0.876-0.829; Brand Community (Component 3) 0.906-0.8; Emotional Attachment (Component 4) 0.860-0.714; e-WOM (Component 5) 0.807-0.738; Interaction (Component 6) 0.912-0.850; Purchase Intention (Component 7) 0.814-0.718 (Appendix, Table 8). Apart from it, "Cronbach's Alpha" test has been applied to check the degree of reliability of each component. The result can be summarized as: Purchase Intention 0.787; Brand Trust 0.871; Brand Awareness 0.878; Brand

Community 0.882; Emotional Attachment 0.860; e-WOM 0.833; Interaction 0.853 (Appendix, Table 10). Based on the result, it can be stated that all the scale questions are internally consistent and reliable.

After the completion of these stages, each scale item has been combined under one variable name by finding their mean values. It has been via “Transform” → and “Compute Variable”. The main purpose of this step is to make our variable for regression analysis.

Chapter 4. Findings

4.1. Correlation Analysis

One of the main statistical tests used in this research study is the correlation test. Considering the main purpose of this analysis is to identify correlation, the magnitude of association, and the direction of the relationship, Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient has been adopted. Starting with the general definition, correlation is the measurement of association between two research variables. If the data is correlated, it is possible to estimate that the change in magnitude of one variable is related to the change in the magnitude of another variable, either in the same or in the opposite direction. (Schober, Boer, 2018). Coming to the interpretation of the result, the Pearson correlation coefficient takes values ranging from +1 to -1 and the value higher than 1 is regarded as a perfectly linear relationship. On the other hand, variables are perfectly linear related by a decreasing relationship if it equals -1. Furthermore, while it is considered that there exists a strong correlation if correlation coefficient r is greater than 0.8, a weak correlation is experienced in getting a value less than 0.5 (Bolboaca, Jantschi, 2006).

The result of the correlation test has been summarized in Table 10 (Appendix, Table 10). Based on the result, we can interpret that the strongest correlation level exists between brand trust and brand awareness, which equals 0.752. Thus, it can be regarded as a relatively high correlation level. Furthermore, the second-highest correlation value is 0.687 between purchase intention and brand trust; therefore, we can interpret that the strongest determination of online clothing purchase intention during the pandemic was brand trust. Accordingly, the same correlation level is experienced between interaction and e-WOM. However, it is important to note that all numbers are less than 1; therefore, a perfectly linear relationship does not occur in the research study. To provide more clarity to the correlation test, collinearity has been calculated:

In general, multicollinearity occurs when independent variables are highly correlated. In such situations, the variance inflation factor is demonstrated to select a subset of significant variables. Building on this idea, VIF measures the degree of multicollinearity (Tamura et al. 2019). According to the rule of thumb, if the VIF value exceeds 5 or 10, it is a sign of multicollinearity and it is more appropriate to exclude that variable to eliminate this problem (Montgomery, 2001). However, as it is visible from Table 11, our VIF value is less than 3; therefore, there does not exist a problem with multicollinearity in the proposed research model.

Table 11. Testing Multicollinearity

	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)		
Brand Community	.510	1.961
Brand Trust	.353	2.833
Interaction	.359	2.786
BrandAwareness	.391	2.556
Emotionalattachment	.465	2.151
e-WOM	.440	2.271

Source: Survey data (Aytaj Babayeva, 2022)

4.2. Regression Analysis

Multiple Regression Analysis has been conducted to measure the relationship between independent (brand trust, brand awareness, brand community, e-WOM, interaction, emotional attachment) and dependent variables (online clothing purchase intention). Typically, multiple regression analysis is preferred when the purpose of a researcher is to identify a criterion (dependent variable) with a predictor (independent variables) (Petrocelli, 2003). Apart from independent and dependent variables, the effect of control variables (age, gender, income) has also been tested. Taking the number of research variables into consideration, it was decided to use a hierarchical multiple regression model which allows to add of more variables to the model in separate steps which are called “blocks”. It is mainly done deliberately to statistically “control” certain variables to determine whether the inclusion of moderate or control variables changes the outcome (Kioko, 2021). Based on the result of regression analysis, interpretation will be

provided

Table 12: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.741 ^a	.549	.538	.70004
2	.742 ^b	.551	.533	.70352

Source: Survey data (Aytaj Babayeva, 2022)

The strength of the relationship between social media marketing components (independent variables) and online clothing purchase intention (dependent variable) has been illustrated in the above-given Table 12. R square is a statistical tool that determines the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variable, and it has been firstly calculated in the absence of control variables (Model 1) to identify differences more clearly and provide more detailed information about the proposed model. In Module 1, the value of R square is 55%. From the given result, we can see that the addition of control variables does not necessarily change research outcomes since it equals 55.1%. Therefore, we can easily interpret that the proposed research model explains a 55% variation in online clothing purchase intention. In other words, given social media marketing components determines 55% of online clothing purchase intention during a pandemic in Azerbaijan.

