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## **Conflict of Interest**

The author (s) declared no conflict of interest and have not received any funds for the project.

# Gender Differences in Response to Digital Marketing: Analyzing Purchase Intentions and Behaviors

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## Abstract

Social media in the prevailing era has changed the attitudes and lifestyles of all individuals, especially university students. Given its importance, this study examines the impact of discount pricing, bundle pricing, and purchase intention on consumer buying behavior. It also examines the impact of social media influencers and awareness on purchase intention and the moderating effect of gender on purchase intention. The study extended the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Comparison Theory to develop a model. We empirically tested the model based on 385 responses collected from the target population. The study found that discount pricing, bundle pricing, and purchase intention promote consumer-buying behavior. It also documented that social media influencers and awareness positively affect purchase intention. We also found gender moderates (i) social media influencer and purchase intention and (ii) awareness and purchase intention. The study's contribution to the body of knowledge is that it has extended the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Comparison Theory to develop a new model. Since the "results support all the articulated hypotheses, the study has increased the generalizability of these theories." The study recommends that firms spend resources and recruit social media influencers to promote their goods. It

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also proposes that firms must select credible and trustworthy social media influencers. Female perceptions and attitudes toward social media influencers differ from males. Therefore, we recommend that firms select social media influencers based on the product categories.

**Keywords:** *Consumer buying behavior, purchase intention, bundling pricing, discount, gender, Theory of Planned Behavior, and Theory of Social Comparison.*

## **Introduction**

The use of the Internet has grown significantly compared to the past years, and now billions of people have access to it via mobile phones and other related devices (Jacobs, 2023). With the growth of social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, individuals' social connections have also increased profoundly (Bintaro et al., 2022). Social media has become a platform for information (Sinha & Fung, 2021). In this digital era, the role of social media influencers in shaping consumer-buying behavior has become increasingly significant. With their massive following, these influencers have become a powerful marketing tool for many firms, enhancing their brand image and promoting their products (Nugroho et al., 2022). Researchers have segmented social media influencers into three categories based on the number of followers (Nugroho et al., 2022). The first category is Nano influencers, with followers of 1K to 10K. The second category is Micro-influencers, with followers of 10K to 100K followers. The third and last category is Macro influencers, with 100K to one million followers. Karell, Linke, Holland, and Hendrickson (2023) assert that social media influencers create and share content of goods and services. Consequently, it promotes the "purchase intention of the goods and services" for the followers. Furthermore, researchers believe that social media followers correlates with influencers' credibility and trust (Pittman & Abell, 2021).

Apart from other pricing strategies, many firms use discount pricing, which, according to many researchers, is very effective in stimulating buying behavior (Tan, 2023). Tumundo, Kindangen, and Tumewu (2022) assert that companies extensively attract customers when offering discounts in sales or promotions. Discounts excite consumers, prompting them to consider buying the product or services at lower prices instead of the original prices. Consumers believe buying goods and services at discounts results in savings (Rahmadina et al., 2023). Discount pricing helps firms deplete excess inventory and increase sales (Tan, 2023). Bundle pricing is similar to discount pricing for increasing sales and depleting excess inventory. Bundle pricing is adding multiple products or services in a bundle or package and selling them at a reduced price (Kim et al., 2023). Consumers often feel bundle pricing is a good option to buy goods and services, as they perceive they are getting more for lower prices (Raditya et al., 2022). Moreover, it

relates to consumer purchases (Mehraj & Qureshi, 2022). Past studies also document that social media influencers and brand awareness affect purchase intention. Social media influencers are reputable and experts in their domains. They regularly share expert opinions about goods and services on social media (Kurdi et al., 2022). As a result, it increases the purchase intention of social media followers. Similarly, brand awareness is vital to enhance the purchase intention of goods and services (Machi et al., 2022). A high brand awareness will stimulate positive buying behavior. At the same time, low or poor brand awareness may not promote sales (Fathima et al., 2023). Many factors affect purchase intention, including social media influencers, brand reputation, and sales and promotions (Asif et al., 2023).

With its unique focus, this study delves into the unexplored territory of the impact of discount pricing, bundle pricing, and purchase intention on consumer buying behavior. It also investigates the influence of social media influencers and awareness on purchase intention and the potential moderating effect of gender on purchase intention.

## **Literature Review**

### **Purchase Intention**

Purchase intention means buying goods in the future. Many factors affect purchase intention, including consumer attitudes toward a product or service, peers' and friends' influence, and cultural norms (Asif et al., 2023). Researchers believe purchase intention is a significant precursor of actual buying behavior. Purchase intention, in most cases, varies from one product category to another or from one culture to another culture (Le & Nguyen, 2022). The Theory of Planned Behavior postulates that precursors of purchase intention are attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control (Canova et al., 2023). The theory also asserts that purchase intention positively affects consumers' buying behaviors (Hagger et al., 2022). Consumers with a high purchase intention toward a product or service are likelier to purchase that product or service (Hagger et al., 2022). Given its importance, marketers focus on increasing consumers' purchase intention of their goods and services (Aji et al., 2020). Moreover, researchers believe that consumers' high purchase intention will only translate into actual purchases subject to the availability of goods, services, and resources (Khan et al., 2023).

