



SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING, CONSUMER COVID-19 PERCEPTION, SOCIAL SUPPORT, VALUE CO-CREATION: A MODERATION-MEDIATION MODEL IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Madiha Bashir ¹

Affiliations:

¹ PhD Scholar
Allama Iqbal Open University,
Islamabad
madihabashir12@gmail.com

Corresponding Author/s Email:

¹ madihabashir12@gmail.com

Copyright:

Author/s

License:



Abstract

This study investigates the intricate relationships between social media marketing (SMM), social support, and value co-creation intentions within the hospitality industry, particularly examining the moderating role of consumers' COVID-19 perception. Drawing on social support theory, this research proposes a moderated-mediation model. Data were collected from 229 travellers who use social media platforms for hotel bookings, such as Couchsurfing, Airbnb, and [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com), in the northern areas of Pakistan. The analysis, conducted using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), reveals that SMM significantly enhances social support, which in turn positively influences value co-creation intentions. The findings confirm the mediating role of social support in the SMM-value co-creation link. However, the perception of COVID-19 did not significantly moderate the relationship between SMM and social support. This study provides critical theoretical and managerial implications for hospitality marketers aiming to foster co-creation in a post-pandemic digital landscape, contributing to the growing body of literature on consumer behaviour in digital environments (Asif, 2024; Rafi et al., 2025).

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, COVID-19, Social Support, Value Co-Creation, Hospitality Industry

1. Introduction

The digital revolution, propelled by social media platforms, has fundamentally transformed the marketing landscape, strengthened marketing communication and shifting power dynamics in favour of consumers. These platforms have empowered consumers to initiate, influence, and drive their entire decision-making process (Ashley, 2015). By offering a cost-effective means of marketing, social media helps brands build consumer loyalty and gain accurate market insights, thereby increasing satisfaction. As consumers spend more time in these digital social networks, their communication and interaction with marketing campaigns increasingly occur within these environments (Asmussen, 2013). This surge has transformed consumers from passive participants into active creators and influencers, shifting power over brands directly into their hands. The integration of information technology in financial services and other sectors has further accelerated this transformation (Asif, 2022).

The digital world encompasses a vast array of online platforms, including company-sponsored blogs and chatrooms, product evaluation websites, consumer emails, and social networking sites. The interactive environment created by social media aids companies in creating value and serving consumers according to their specific needs (Berton, 2008). The use of these platforms by consumers for information gathering to aid



purchase decisions and for sharing experiences with others is known as social media marketing. Consequently, brands have expanded their marketing channels through social media to better target consumer preferences and enhance understanding of changing consumer needs, ultimately boosting satisfaction and loyalty (Asif & Sandhu, 2023). Research has shown that social media marketing activities significantly enhance customer equity and brand relationships (Kim & Ko, 2012; Rafi et al., 2011).

Consumers develop heuristics and rules of thumb to navigate countless decisions, a process explained by various theories like the Engel, Kollet, Blackwell (EKB) model and the theory of reasoned action (Constantinides, 2006). However, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced unprecedented uncertainty for marketers as the world rapidly shifted "from bricks to clicks." The economic impacts of the pandemic were profound and far-reaching (Asif et al., 2022). To sustain their consumer base, brands had to adapt quickly to digital means to understand and target evolving consumer behaviour. The psychological capital of employees and effective conflict management became crucial during this transition (Asif et al., 2019). Crucially, the role of social support and value co-creation intentions driven by SMM, especially during the perception of a health crisis like COVID-19, has not been thoroughly evaluated in the hospitality industry. The complexities of such crises extend beyond economic factors to include broader societal challenges (Asif, 2024). Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to explore a holistic model that examines the influence of SMM on value-co-creating intentions, considering consumers' perception of COVID-19. As Kement et al. (2020) suggest, consumer desires and behavioural intentions should be examined as the perception of the pandemic evolves, particularly in the hospitality and tourism sector. This aligns with recent calls for more nuanced understanding of consumer behaviour during crises (Rafi et al., 2025; Shahid Satar et al., 2025).