Table 13: Multiple Regression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Coefficients ^a		Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t		Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.375	.211		1.775	.077		
	Brand Community	.202	.058	.216	3.478	<.001	.510	1.961
	BrandTrust	.411	.081	.379	5.074	<.001	.353	2.833
	Interaction	-.012	.076	-.012	-.162	.871	.359	2.786
	Brand Awareness	.185	.071	.185	2.615	.010	.391	2.556
	Emotional Attachment	.048	.060	.052	.798	.426	.465	2.151
	E- WOM	.052	.059	.059	.880	.380	.440	2.271
2	(Constant)	.310	.250		1.239	.217		
	Brandcommunity	.195	.060	.209	3.263	.001	.485	2.061
	BrandTrust	.411	.083	.379	4.966	<.001	.342	2.925
	Interaction	-.008	.077	-.008	-.110	.912	.356	2.808
	Brand Awareness	.181	.071	.182	2.543	.012	.389	2.571
	Emotional Attachment	.054	.061	.059	.895	.372	.450	2.222
	E-WOM	.051	.060	.058	.863	.389	.439	2.276
	Gender:	.062	.098	.029	.631	.529	.937	1.067
	Age:	-.019	.037	-.024	-.505	.614	.908	1.101
Income:	.013	.039	.015	.318	.751	.898	1.114	

a. Dependent Variable: Online Clothing Purchase Intention

Source: Survey data (Aytaj Babayeva, 2022)

Apart from it, a developed hypothesis was analyzed based on a result of regression as well. From the Table 4, the β coefficients for the constant and six predictors of online clothing purchase intention were as follows: Constant $\beta= 0.310$, $t=1.239$, $p=0.217$: not significant; Brand community $\beta=0.209$, $t=3.263$, $p=0.001$ significant; Brand trust $\beta=0.379$, $t=5$, $p<0.01$ significant; Interaction $\beta=-0.08$, $t=-0.11$, $p=0.912$ not significant; Brand awareness $\beta=0.182$, $t=2.543$, $p=0.012$ significant; Emotional attachment $\beta=0.059$, $t=0.895$, $p=0.372$ not significant; E-WOM $\beta=0.058$, $t=0.863$, $p=0.389$ not significant; Gender $\beta = 0.029$; $t=0.631$, $p=0.529$ not significant; Age $\beta= -0.024$, $t=-0.505$, $p=0.614$ not significant; Income $\beta=0.015$, $t=0.318$, $p=0.751$ not significant. From the result, it is possible brand trust has a statistically significant impact on online clothing purchase intention since the p-value is less than 0.01. In other words, the first hypothesis has been confirmed. Furthermore, the given outcome helps us to note that the influence of brand community and brand awareness is also significant for the dependent variable; therefore, Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3 have been accepted as true as well. To be more precise, the strongest influence is observed in brand trust since its coefficient value is the highest among them. However, a

significance level of other independent variables (e-WOM, emotional attachment, and interaction) has exceeded the required p-value to consider their contribution to online clothing purchase intention as reasonable. From this perspective, Hypothesis 4-6 have been rejected and the assumption about the effect of control variables is also regarded as insignificant.

The Model

$$Y (\text{social media and online clothing purchase intention}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{brand community}) + \beta_2 (\text{brand trust}) + \beta_3 (\text{interaction}) + \beta_4 (\text{brand awareness}) + \beta_5 (\text{emotional attachment}) + \beta_6 (\text{E-WOM}).$$

Where $\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5, \beta_6$ is respectively 0.310, 0.209, 0.379, -0.08, 0.182, 0.059, 0.058.

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1. Discussion of Findings

The main objective of this research was to analyze different SMM branding items and determine their impact on online clothing purchase intention during the COVID-19 outbreak in Azerbaijan. Furthermore, the research study also examined the controlling effect of age, gender, and income variable on the relationship between SMM components and online clothing purchase intention to provide a more comprehensive outcome. As a result of the research, I have identified that brand trust, brand awareness, and brand community have a positive and statistically significant impact on buyers' intention to purchase apparels online; therefore, I can address the major research question by stating that SMM had a positive contribution to get apparels online during COVID-19. However, it has been statistically proved that adding control variables of a research study (age, gender, income) do not change the outcome. Although a positive correlation between these variables is expected, I intended to go further and extensively investigate the research topic by proposing an appropriate research model which became a fundamental source in conducting a comprehensive study. Despite the acquired research outcome is partially in line with other similar research studies since they have also concluded that SMM has a positive impact on purchase intention, my findings have differences. Firstly, coming to similar outcomes, it has been empirically proved that brand trust (Korchia, 2003; Zboja & Voorhees; Cuong 2020), brand community (McClure & Seock; Balakrishnan et al, 2014), brand awareness (Macdonald & Sharp, 2000; Hoyer & Brown, 1990)