### **Consumer Buying Behavior**

Consumer buying behavior relates to consumers' actual purchases. If consumers have a pleasant experience when consuming goods and services, they will develop a positive attitude towards them, leading to repurchasing the same goods and services (Mehraj & Qureshi, 2022). Thus, successful firms deliver what they promised and often

deliver more (Freeman et al., 2023). The Theory of Planned Behavior postulates that the precursors of buying behaviors are attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control (Jose & Sia, 2022). These factors directly and through purchase intention affect buying behavior (Centeno, 2023). There are millions of buyers globally, but not all of them buy the same products or services since they all have different needs. Researchers have different perspectives on consumer buying behavior and have segmented it into four categories: Variety-seeking, complex buying, habitual buying, and dissonance-reducing (Xu et al., 2020). Many models have focused on understanding consumers' buying behavior, including buyers' black box, which assumes researchers know little about what goes into consumers' minds when buying goods and services (Khegay, Aubakirov, 2021).

### **Discount Pricing**

Discounting pricing is an important promotional strategy for attracting customers. In this strategy, firms reduce a good or service's original price to improve sales (Nugroho et al., 2023). As a result, it increases traffic, depletes inventory, and enhances sales (Ittaquallah et al., 2020). Wang, Liu, and Yang (2023) assert that people are attracted to discount pricing as they feel they are saving money. Also, in discount pricing, consumers show a sense of urgency as they feel that the stock of discounted goods will be depleted soon (Prabowo et al., 2021).

### **Social Media Influencer**

In the last few decades, social media usage has increased significantly (Ao et al., 2023). According to an estimate, social media users in 2023 were 4.89 billion, and researchers believe it will grow by 6.5% in the next few years (Weismueller et al., 2020). Social media influencers are reputable and experts in their domains. They regularly share their expert opinions about goods and services on social media. Consequently, they attract and engage many social media followers (Kurdi et al., 2022).

### **Awareness**

Firms must create brand awareness to develop sustainable consumer relationships in this competitive world. Brand awareness is an essential precursor to a consumer's purchase intention. Given its importance, brands allocate and invest significant resources to create brand awareness (Mukherjee, Das & Chakraborty, 2023). Firms use different strategies to create brand awareness, including mass marketing, target marketing, sponsoring events, and product placement.

### **Bundle Pricing**

Bundle pricing is adding multiple products or services in a bundle or package and selling them at a reduced price (Kim et al., 2023). Consumers often feel bundle pricing

is a good option to buy goods and services as they perceive they are getting more for lower prices (Raditya et al., 2022). Song, Noone, and Mattila (2023) assert that in bundle pricing, consumers buy additional products they may not in normal circumstances. Bundle pricing is beneficial for consumers and firms. Consumers often buy products that they need but never think about it. On the other hand, firms deplete the inventory of unsold products (Kim et al., 2023).

## **Theoretical Grounding**

### **Social Comparison Theory (SCT)**

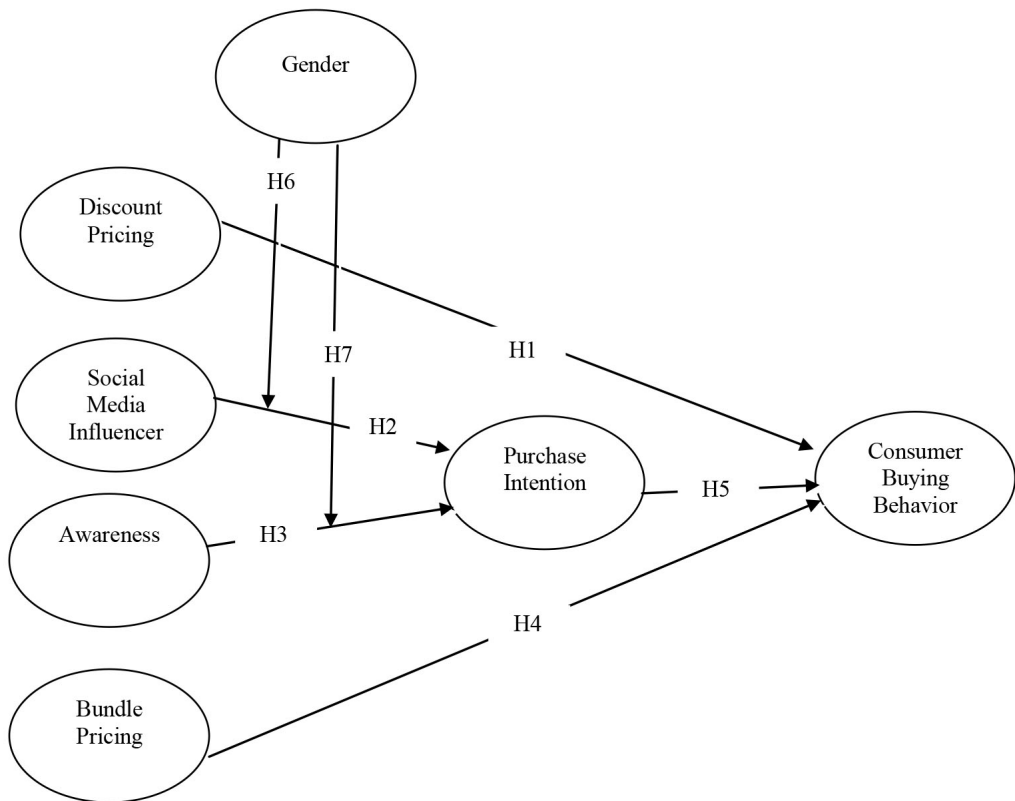
Festini (1954) introduced the Social Comparison Theory. The theory postulates that individuals compare themselves with others. If they find others more attractive than themselves, they develop complex and start following them (Wang et al., 2023). At the same time, when individuals find others less attractive, it increases their self-esteem, and they do not follow those (Tariq et al., 2021). The theory asserts that individuals, while comparing the physical attractiveness of others, also look into their personality traits, including integrity and dignity. The theory also asserts that individuals compare and follow those with similar characteristics and traits (Maier et al., 2022). Many researchers have used Social Comparison Theory in different domains, including body image (Shen et al., 2022), brand endorsers (Dinh & Lee, 2022), and social media followers (Scully et al., 2023).