Furthermore, social factors such as social support warrant evaluation in the hospitality context (Hanaysha, 2017). Rooted in social support theory (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010) and linked to value co-creation (Vargo et al., 2008), social support can significantly alter consumers' behavioural intentions (Wang & Hajli, 2014). The role of emotional intelligence and personality traits in shaping these behaviours cannot be overlooked (Dong et al., 2022; Rafi et al., 2013). This study theoretically builds on social support theory to identify the link between SMM and value co-creation intentions during the perception of COVID-19. The theory provides a framework for understanding how consumer perceptions assert the link between social networking and value co-creation (Hajli et al., 2020). Thus, this study defines the following research objectives: (1) to test a proposed model of value co-creation intentions during the COVID-19 pandemic and (2) to examine the role of COVID-19 perception in building social support mechanisms through SMM in the hospitality industry of Pakistan, addressing a significant gap in the literature (Rafi & Rather, 2024).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media Marketing

Since the dawn of the digital age, the marketing landscape has been revolutionized. As social media users surge, marketers must develop new strategies to target a wide range of consumers. Social media platforms are two-way communication channels where users interact online, sharing opinions and information. This has drastically influenced how information is shared and consumed by brands and consumers, creating a platform for individuals to share experiences and thoughts (Gaby A. C. Schellekens, 2010). This has led to in-depth analyses of its correlation with purchase behaviour, relationship management, and brand management. The pandemic shifted consumer lifestyles from the physical to the digital world, creating a dire need for marketers to utilize social media platforms, which have developed into communities where information about products and services is continuously shared (Gunelius, 2011). Studies on consumer-brand relationships have emphasized the importance of these digital communities (Rafi et al., 2024; Rather & Rafi, 2024).

SMM offers a cost-effective method for brands to use time resources efficiently, building better communication with consumers and establishing brand loyalty beyond traditional methods (Kumar, 2016). A study by Misbah (2018) highlighted that half of Twitter and Facebook users became more likely to recommend or purchase a brand's product after interacting with the company on social media. The need for organizations



to establish their presence on social media is immediate, as the pandemic has limited physical interaction. Brands can promote products, provide instant support, and create online communities of enthusiasts through platforms like Facebook and Instagram. The effectiveness of these platforms depends on various factors, including color appropriateness in marketing communications (Rafi et al., 2022) and the philosophical underpinnings of electronic word-of-mouth (Rafi et al., 2021).

SMM platforms provide organizations with an essential communication base, facilitating information flow. Organizations can create profound relationships with consumers by following their insights (Kaplan, 2010). The consumer-led theory of SMM emphasizes the importance of consumer insights into needs, wants, and perceived value. Digital platforms provide lasting reviews that organizations can study. The main prospect of SMM is creating lasting brand loyalty and satisfaction, while also helping with cost reduction (Trainor, 2014). Research has shown that talent management during digital transformation requires effective leadership and adaptability (Mahroof et al., 2025). The role of salespersons' skills and emotional intelligence in marketing exchanges further complements these digital efforts (Rafi & Saeed, 2019a, 2019b).

2.2 COVID-19 and Consumer Buying Behaviour

Throughout history, pandemics have cost lives and caused severe economic loss. The COVID-19 pandemic shocked the world, disrupting business operations. Developed countries with strong technological bases adopted "smart lockdowns," which involved closing the physical world but maintaining commerce through digital means to keep economies stable (Seema Mehta, 2020). While the integration of technology had already created a smart lifestyle, organizations were not forecasting such a drastic impact. The causes of youth unemployment and economic stagnation during this period became critical areas of investigation (Asif et al., 2023; Asif et al., 2025b).

The preventive measures moved the world from bricks to clicks. Lockdowns dramatically increased the usage of social media platforms, making digital means the new retailer of services and products. Consumers shifted their methods of purchase and word-of-mouth, relying on enhanced information accessibility (Selman Repišti, 2020). The pandemic acted as a catalyst for SMM's impact on consumer buying behaviour. Consumer behaviour, traditionally affected by the marketing mix, is now more profoundly influenced by the social media marketing mix, with decision-making becoming more research-based and reliant on democratic, unbiased reviews from social platforms (Kumar, 2016). The effect of internet addiction on school-going children during lockdowns also emerged as a significant concern (Shahid et al., 2022). This shift is supported by findings that a vast majority of marketers place high value on their social media operations (Mangold, 2009). Research on psychological factors affecting investment decisions during economic uncertainty has also gained prominence (Mumtaz et al., 2023).

2.3 Social Media Marketing and Social Support

Social media marketing involves using social technologies to facilitate interactions and sell products and services online (Liang et al., 2011). Social media consumers are distinct from general e-commerce consumers because they engage in good interactions with others (Park et al., 2007). Using social technologies like Facebook and Instagram helps consumers interact with the marketing system, making them alert to companies' offerings. This creates a social network between sellers and purchasers, fostering positive sociability (Pelaez et al., 2013). Research on immersive technologies and the evolution of retail in the metaverse suggests that these interactions will become even more sophisticated (Asif et al., 2025d; Rafi et al., 2025c).