have a significant role in determining purchase intention. Apart from it, some researchers have also practically analyzed and found that e-WOM (Kazmi & Mehmood, 2016; Alfina et al, 2014), emotional attachment (Krukowski et al, 2021; Hwang & Kandampully; 2012); interaction (Jamali &Khan, 2018; Filieri &Kennedy, 2022) are also main determinants of customers' purchase intention, my finding revealed different outcome. The possibility of distinct outcomes is considered normal and acceptable since research studies on the given topic have been conducted in different countries which have their own cultural, demographic, and psychographic factors; therefore, we cannot expect the same result. Besides, brands can improve their image and achieve brand loyalty by implementing social media-related strategies. Thus, the given research study offers those brands having a presence on different social media platforms could engage in marketing activities to improve trust levels as it is the most significant indicator of purchase intention. Followingly, they should concentrate on increasing reachability for customers by creating a high degree of brand awareness if they desire to promote sales. Finally, turning online users into a member of the brand community could be a primary target for companies since it leads to permanent purchases.

Theoretical and practical implications:

The research study has several theoretical and practical implications. Firstly, though previous research studies have also analyzed the concept of brand trust, brand awareness, brand community, emotional attachment, e-WOM, and interaction as a separate topic, they have not combined these elements in one study to analyze their effect on purchase intention. However, in this study, these items have been firstly theoretically discussed and then empirically tested to measure their impact on online purchase intention. This is a contribution of this research study to already existing findings.

The second innovative approach applied in this study is related to the analysis of the dependent variable (purchase intention). As a result of a long-lasting revision of various literature reviews about consumers' purchase intention, it has been concluded that neither of the prior studies has narrowed this concept by demonstrating which type of purchase intention and within what time. However, the primary target of this inquiry is to determine whether online clothing purchase intention has been positively or negatively impacted by SMM activities on it during COVID in Azerbaijan. In addition to it, the branding process in virtual communities has been comprehensively explained in this investigation. Thus, it has not only been argued that SMM has a positive impact on purchase intention, but also the occurrence of these positive correlations has been demonstrated by the assistance of the proposed research model. Based on the result

derived from this study, brand managers could acquire more comprehensive information about the importance of social media for their development and could decide to develop their initial marketing performance. From a practical standpoint, it is strongly believed that most managers especially in Azerbaijan, use social media with one purpose which is the promotion of sales and allocation of higher profits; therefore, they frequently create content in this direction. However, the availability of such useful studies will help to realize that they could be interested in customers' preferences, and desires by establishing user-based content.

Furthermore, the research indicated and practically proved that brand trust, brand awareness, and brand community had a positive and statistically significant impact on online clothing purchase intention. Followingly, based on the multiple regression model, it has been further noted that these factors explain 54% variations in online clothing purchase intention. Therefore, this research can be replicated and other independent variables affecting purchase intention could be determined. Apart from it, it has been concluded that the strongest influence is experienced in brand trust. So, it could be a crucial sign for brand managers of the clothing industry to understand the importance of this component for increasing customers' purchase intention. From this perspective, they could review already established marketing strategies related to brand trust or provide improvement if they found them weak and unrelated. Finally, it is assumed that the theoretical and practical knowledge provided insight the study could assist newly operating clothing brands in Azerbaijan about how to arrange their practices without wasting their resources on less significant factors.

Taking all the given points into consideration, it can be noted that this research study is valuable from both theoretical and managerial perspectives.

5.3. Limitations and Future Research

The study confronted some challenges. Firstly, it was intended to measure the impact of SMM on online clothing purchase intention in Azerbaijan, but the data could be collected from Baku. Even though Baku is the main city, it could be more appropriate to gather information from different regions, and villages as well. Thus, it is suggested to conduct future studies cross-cultural in nature to provide

extensiveness of research by analyzing the impact of SMM within different parts of Azerbaijan or even globally.