### **Theory of Planned Behavior**

The Theory of Planned Behavior extends the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen, 1991). It has certain limitations, including time and resources. Therefore, the Theory of Reasoned Action authors added another variable, perceived behavior control, and renamed it the Theory of Planned Behavior (Wongsaichia, 2022). The Theory of Planned Behavior has five components: Actual behavior, intention, attitudes, subject norms, and perceived behavior control (Asif et al., 2023). Purchase intention is the consumers' intention to buy a product (Kumar et al., 2022). Attitudes are an enduring perception of consumers for a product, service, or person (Ahmed et al., 2021). Subjective norms are the influence of peers, friends, and culture (Khan et al., 2023). Perceived behavior control is a control mechanism of individuals that helps them decide whether to adopt a behavior (Asif et al., 2023). Precursors of behavior and purchase intentions are attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Based on the theoretical discussions, the study has proposed seven hypotheses: "five direct, and two moderating hypotheses." Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

## Hypothesis Development

### Discount Pricing and Consumer Buying Behavior

Pricing is consumers' cost or value for any product or service (Nugroho et al., 2023). The right price set for any product can greatly affect a company's success, generating revenue and building its name in the market (Ittaqullah et al., 2020). Thus, pricing strategies are highly valued, and firms must base them on their short and long-term goals (Wang et al. (2023). Companies mainly launch products according to consumer behavior and their prevailing and future needs. Marketing strategies depend on the 4Ps of marketing. Of the four marketing mix components, pricing is an important determinant (Prabowo et al., 2021). Apart from other pricing strategies, many firms use discount pricing, which, according to many researchers, is very effective in stimulating buying behavior (Tan, 2023). Tumundo et al. (2022) assert that companies extensively attract customers when offering discounts. Discounts excite consumers, prompting them to consider buying the product or services at lower prices instead of the original



prices. Consumers believe buying goods and services at discounts results in savings (Rahmadina et al., 2023). Discounts enhance the perceived value of products. Some companies often have time-limited discounts, which creates urgency in customers to buy the product quickly before it gets sold out (Sari et al., 2022). Discount pricing mainly attracts price-sensitive customers who always look for sale promotions (Risal et al., 2023). These types of consumer responses are always positive toward discount pricing. Most importantly, offering discount pricing creates a sense of loyalty and attachment to existing and new customers.

*H1. Discount pricing positively affects consumer-buying behavior.*

### **Social Media Influencer and Purchase Intention**

Gani et al. (2023) document that “social media influencers create trends and promote goods and services.” The followers perceive social media influencers as unbiased and domain experts.” Therefore, followers seek the advice of the influencers before purchasing goods and services (Jones & Muthaiyah, 2023). Researchers have divided social media influencer into different types based on the content, level of influence, and number of followers (Pop et al., 2022). Firms, while selecting social media influencers, also focus on these types. Social media influencers share content on Facebook and Instagram that generates interaction with followers (Khan et al., 2023). Besides social networking, social media influencers promote positive purchase intention in consumers (Yones & Muthaiyah, 2023). Social media influencers collaborate with firms and share content about the firms and their products. As a result, social media users develop positive attitudes toward the products and services recommended by social media influencers (Erlangga, 2021). Given its importance, firms recruit celebrities as influencers to promote their products (Dinh & Lee, 2022). Many past studies document that social interaction generated by social media influencers positively affects consumers’ attitudes and behaviors toward goods and services (Shoenberger & Kim, 2023). Social media influencers’ credibility, expertise, and trustworthiness are important to motivate consumers to listen to their advice about goods and services (Sharma et al., 2022).

*H2. The social media influencer positively affects purchase intention.*

### **Awareness and Purchase Intention**

There are hundreds of brands in the market. Therefore, firms must increase brand awareness to attract customers (Machi et al., 2022). A high brand awareness stimulates positive buying behavior. At the same time, low or poor brand awareness may not promote sales (Fathima et al., 2023). Öztürk (2022) asserts that high brand awareness is positively associated with trust and credibility, promoting brand loyalty and purchase intention. Similarly, Mukherjee et al. (2023) assert that consumers’ positive brand



perception enhances customer loyalty. Consumers prefer to buy well-known brands, believing such brands have a lower risk than unknown brands. At the same time, brands with strong awareness evoke and raise emotions and build strong relationships with consumers (Akbar et al., 2023). Emotionally attached consumers generate positive word of mouth and often become brand advocates (Öztürk, 2022).