With the emergence of Web 2.0, social relations became a prominent factor in online technologies. Platforms like Twitter allow community members to provide social support to others (Gruzd et al., 2011), sharing product characteristics and influencing recommendations (Senecal & Nantel, 2004). Hajli (2014) introduced social e-commerce platforms where users can obtain online social support, which is often termed emotional or informational support (Ridings & Gefen, 2004). This support encourages members to participate in social media conversations (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002). Researchers argue that SMM supports community members in hiring products and services (Hajli & Lin, 2014), creating social markets where consumers can



purchase and support others (Park et al., 2007). The relevance of motivational theories and firm health in this context has been well-documented (Alizai et al., 2021). Based on this, the study proposes:

H1: *Social media marketing may significantly boost social support.*

2.4 Social Support and Value Co-creation Intentions

The theory of social support, rooted in psychology (Barrera, 1986), determines the perception of individuals who share resources in formal and informal groups (Gottlieb & Bergen, 2010). It involves individuals demonstrating care for others by sharing supportive material (Tajvidi et al., 2017). While extensively considered in psychology, healthcare, and marketing (e.g., Hajli et al., 2017; Tajvidi et al., 2018), it remains underexplored in hospitality management. The literature identifies two main dimensions of social support online: informational and emotional/functional support (Liang et al., 2011). These dimensions may affect co-creation, as previous studies have asserted that social support is a highly influential factor in co-creating consumer intentions in online communities (Gibbs et al., 2019; Rains & Young, 2009). However, the need for social support in co-creating consumer intentions in hospitality management is still unexplored. Members participating in value co-creation primarily prefer social support (Zhang et al., 2018). Renowned industries have recognized online value co-creation, engaging consumers to co-create new products and ideas (Ikea, 2019). Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2016) suggested that value co-creation may be primarily influenced by online social support. The role of administrative expertise and achievement motivation in facilitating such co-creation processes has been examined (Aurangzeb et al., 2021). Thus, this study proposes:

H2: *Social support may significantly increase consumers' value co-creation intentions.*

2.5 Social Media Marketing, COVID-19 Perception and Social Support

COVID-19 became an international issue, affecting every industry, especially hospitality and tourism. Wen et al. (2020) claim that COVID-19 severely impacted China's tourism industry, as tourists refrained from travel due to personal risk. In this critical situation, tourists may prefer to communicate using social media apps, seeking information and supporting community members about hotel services. This study focuses on the perception of COVID-19, defined as "cognitive potentials to predict danger or threat" (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005). Concerned about the threat, tourists may hesitate to travel and instead rely on social media marketing. The cybersecurity and audit resilience challenges in digital finance during this period have been well-documented (Asif et al., 2025a).

Alaeddinoglu and Rol (2020) note that tourists' travel plans have become critical factors of psychology and society. Nicholl (2020) asserts that tourists avoid traveling due to suspicion during COVID-19. According to Liew (2020), tourists' interest in online hotel reserving and tour setting decreased during the pandemic. Government bans and tourists' risk perceptions further increase the perceived danger. Another study found that tourists restrained from travel even when online booking was possible, and refrained from supporting others in this context (Rachmawati & Shishido, 2020). Research on the prohibition of alcohol in religious texts during times of crisis provides interesting parallels regarding behavioural restrictions (Usama et al., 2022). Based on this discussion, the study proposes:

H3: *COVID-19 perception negatively moderates the relationship between social media marketing and social support.*

2.6 Social Media Marketing, Social Support and Value Co-creation Intentions

Using SMM helps firms not only develop close consumer links but also build brand communities where consumers communicate and co-create value (Wang et al., 2014). The CMO Council (2011) found that 74% of consumers on online social media engage with brands after purchase, trusting brands and having strong relations with community members, thereby helping in co-creation. This notion is supported by Gensler et al. (2013), who underlined value co-creating intentions in the social commerce context. Therefore, the escalation of social media enables vibrant collaborations among online consumers, allowing them to share stories and co-create value, leading to successful brands. The impact of differentiated customer service and brand commitment on brand advocacy further reinforces this relationship (Hassan et al., 2016). Creating a high-performance workplace through job satisfaction and employee engagement is essential for fostering such