The second major challenge was also related to the data collection process since some people did not want to participate in the questionnaire by stating that they do not have enough time for it which in its turn narrowed the sample size. Besides, considering ethical standards were followed by a researcher, it was difficult to approach people and ask questions by thinking that they could be busy with their work, and it could disturb them. Therefore, it is strongly believed that if research is conducted in a different country where people are more social and comfortable, the sample size could be larger. Apart from it, it is essential to note that research focus is given to collect data from people who made an online clothing purchase during a pandemic, and the convenience sampling method was applied. Therefore, obtaining an ideal sample size was a research limitation.

Thirdly, this research study analyzed the influence of SMM on online clothing purchase intention based on five components which explained 54% variation; however, it is strongly believed that there are also many determinants of online purchase intention, and the research can be replicated to determine these variables and identify their impact as well. In other words, since purchase intention is a multidimensional and widespread concept, other dimensions should also be carefully examined.

Finally, because of limited time, the research did not have an opportunity to analyze the moderating effect of local and international clothing brands in this relationship. Building on this idea, it is suggested to identify more social media components of online clothing purchase intention and examine the strength of relationships along with moderating impact of local/ global clothing brands to offer a more detailed outcome.

5.4. Ethical Considerations

The following ethical standards have been taken into consideration in this study.

- Starting from the attitude with participants, they were treated with respect and honesty. It was frequently noted that they are an integral part of research study, and they were always thanked for their contribution. Followingly, though in some situations, they did not want to participate in the survey, it was well- understood by the researcher. Furthermore, although all the explanations and

guidance have been illustrated within the questionnaire itself, further questions were responded ethically.

- Apart from it, the anonymity of respondents was provided. The questions regarding personal privacy were not included in the survey thinking that it could cause dissatisfaction from their side. Therefore, it is expected that all the given responses are objective and valid. Besides, they did not experience any time limit and could finish the questionnaire when it is appropriate for them.
- Finally, all the citations and references have been illustrated.

Conclusion

To conclude, in the research six social media components were tested to examine their impact on online clothing purchase intention during the COVID outbreak in Azerbaijan. The result of this research study reveals that different social media components especially brand trust, brand awareness, and community had a positive and statistically significant impact on consumers' intention to get apparel during the COVID-19 outbreak in Azerbaijan. Thus, the findings will provide a significant contribution to the existing literature reviews by combining these elements in one study. Coming to the effect of other social media-based antecedents, it has been practically found emotional attachment, E-WOM, and interaction have less impact on changing consumer's opinion to get apparels online. Hence, to sum up, the given research study carries more significance for both mature and start-up companies in Azerbaijan since they can examine their weaknesses and improve their marketing strategies and tactics based on the result of the proposed research model if they desire to gain popularity and profits.

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Appendix

Table 7: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.942
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4917.661
	df	435
	Sig.	.000

Source: Survey data (Aytaj Babayeva, 2022)

Table 8: Rotated Component Matrix

	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can easily recall the symbol or logo of the clothing brand that I purchase online	.855						
I am always aware of the characteristics of a clothing brand that I purchase online	.836						
I can easily recognize the clothing brand that I purchase online in comparison with other competing brands	.826						
I have no difficulty in imagining the clothing brand that I purchase online in my mind	.816						
I understand the meaning of a clothing brand that I purchase online	.768						

The clothing brand that I purchase online is trustworthy and honest	.876					
The clothing brand that I purchase online always keeps its promises and obligations	.862					
The website of a clothing brand that I buy online offers secure personal privacy	.832					
I can always trust on clothing brand that I purchase online if I wish to get clothing of high quality	.829					
I am strongly affiliated with other members of the online clothing brand community	.906					
I share a common bond with the online clothing brand community	.891					
I visit the online clothing brand community continuously	.836					
I always benefit from members of the online clothing brand community	.800					
I feel myself desiring the clothing brand that I often purchase online	.860					
If the clothing brand that I purchase online was no longer available on social media, I would feel anxiety	.810					
The clothing brand that I usually purchase online says something true and deep about who I am as a person	.810					
I feel emotionally connected to the clothing brand that I purchase online	.808					
There is a certain pleasure when I get apparels from a clothing brand that I usually purchase online	.714					
When I spread information about an online clothing brand, it influences other people's thoughts	.807					

I always try to share my experiences more effectively with a clothing brand that I purchase online					.796	
If I don't read consumers' online product reviews when I buy clothes, I worry about my decision					.792	
To select the right online clothing brand, I frequently consult online reviews of products and brands provided by other people on social media					.742	
I always publish my experiences with online clothing brand on social networks at the request of other members."					.738	
When information sharing is possible on the social media of a clothing brand that I purchase online, I don't worry about my decision					.912	
When the discussion and exchange of opinions is possible on the social media of a clothing brand that I purchase online, I feel confident in my decision					.878	
When information sharing is possible on the social media of a clothing brand that I purchase online, I don't worry about my decision					.850	
During a pandemic, I was very likely to purchase clothes online						.814
I was very likely to repurchase clothes online during COVID-19						.810
The usage of social networking sites of clothing brands more frequently during the pandemic increased my intention for online purchase						.790
I was very likely to return the clothing brand's website for online purchase during COVID-19						.718