*H3. Awareness positively affects purchase intention.*

### **Bundle Pricing and Consumer Buying Behavior**

Bundle pricing is adding multiple products or services in a bundle or package and selling them at a reduced price (Kim et al., 2023). Consumers often feel bundle pricing is a good option to buy goods and services as they perceive they are getting more for lower prices (Raditya et al., 2022). Song, Noone, and Mattila (2023) assert that in bundle pricing, consumers buy additional products they may not in normal circumstances. As a result, firms sell more, which improves their revenues (Liu et al., 2022). Bundle pricing allows firms to sell premium products in packages (Abbas et al., 2022). Tosun and Tosun (2023) believe pricing allows firms to differentiate their value proposition from the competitors, giving them a competitive edge (Tosun& Tosun, 2023). Bundle pricing also allows consumers to buy products they may otherwise forget to buy (Raditya et al., 2022).

*H4: Bundle pricing has a significant impact on consumer buying behavior.*

### **Purchase Intention and Consumer Buying Behavior**

Purchase intention is an important precursor of consumer buying behavior (Abdelkhair et al., 2023). Firms often use it to measure consumer responses to newly launched products and services in selected segments. The test results may help firms decide whether the launched product and services need further development before launching them on a full scale in target segments (Azizah et al., 2022). Song, Noone, and Mattila (2023) believe purchase intention directly affects consumer-buying behavior. Therefore, understanding its antecedents is vital for enhancing consumer-buying behavior (Azizah et al., 2022; Um, Chung, & Steinmetz, 2023). Many past studies also “found a significant association between purchase intentions and consumer buying behavior” in many domains, including luxury brands (Golalizadeh et al., 2023), counterfeit luxury products (Shan et al. et al., 2022), green marketing (Alhamad et al., 2023), online purchases (Amaral, & Djuang, 2023; Tanveer et al., 2022).

*H5: Purchase intention positively affects consumer-buying behavior.*

## **Moderating Role of Gender**

Researchers, including Kang and Kim (2023), assert that gender has a varying impact on the association between social media influencers and purchase intention. For example, a study found that “gender moderates awareness and purchase intention” (Yap & Ismail, 2022). The Theory of Social Roles postulates that females’ perception of social media influencers differs entirely from that of males (Forgas-Coll et al., 2022; Zahra et al., 2022). Moreover, content shared by an influencer would be perceived differently by genders (Rifon et al., 2023). Similarly, extant literature also documents that male and female social influencers could have different followings (Costello et al., 2023). Thus, we argue that gender has a varying impact on purchase intention.

*H6. Gender moderates social media influencer and purchase intention.*

*H7. Gender moderates awareness and purchase intention.*

## **Methodology**

### **Sampling and Sample Size**

The study targeted students from the leading universities in Karachi due to their prior experience in online shopping. Six “enumerators visited the target universities,” distributed 415 questionnaires, and received 385 questionnaires. Prior studies have collected respondents’ opinions without the stimulus (Othman et al., 2023). In line with past research, we did not use any stimuli for collecting the responses.

### **Common Method Bias**

Common method bias can adversely affect the results of survey-based studies. Researchers have suggested techniques to “reduce the adverse effect of common method bias” (Ding et al., 2023). Following Ding, Chen, and Jane’s (2023) advice, we developed the conceptual framework based on established theories and literature. Also, the study “adopted the questionnaire” from past studies whose context was similar to ours. In addition, we assessed the reliability and validity of the scales in two stages. We ascertained reliability and validity based on a small sample at the pretest stage. In the second stage, we examined the reliability and validity of the constructs after administering the questionnaire to the target population.

### **Pretest**

Large-scale surveys are expensive and time-consuming. Many researchers, including Roth (2022), suggest undertaking a pretest “before administering the questionnaire to

the target population.” Following the advice of the researcher mentioned above, we also conducted a pretest. In the pretest, we recruited 50 university students for the pilot test. After explaining the study’s objective and purpose, the students completed the questionnaires. They reported no issues in understanding and comprehending the questions in the instrument. Subsequently, we generated “results related to reliability and validity” and found them within the prescribed range.

**Scales and Measures**

The questionnaire in this research has two parts. The first is demographic data based on a nominal scale. The second part is “related to the main study.” It has “six factors and 25 items” based on a 5-point rating scale: “Five suggesting high agreement and one low agreement.” We adopted the questionnaire from past studies. Table 1 exhibits the constructs’ sources and items. The study has attached the questionnaire as Annexure 1.

**Table 1: Scale and Measures**

Constructs	Sources	Items
Purchase Intention	Yoo, Donthu and Lee (2001)	3
Social Media Influencers	Ohanian (1990) and Jansom and Pongsakornrungsilp (2021)	9
Discount Pricing	Al-Salamin and Al-Hassan (2016)	3
Bundle Pricing	Dominique-Ferreira and Antunes (2019).	2
Consumer Buying Behavior	Doe and Asamoah (2022)	5
Awareness	Weidman and Von- Mettenheim (2020)	3

**Statistical Analysis**

Data analysis is cleaning (Clark et al., 2021), transforming (Ghauri et al., 2020), and modeling data (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019) that helps in concluding. Various software, including SPSS and Smart PLS, are available for data analysis (Santoso et al., 2023). This study used Smart PLS for statistical analysis as it can deal with the complex model and generates regression results simultaneously.

**Respondents’ Characteristics**

The study collected data from “five leading business universities in Karachi.” The recruited enumerators distributed 415 questionnaires and received 385 questionnaires. Table 2 depicts the respondents’ profile.