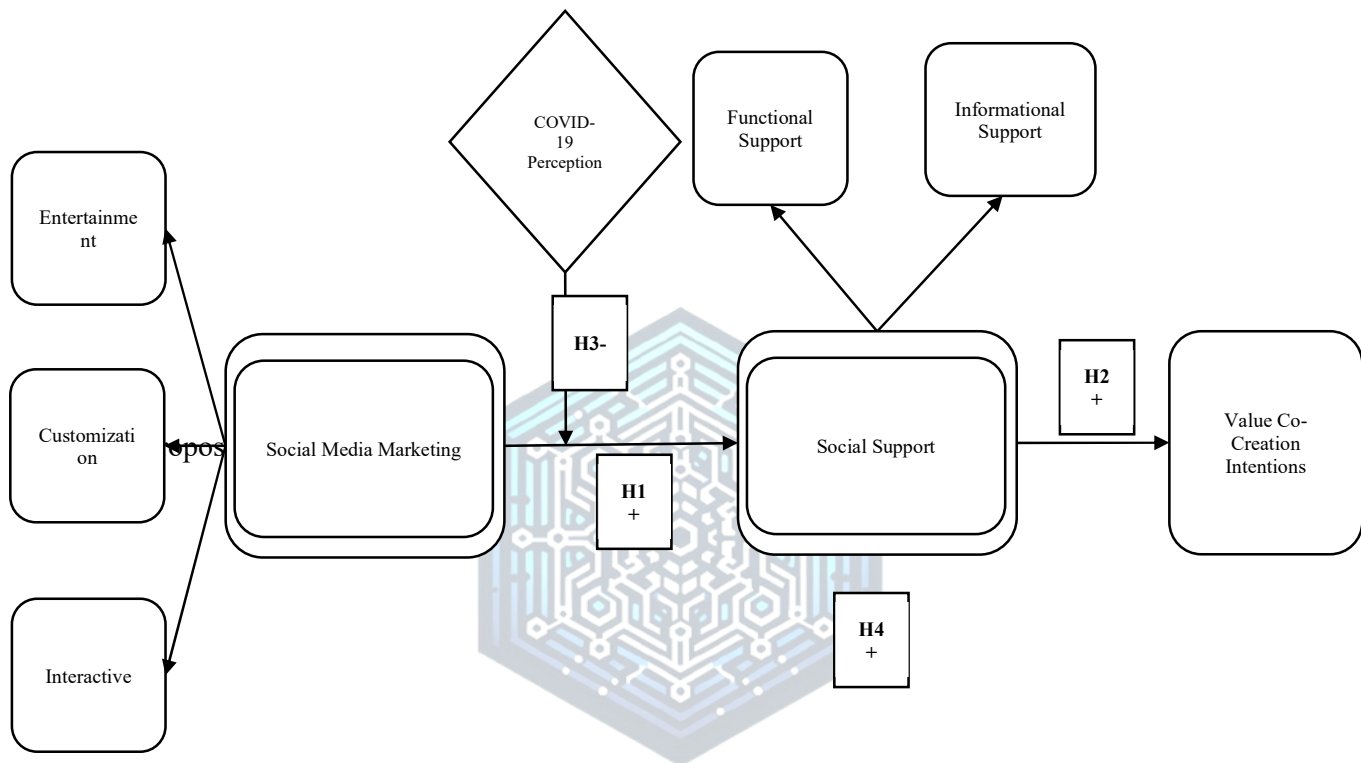


collaborations (Asif & Shaheen, 2022). Based on this, social support is proposed as a mediator. Research on salespersons' skill-sets and their impact on customer behaviour provides additional insights into these dynamics (Rafi et al., 2017; Shafiq et al., 2017). The role of workplace bullying and organizational commitment in shaping employee and customer outcomes has also been explored (Rasool et al., 2013).

H4: *Social support mediates the relationship between social media marketing and consumers' value co-creation intentions.*

Figure 1

Proposed Model



3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and Study Context

The population of this research study comprises travellers who mostly make their bookings through social media platforms, including Airbnb, [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com), and HomeAway. The sample consists of people who travel abroad and locally, using social platforms for hotel bookings. The northern areas of Pakistan are considered one of the favourite destinations for both international and local travellers. This context is particularly relevant given the growing body of research on consumer behaviour in the Pakistani tourism and hospitality sector (Asif & Asghar, 2025; Asif et al., 2025c; Rafi et al., 2025b).

3.2 Instrument Development

Existing scales were adopted with minor changes to make them more suitable and understandable within the study context. Several demographic questions were included. This research study used non-probability sampling, specifically convenient sampling. Before using the questionnaire, reliability and validity were established in the local context. The three dimensions (entertainment, customization, and interaction) of 'social media marketing' were adapted from Kim and Ko (2012). The scale for 'COVID-19 perception' was adapted from Selman et al. (2020). The two dimensions (functional and informational) of 'social support' were



adapted from Tajvidi et al. (2017), and 'value co-creation intentions' was adapted from Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2016), Schau et al. (2009), and Tajvidi et al. (2017).