Source: Survey data (Aytaj Babayeva, 2022)

Table 9: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	13.558	45.192	45.192	13.558	45.192	45.192	4.750	15.834	15.834
2	2.790	9.302	54.494	2.790	9.302	54.494	4.640	15.468	31.301
3	1.643	5.477	59.971	1.643	5.477	59.971	3.914	13.045	44.347
4	1.059	3.531	63.502	1.059	3.531	63.502	2.331	7.770	52.117
5	.941	3.136	66.639	.941	3.136	66.639	2.299	7.664	59.780
6	.856	2.852	69.490	.856	2.852	69.490	1.854	6.179	65.960
7	.771	2.569	72.059	.771	2.569	72.059	1.830	6.099	72.059

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: Survey data (Aytaj Babayeva, 2022)

Table 10: Cronbach's Alpha

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
Purchase Intention	.787	4
Brand Trust	.871	4
Brand Awareness	.878	5
Brand Community	.882	4
Emotional Attachment	.860	5
e-WOM	.833	5
Interaction	.853	3

Source: Survey data (Aytaj Babayeva, 2022)

Table 11: Correlations

		Brand Community	Brand Trust	Interaction	Purchase Intention	Brand Awareness	Emotional Attachment	E-WOM
Brand Community	Pearson Correlation	1	.544**	.553**	.564**	.472**	.599**	.604**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	238	236	238	238	238	238	238
Brand Trust	Pearson Correlation	.544**	1	.661**	.687**	.752**	.553**	.515**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	236	236	236	236	236	236	236
Interaction	Pearson Correlation	.553**	.661**	1	.545**	.619**	.652**	.687**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	238	236	238	238	238	238	238
Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	.564**	.687**	.545**	1	.625**	.517**	.504**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	238	236	238	238	238	238	238
Brand Awareness	Pearson Correlation	.472**	.752**	.619**	.625**	1	.559**	.523**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	238	236	238	238	238	238	238
Emotional Attachment	Pearson Correlation	.599**	.553**	.652**	.517**	.559**	1	.585**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	238	236	238	238	238	238	238
E- WOM	Pearson Correlation	.604**	.515**	.687**	.504**	.523**	.585**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	238	236	238	238	238	238	238

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey data (Aytaj Babayeva, 2022)

Table 12: Model Summary^c

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.741 ^a	.549	.538	.70004	
2	.742 ^b	.551	.533	.70352	1.932

a. Predictors: (Constant), E-WOM, Brand Trust, Emotional Attachment, Brand Community, Brand Awareness, Interaction

b. Predictors: (Constant), E-WOM, Brand Trust, Emotional Attachment, Brand Community, Brand Awareness, Interaction, Gender: Age: Income:

c. Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention

Table 13: Multiple Regression

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Coefficients ^a		Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t		Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.375	.211		1.775	.077		
	Brand Community	.202	.058	.216	3.478	<.001	.510	1.961
	BrandTrust	.411	.081	.379	5.074	<.001	.353	2.833
	Interaction	-.012	.076	-.012	-.162	.871	.359	2.786
	Brand Awareness	.185	.071	.185	2.615	.010	.391	2.556
	Emotional Attachment	.048	.060	.052	.798	.426	.465	2.151
	E- WOM	.052	.059	.059	.880	.380	.440	2.271
2	(Constant)	.310	.250		1.239	.217		
	Brandcommunity	.195	.060	.209	3.263	.001	.485	2.061
	BrandTrust	.411	.083	.379	4.966	<.001	.342	2.925
	Interaction	-.008	.077	-.008	-.110	.912	.356	2.808
	Brand Awareness	.181	.071	.182	2.543	.012	.389	2.571
	Emotional Attachment	.054	.061	.059	.895	.372	.450	2.222
	E-WOM	.051	.060	.058	.863	.389	.439	2.276
	Gender:	.062	.098	.029	.631	.529	.937	1.067
	Age:	-.019	.037	-.024	-.505	.614	.908	1.101
	Income:	.013	.039	.015	.318	.751	.898	1.114

a. Dependent Variable: Online Clothing Purchase Intention

Source: Survey data (Aytaj Babayeva, 2022)