Table 2: Respondents Characteristics

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age Group</b>		
18-28	85	22.07%
29-39	120	31.17%
39-49	95	24.68%
49-59	45	11.69%
59 Plus	40	10.39%
<b>Education Level</b>		
Pursuing Bachelor’s Degree	185	48.05%
Pursuing a Graduate’s Degree	170	44.16%
Pursuing Post Graduate Degree	30	7.79%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	180	46.75%
Female	205	53.25%
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Employed Student	245	63.64%
Unemployed Student	140	36.36%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	250	64.94%
Married	135	35.06%
<b>Household Income</b>		
Less than 50,000	75	19.48%
50,000 - 100,000	130	33.77%
100,001 - 150,000	90	23.38%
Over 150,000	60	15.58%
Not Disclosed	30	7.79%

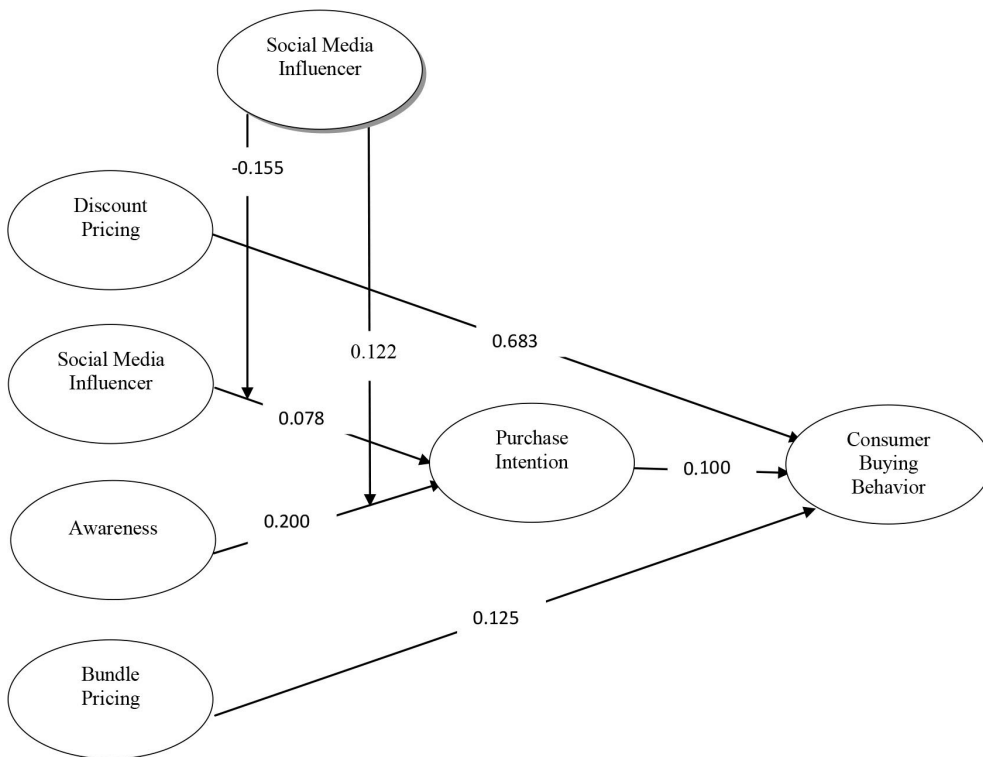
Of 385 survey respondents, 22.07% are between 18- 28 years age group, 31.17% between 29-39 years age group, 24.68% in the age group of 39 to 49 years, 11.69% are between 49 to 59 years age group, and 10.39% are older than 59 years. Regarding education, 48.05% of students are pursuing bachelor’s degrees, 44.16% are pursuing graduate-level degrees, and 7.79% are pursuing post-graduate-level degrees. Regarding gender, the results show that 46.75% are males, and 53.25% are females. Employment status shows 63.46% are employed students and 36.36% are unemployed students. Marital status shows that 64.94% of respondents are single, and 35.06% are married. Income strata show that 19.48% of respondents’ households’ income is less than Rs.50,000, 33.77% of respondents households’ income is between Rs.51,000 and Rs.100,000, 23.38% respondents households’ income is between Rs.100,001 and Rs.

150,000, 15.58% respondents households' income is at more than Rs.150,000, and 7.79% respondents did not disclose their household income.

## Results and Findings

### Measurement Model

As advised by many, the study includes a two-step analysis in Smart PIS (Santoso et al., 2023). First, we developed a measurement model, presented in Figure 2, for initial results, including reliability (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019) and validity (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019).



**Figure 2 Measurement Model**

### Descriptive Analysis

The study has summarized the results of Cronbach Alpha, composite reliability, and AVE in Table 3. The summary of results shows that the highest Cronbach's alpha value is for gender ( $\alpha = 0.881$ ), and the smallest is for purchase intention ( $\alpha = 0.759$ ). The results suggest that the constructs have acceptable internal consistency since all Cronbach's

Alpha values are at least 0.759 (Mohajan, 2017). Similarly, all the composite values are > 0.800, and the AVE values are > 0.600, suggesting that constructs meet the requirement of convergent validity (Sarstedt et al., 2019).