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

A Google Forms-based questionnaire was designed and the link was shared on several social media platforms, including the Couchsurfing application. Moreover, data were obtained with the consent of multiple hotels in Islamabad that particularly host foreign travelers. The authenticity of the data was confirmed by participants who were involved in the travel community. Although many complexities were faced during data collection due to the outbreak of COVID-19, consistent follow-ups helped the researchers collect 243 filled questionnaires from the Couchsurfing group as well as international traveler hotels. It was ensured that only travelers who had the experience of bookings on social media platforms, such as Airbnb and [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com), were considered. After data screening, 229 valid responses were used for the final analysis. The role of leadership in digital transformation during this period was critical (Aurangzeb & Asif, 2021), and research on resources management and SME performance provided valuable contextual insights (Aurangzeb et al., 2021).

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Sample Profile

Table 1

Sample profile

Variable	Attribute	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	169	74%
	Female	60	26%
Age group (in years)	18-23	113	49%
	24-29	86	38%
	30 or more	30	13%
	1-2	32	14%
Social media usage (in years)	3-4	39	17%
	5 or more	158	69%
	1-2	32	14%
Social media usage (in years)	3-4	39	17%
	5 or more	158	69%
How often you use social media for hotel booking?	Once in a week	38	17%
	Once in a month	22	10%
	Quarterly	24	10%
	Once in a 6-months	26	11%
	Once in a year	119	52%
Favourite Hotel Booking Website	Booking.com	111	48%
	Airbnb.com	57	25%
	homeaway.com	30	13%
	Hostelworld.com	23	10%
	Agoda.com	8	3%
Total		229	100%



The sample consisted of 74% male and 26% female respondents. The largest age group was 18-23 years (49%), followed by 24-29 years (38%). A significant majority (69%) had been using social media for 5 or more years. Regarding hotel booking frequency, 52% booked once a year, while 17% booked once a week. [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com) was the favorite platform for 48% of respondents, followed by Airbnb (25%). This demographic profile is consistent with studies on social media usage patterns in Pakistan (Asif & Sandhu, 2023; Rafi et al., 2025a).

4.2 Scale Validity and Reliability

Table 2

Construct reliability and convergent validity

Variable				Dimension	Item Code	Loadings	Composite Reliability	AVE
Social Media Marketing		Entertainment		ETN2	0.880	0.883	0.791	
		Entertainment		ETN3	0.899			
		Customisation		CST1	0.843	0.883	0.716	
		Customisation		CST2	0.881			
		Customisation		CST3	0.814	0.897	0.813	
		Interactive		INT2	0.903			
COVID-19 Perception		Interactive		INT3	0.900	0.870	0.573	
		COVID-19 Perception		COP1	0.762			
		COVID-19 Perception		COP2	0.854			
		COVID-19 Perception		COP3	0.733			
Social Support		COVID-19 Perception		COP4	0.770	0.864	0.613	
		Functional Support		FS1	0.747			
		Functional Support		FS2	0.831			
		Functional Support		FS3	0.807			
		Functional Support		FS4	0.744			
		Information Support		IS1	0.891			
Value Co-creation Intentions		Information Support		IS2	0.891	0.885	0.794	
		Value Co-creation Intentions		VCO1	0.761			
		Value Co-creation Intentions		VCO2	0.848			
		Value Co-creation Intentions		VCO3	0.793			

Note: ETN1, INT1, and COP5 were deleted due to low loadings.



The measurement model was assessed for reliability and convergent validity. As shown in Table 2, all item loadings were above the recommended threshold of 0.7 after deleting items ETN1, INT1, and COP5 due to low loadings. The Composite Reliability (CR) for all constructs exceeded 0.8, indicating high internal consistency. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct was above 0.5, confirming convergent validity. These psychometric properties align with established standards in social science research (Asif, 2021; Pasha et al., 2019).

Table 3

Discriminant validity

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Social Media Marketing (1)	0.752			
Social Support (2)	0.506	0.755		
Value Co-Creation Intentions (3)	0.573	0.623	0.802	
COVID-19 Perception (4)	0.428	0.432	0.415	0.804

Note: Diagonal elements (bold figures) are the square root of the AVE (the variance shared between the constructs and their measures). Below-diagonal elements are the correlations among variables.

Discriminant validity was established using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. As shown in Table 3, the square root of the AVE for each construct (bold figures on the diagonal) is greater than its highest correlation with any other construct, confirming discriminant validity.