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Awareness	0.854	0.911	0.774
Bundle Pricing	0.875	0.923	0.800
Consumer Buying Behavior	0.801	0.883	0.717
Discount Pricing	0.780	0.872	0.696
Gender	0.881	0.926	0.808
Purchase Intention	0.759	0.862	0.677
Social Media Influencers	0.760	0.862	0.676

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity shows the “uniqueness and distinctness” of the constructs used in a study (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). We have used Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) criteria to assess discriminant validity. The summary of the results in Table 4 “shows that the square root of AVE values is greater than Pearson Correlation values, suggesting that all the constructs used in the study are empirically different” (Memon et al., 2021).

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

Constructs	AWR	BP	CBB	DP	Gender	PI	SMI
Awareness	0.880						
Bundle Pricing	0.728	0.894					
Con. Buying Behavior	0.078	0.738	0.847				
Discount Pricing	0.019	0.766	0.044	0.834			
Gender	0.813	0.634	0.810	0.820	0.899		
Purchase Intention	0.801	0.725	0.822	0.775	0.078	0.823	
Soc. i Media Influencers	0.815	0.821	0.798	0.779	0.711	0.738	0.822

Effect Size of the Model (R and F Square Values)

F square suggests a change in R<sup>2</sup> when an exogenous variable is removed from the model. According to Cheah et al. (2020), F-square is the effect size (>=0.020 is small; >=0.150 is medium; >=0.350 is large). Refer to Table 5 for a summary of the results.

**Table 5: Effect Size**

Relationships	F-square	Effect
Awareness -> Purchase Intention	0.001	Small
Bundle Pricing -> Consumer Buying Behavior	0.030	Small
Discount Pricing -> Consumer Buying Behavior	0.690	Large
Purchase Intention -> Consumer Buying Behavior	0.017	Medium
Social Media Influencers -> Purchase Intention	0.014	Small
Gender x Social Media Influencers -> Purchase Intention	0.085	Small
Gender x Awareness -> Purchase Intention	0.040	Small

The results in Table 5 show that the model has five small F effect sizes, one large effect size, and one medium effect size.

### Hypotheses Results

The study extended the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Social Comparison and tested seven proposed hypotheses. Table 6 summarizes the results and Figure 3 depicts structure model.

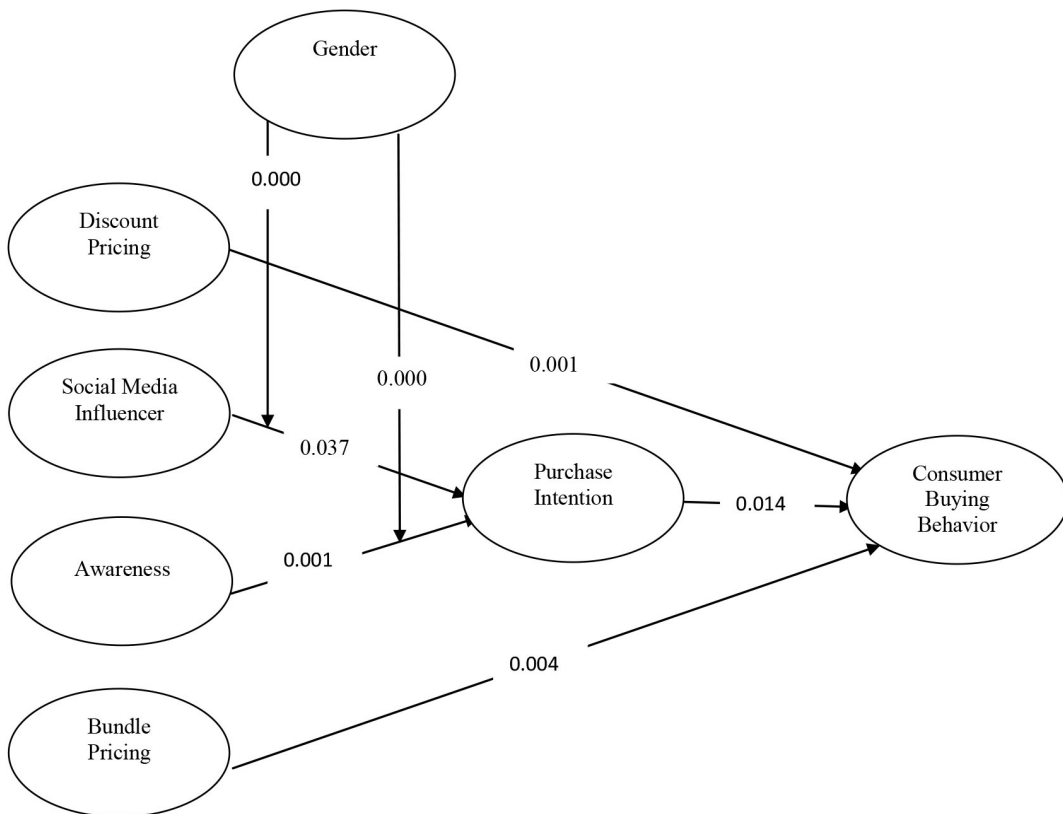
**Table 6: Hypotheses Results**

Hypotheses	Path coefficients	P-values	Results
Discount Pricing -> Consumer Buying Behavior (H1)	0.683	0.001	Accepted
Social Media Influencers -> Purchase Intention (H2)	0.078	0.037	Accepted
Awareness -> Purchase Intention (H3)	0.200	0.001	Accepted
Bundle Pricing -> Consumer Buying Behavior(H4)	0.125	0.004	Accepted
Purchase Intention -> Consumer Buying Behavior (H5)	0.100	0.014	Accepted
Gender x Social Media Influencers -> Purchase Intention(H6)	-0.155	0.000	Accepted
Gender x Awareness -> Purchase Intention (H7)	0.122	0.000	Accepted

The results support Hypothesis 1, which states, “Discount pricing positively affects consumer buying behavior” ( $\beta=0.683, p=0.001<0.05$ ). We supported Hypothesis 2, which states, “Social media influence positively affects consumer buying behavior” ( $\beta=0.078, p=0.037<0.05$ ). We accepted Hypothesis 3, which states that “Awareness positively affects consumer buying behavior” ( $\beta=0.200, p=0.001<0.001$ ). We accepted Hypothesis 4, which states, “Bundle pricing positively affects consumer buying behavior” ( $\beta=0.125, p=0.004<0.05$ ). We accepted Hypothesis 5, stating that purchase intention positively affects consumer buying behavior ( $\beta=0.100, p=0.014<0.05$ ). Our result supported Hypothesis 6, which states that “Gender moderates social media influencer consumer and purchase intention” ( $\beta=-0.155, p=0.000<0.05$ ). The study supported Hypothesis



7, which states that “Gender moderates awareness and purchase intention” ( $\beta=-0.122$ ,  $p=0.000<0.05$ ).



**Figure 3: Structural Model**

## Discussion and Conclusion

### Discussion

Extending The Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Comparison, “we empirically tested seven hypotheses and found support for all of them.” The findings are consistent with past studies. The following sections compare the results with the past literature.

The results support Hypothesis 1: “Discount pricing positively affects consumer buying behavior” ( $\beta=0.683$ ,  $p=0.001$ ). Discounts excite consumers, prompting them to consider buying the product or services at lower prices instead of the original prices. Consumers believe buying goods and services at discounts results in savings (Rahmadina et al., 2023). Discounts enhance the perceived value of products. Some companies often

have time-limited discounts, which creates urgency in customers to buy the product quickly before it gets sold out (Sari et al., 2022). Discount pricing mainly attracts price-sensitive customers who always look for sale promotions (Risal et al., 2023). These types of consumer responses are always positive for discount offers. Most importantly, offering discount pricing retains existing customers and attracts new ones.

We supported Hypothesis 2: "Social media influence positively affects purchase intention" ( $\beta=0.078$ ,  $p=0.037$ ). Social media influencers share content on Facebook and Instagram that generates interaction with followers (Khan et al., 2023). Besides social networking, social media influencers promote positive purchase intention in consumers (Yones & Muthaiyah, 2023). Social media influencers collaborate with firms and share content about the firms and their products. As a result, social media users develop positive attitudes toward the products and services recommended by social media users (Erlangga, 2021). Given its importance, firms recruit celebrities as influencers to promote their products (Dinh & Lee, 2022). Many past studies document that social interaction generated by social media influencers positively affects consumers' attitudes and behaviors toward goods and services (Shoenberger & Kim, 2023). Social media influencers' credibility, expertise, and trustworthiness are important to motivate consumers to listen to their advice about goods and services (Sharma et al., 2022).

We accepted Hypothesis 3: "Awareness positively affects purchase intention" ( $\beta=0.200$ ,  $p=0.001$ ). Öztürk (2022) asserts that high brand awareness is positively associated with trust and credibility, promoting brand loyalty and purchase intention. Similarly, Mukherjee, Das, and Chakraborty (2023) assert that consumers' positive brand perception enhances customer loyalty. Consumers prefer to buy well-known brands, believing such brands have a lower risk than unknown brands. At the same time, brands with strong awareness evoke and raise emotions and build strong relationships with consumers (Akbar et al., 2023). Emotionally attached consumers generate positive word of mouth and often become brand advocates (Öztürk, 2022).

The results support Hypothesis 4: "Bundle pricing positively affects consumer buying behavior" ( $\beta=0.125$ ,  $p=0.004$ ). Consumers often feel bundle pricing is a good option to buy goods and services, as they perceive they are getting more for lower prices (Raditya et al., 2022). Song, Noone, and Mattila (2023) assert that in bundle pricing, consumers buy additional products that they may not buy in normal circumstances. As a result, firms sell more, which improves their revenues (Liu et al., 2022). Bundle pricing allows firms to sell premium products in packages (Abbas et al., 2022). Tosun and Tosun (2023) believe pricing allows firms to differentiate their value proposition from the competitors, giving them a competitive edge (Tosun & Tosun, 2023). Bundle pricing also allows consumers

to buy products they may otherwise forget to buy (Raditya et al., 2022).

The results support Hypothesis 5: "Purchase intention positively affects consumer buying behavior" ( $\beta=0.100$ ,  $p=0.014$ ). Purchase intention is an important precursor of consumer buying behavior (Abdelkhair et al., 2023). Firms often use it to measure consumer responses to newly launched products and services in selected segments. The test results may help firms decide whether the launched product and services need further development before launching them on a full scale in target segments (Azizah et al., 2022). Song, Noone, and Mattila (2023) believe purchase intention directly affects consumer-buying behavior. Therefore, understanding its antecedents is vital for enhancing consumer-buying behavior (Azizah et al., 2022; Um, Chung, & Steinmetz, 2023). Many past studies also "found a significant association between purchase intentions and consumer buying behavior" in many domains, including luxury brands (Golalizadeh et al., 2023), counterfeit luxury products (Shan et al. et al., 2022), green marketing (Alhamad et al., 2023), online purchases (Amaral, & Djuang, 2023; Tanveer et al., 2022).