4.3 Structural Model Analysis

Table 4

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	β	t	p-Value	Statistical Decision
H1: SMM $\rightarrow$ SS	0.506	6.603	0.000	Supported
H2: SS $\rightarrow$ VCO	0.623	10.591	0.000	Supported
H3: SMM $\rightarrow$ COP $\rightarrow$ SS	-0.037	0.863	0.388	Not Supported
H4: SMM $\rightarrow$ SS $\rightarrow$ VCO	0.315	4.447	0.000	Supported

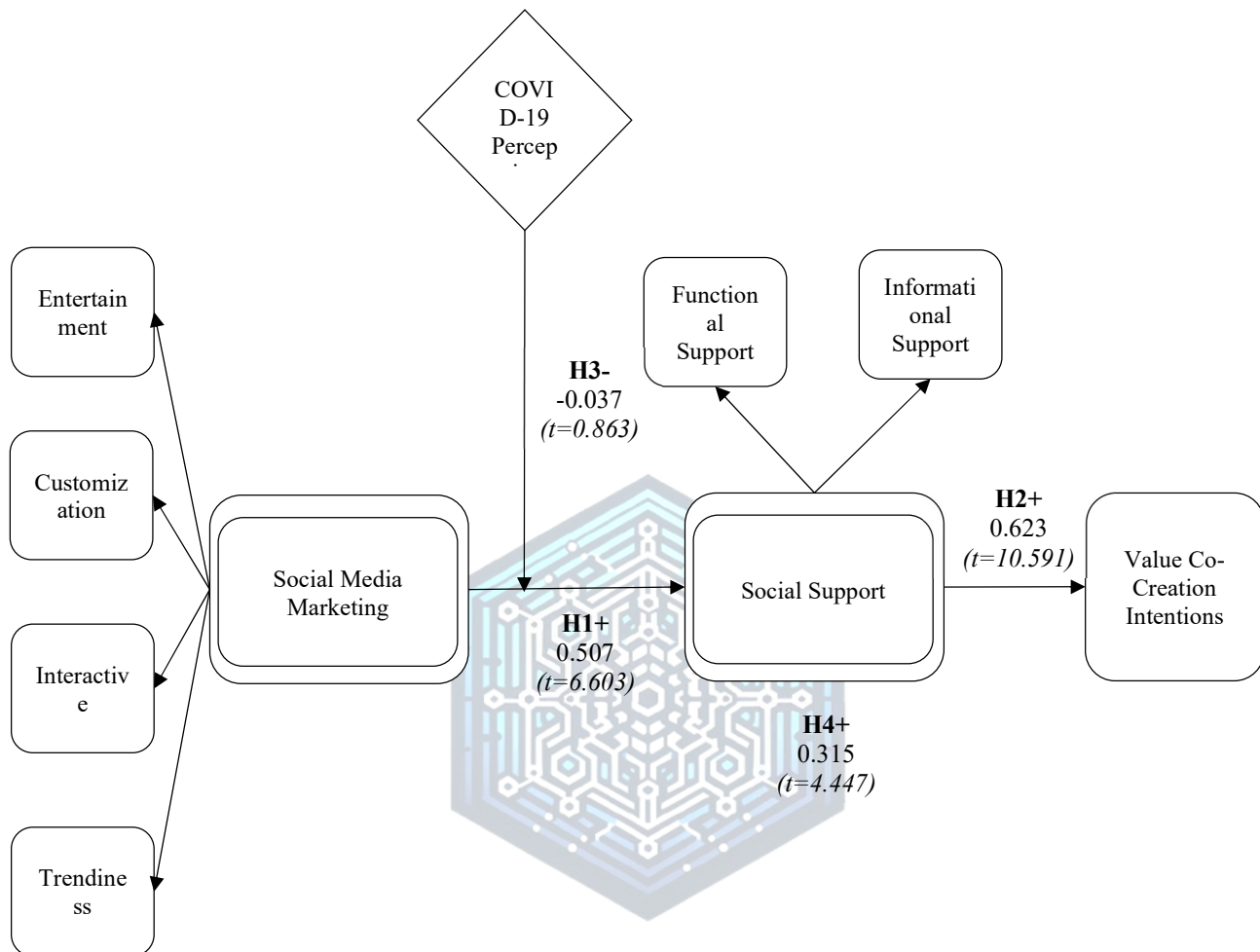
Note: SMM - Social Media Marketing, SS - Social Support, COP - COVID-19 Perception, and VCO - Value Co-Creation Intentions

The structural model was analysed to test the proposed hypotheses. The results are presented in Table 4 and Figure 2. H1, which proposed that social media marketing significantly boosts social support, was supported ($\beta = 0.506$, $t = 6.603$, $p < 0.001$). H2, proposing that social support increases value co-creation intentions, was also supported ($\beta = 0.623$, $t = 10.591$, $p < 0.001$). H3, which hypothesized that COVID-19 perception negatively moderates the SMM-social support relationship, was not supported ($\beta = -0.037$, $t = 0.863$, $p = 0.388$). Finally, H4, testing the mediating role of social support in the SMM-value co-creation link, was supported ($\beta = 0.315$, $t = 4.447$, $p < 0.001$). These findings contribute to the growing body of evidence on the mediating mechanisms in social media marketing research (Rafi et al., 2025d; Tajvidi et al., 2017).