We accepted Hypothesis 6: "Gender moderates social media influencer and purchase intention" ( $\beta=-0.155$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). We also accepted Hypothesis 7, which states that gender moderates awareness and purchase intention ( $\beta=0.122$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The Theory of Social Roles postulates that females' perception of social media influencers differs entirely from that of males (Forgas-Coll et al., 2022; Lzahrani et al., 2022). Researchers document that male and female interpretations of the same content differ (Rifon et al., 2023). Extant literature also documents that male and female social influencers could have different followings (Costello et al. 2023). Researchers, including Kang and Kim (2023), assert that gender has a varying impact on the association between social media influencers and purchase intention. Another research document shows that gender moderates awareness and purchase intention (Yap & Ismail, 2022).

## **Conclusion**

Social media in the prevailing era has changed the attitudes and lifestyles of all individuals, especially university students. Given its importance, this study examines the impact of discount pricing, bundle pricing, and purchase intention on consumer buying behavior. The effect of social media influencers and awareness on purchase intention. The moderating effect of gender on purchase intention. The study extended the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Comparison Theory to develop a model that we tested based on 385 responses from targeted university students. The study found that discount pricing, bundle pricing, and purchase intention promote consumer-buying behavior. Social media influencers and awareness promote purchase intention.

Gender moderates (i) social media influence and purchase intention and (ii) awareness and purchase intention.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The study has developed a model by extending the Theory of Planned Behavior and Social Comparison Theory, which have seven hypotheses. Since “all our results support all the hypotheses,” we argue that both theories have assimilated adequately to predict consumers’ purchase intentions and buying behaviors. Thus, we have contributed to the body of knowledge by enhancing the generalizability of the Theory of Reason Action and Social Comparison Theory.

### **Managerial Implications**

In this competitive world, retaining and attracting new customers has become difficult. Social media influencers significantly affect consumers’ buying behaviors and purchase intentions. The firms must spend adequate resources and recruit reputable social media influencers. While selecting social media influencers, firms must ensure that social influencers have credibility and a reputable image. Female perceptions and attitudes toward social media influencers differ from males. Therefore, while selecting social media influencers, we recommend that firms recruit male or female social media influencers depending on the product category. Discount pricing attracts consumers as they feel they are getting more than they are paying. However, firms must not use this strategy frequently, as it may not be effective in the long- run. Bundling pricing helps firms sell products that consumers often ignore. It is a good strategy, and the firm can use it for the long term.

### **Limitations and Future Recommendations**

Like most studies, this study also has several limitations. The study has focused “on the leading universities of Karachi.” Other studies may extend the model to other cities and sectors. Future studies may explore whether the results are the same in a comparative study of two sectors and cities. The study has “examined the moderating effect of gender on purchase intent.” Other studies may use other demographic variables as moderators. Pakistan has a diversified ethical culture. The results may vary from one ethnical group to another. A comparative study between two or more ethnical groups may bring “more insight into the discussed phenomenon.”

Annexure 1

Construct and Items Used in the Questionnaire

Purchase Intention

- PI1. I seriously consider purchasing the product based on the endorsement of opinion leaders.
- PI2. I usually take lots of time before buying a visually conspicuous product.
- PI3. I buy products that social media influencers are promoting.
- PI4. The positive recommendation of social media influencers enhances my purchase decision.
- PI5. I look for the product promoted by the influencers.
- PI6. I feel that the influencers focus on my interests.
- PI7. Social media influencers affect my purchase decisions more than conventional advertisements.
- PI8. I often make purchase decisions based on influencers’ positive reviews.

Credibility (Dimension SMI)

- CR1. The social media opinion leader is a credible source of information for products.
- CR2. The social media opinion leader provides accurate and reliable information.
- CR3. I have confidence in the credibility of the social media opinion leader.

Trustworthiness (Dimension of SMI)

- TW1. The social media influencers are trustworthy.
- TW2. Social media influencers share honest opinions.
- TW3. Social media influencers help in enhancing brand image.

Social Attractiveness (Dimension of SMI)

- SA1. An influencer’s social attractiveness recommendation helps me search for the right product.
- SA2. I prefer to buy products and services recommended by attractive social media influencers.
- SA3. Social media influencer presentations and styles motivate me to buy recommended products.

Discount Pricing

- DP1. I am always attracted to discount pricing as I pay less than the product’s value.
- DP2. I like discount pricing as it adds up to many savings.

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### Bundle Pricing

BP1. I like bundle pricing as it often helps identify the products I never thought I would need.

BP2. In bundle pricing, I get more than the value of money.

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### Consumer Buying Behavior

CBB1. I buy mostly from the shop that is closest to me.

CBB2. I buy mostly from a shop that offers fair prices and high-quality products.

CBB3. I buy mostly from shops that sell current and fashionable or trendy goods.

CBB4. I buy mostly from shops that give adequate services.

CBB5. I buy mostly from the shop that offers rewards for loyal customers.

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### Awareness

AW1. Advertisements help me to know about new products.

AW2. I give due attention to the advertisements before I buy the products.

AW3. I regularly watch, read, and listen to advertisements to keep myself updated about the products.

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