Figure 2

Structural model



5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aimed to explore a holistic model examining the influence of social media marketing on value co-creation intentions through social support, and the moderating role of COVID-19 perception in the hospitality industry of Pakistan. The findings provide strong empirical support for most of the hypothesized relationships, contributing significantly to the existing literature on SMM, social support theory, and value co-creation. The results align with previous research on the HEXACO model of personality traits and entrepreneurial performance (Rafi et al., 2013), suggesting that individual differences play a crucial role in these dynamics.

The positive and significant relationship between SMM and social support (H1) confirms that interactive, entertaining, and customized content on social media platforms fosters a sense of community and mutual assistance among consumers. When brands use social media to engage with consumers, it encourages consumers to interact with and support each other, sharing information and providing functional and emotional backing. This aligns with the work of Hajli (2014) and Park et al. (2007), who argued that social media technologies facilitate interactions that are distinct from traditional e-commerce, creating a fertile ground for social support. As Rafi et al. (2025a) found in the Couchsurfing community, the social dynamics



within these platforms are crucial for building supportive networks. This finding is also consistent with research on emotional well-being in peer-to-peer tourism, where social interactions are key to positive outcomes (Rafi et al., 2025b). The role of brand trust and commitment in these relationships cannot be overstated (Hassan et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the strong positive impact of social support on value co-creation intentions (H2) underscores the critical role of communal relationships in the hospitality industry. When consumers feel supported—whether through useful information or empathetic functional assistance, they are more willing to engage in co-creation activities, such as providing feedback, sharing experiences, and helping improve services. This finding extends the application of social support theory from contexts like online health communities (Gibbs et al., 2019; Rains & Young, 2009) to hospitality, confirming that a supportive environment is a prerequisite for collaborative value creation, as suggested by Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2016). It also resonates with research on consumer-brand engagement, where a supportive service environment enhances customer relationships (Shahid Satar et al., 2025). The importance of collaboration between sales and marketing functions in driving business performance further supports this notion (Iqbal Nawaz, 2022).

The study also confirmed the mediating role of social support in the relationship between SMM and value co-creation intentions (H4). This is a key contribution, as it elucidates the mechanism through which SMM translates into co-creative consumer behaviour. It is not merely the presence of SMM activities that drives co-creation, but the social support that these activities generate. This finding aligns with the theoretical underpinnings of social support theory, which asserts the link between social networking and co-creation (Hajli et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2014). This mediation highlights that for hospitality brands, the primary goal of SMM should be to build a supportive online community, as this community then becomes the engine for value co-creation (Rafi et al., 2024). Research on the impact of benefit realization management on project success provides parallel insights into how mediating mechanisms operate in organizational contexts (Kazmi et al., 2016). Studies on knowledge metrics of brand equity further reinforce the importance of these mediating pathways (Rafi et al., 2011).

Interestingly, the moderating effect of COVID-19 perception on the SMM-social support relationship (H3) was not supported. This suggests that the need for social connection and support through social media remained robust, even during the heightened threat of the pandemic. While the pandemic undoubtedly increased anxiety and changed travel behaviours (Asif et al., 2022; Wen et al., 2020), it did not weaken the fundamental human need for social interaction and support. In fact, the reliance on digital means during lockdowns may have made social media an even more critical tool for maintaining social ties, thus negating any potential negative moderation. The perception of risk may have changed the *nature* of the support sought (e.g., more informational support about safety protocols) but not the overall positive link between SMM and social support. This finding provides a more optimistic outlook for hospitality marketers, indicating that investments in SMM for building community are resilient to external crises like a pandemic. Research on augmented reality in ecotourism suggests that technological interventions can enhance visitor experiences even during challenging times (Rafi et al., 2024). The economic value-added dynamics and their impact on market performance during crises provide additional context for understanding these resilience patterns (Pasha et al., 2019).

In conclusion, this study successfully developed and tested a moderated-mediation model in the context of Pakistan's hospitality industry. It confirms that social media marketing is a powerful tool for fostering social support, which in turn drives value co-creation intentions among consumers. The perception of COVID-19 did not alter this fundamental dynamic, highlighting the enduring importance of social connections in the digital age. The findings have significant implications for understanding consumer-brand relationships in tourism and hospitality (Rather & Rafi, 2024) and contribute to the broader literature on digital marketing and consumer behaviour (Asif & Ali, 2025). The role of managerial accounting in driving financial performance and sustainability in small and medium enterprises further contextualizes these findings within the broader business environment (Asif & Asghar, 2025). Research on organizational power structures and



gender inequality provides important considerations for ensuring inclusive participation in these digital communities (Aslam & Asif, 2025).

6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

While this study offers valuable insights, it is not without limitations. First, the uncertainty about the future of the pandemic remains high. Therefore, it is desirable to review the travel intentions and desires of tourists post-pandemic, as their perceptions may change over time (Kement et al., 2020). The role of emotional intelligence in shaping these changing perceptions warrants further investigation (Dong et al., 2022; Rafi & Saeed, 2019a). Second, the study was conducted in a specific geographic and cultural context (Pakistan), which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The effect of the pandemic, its transmissibility, and the measures adopted by states vary across countries, making it difficult to generalize the results. Future studies are recommended to be carried out in different geographic and cultural settings (Alaeddinoglu & Rol, 2020). The energy scarcity and economic stagnation challenges faced by developing countries like Pakistan provide a unique context that may not be directly applicable to developed nations (Asif et al., 2025b).

Furthermore, future research could explore other potential moderators, such as personality traits (Rafi et al., 2013) or emotional intelligence (Dong et al., 2022), which might influence how consumers perceive and react to SMM during a crisis. Investigating the role of digital transformation and leadership in fostering these online communities could also provide valuable managerial insights (Mahroof et al., 2025). The role of trust as a mediating mechanism between emotional intelligence and project team performance deserves further exploration (Asif et al., 2022). Additionally, exploring these dynamics in emerging contexts like the metaverse could be a promising avenue for future research (Asif et al., 2025d; Mehmood et al., 2024; Rafi et al., 2025c). The impact of artificial intelligence in revolutionizing human resource management presents another important direction for future investigation (Asif et al., 2025c). The philosophical foundations of electronic word-of-mouth and their evolution in digital environments continue to offer rich opportunities for scholarly inquiry (Rafi et al., 2021). Finally, longitudinal studies examining how these relationships evolve as the pandemic recedes would provide valuable insights into the temporal dynamics of consumer behaviour in crisis situations.

References

- Alaeddinoglu, F., & Rol, S. (2020). The role of social media in travel planning decisions of tourists. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*.
- Alizai, S. H., Asif, M., & Rind, Z. K. (2021). Relevance of motivational theories and firm health. *International Journal of Management*, 12(3), 1130-1137.
- Ashley, C., & Tuten, T. (2015). Creative strategies in social media marketing: An exploratory study of branded social content and consumer engagement. *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(1), 15-27.
- Asif, M. (2021). Contingent effect of conflict management towards psychological capital and employees' engagement in financial sector of Islamabad [Doctoral dissertation, Preston University]. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.17616.79360>
- Asif, M. (2022). Integration of information technology in financial services and its adoption by the financial sector in Pakistan. *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(2), 23–35. <https://doi.org/10.63544/ijss.v1i2.31>
- Asif, M. (2024). The complexities of bioterrorism: Challenges and considerations. *International Journal of Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences*, 3(3), 2175–2184.
- Asif, M., & Ali, A. (2025). Assessing the effects of artificial intelligence in revolutionizing human resource management: A systematic review. *Social Science Review Archives*, 3(4), 2887–2908. <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i3.1055>
- Asif, M., & Asghar, R. J. (2025). Managerial accounting as a driver of financial performance and sustainability in small and medium enterprises in Pakistan. *Center for Management Science Research*, 3(7), 150–163. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17596478>



- Asif, M., Imran, A., Joseph, V., Haqdad, U., Samraameer, & Asif, M. (2022). Mediating role of trust between emotional intelligence and project team performance in telecommunication sector. **Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 19*(4), 988–1005.
- Asif, M., Khan, A., & Pasha, M. A. (2019). Psychological capital of employees' engagement: Moderating impact of conflict management in the financial sector of Pakistan. *Global Social Sciences Review*, 4(3), 160–172. [http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2019\(IV-III\).15](http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2019(IV-III).15)
- Asif, M., Pasha, M. A., Mumtaz, A., & Sabir, B. (2023). Causes of youth unemployment in Pakistan. *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(1), 41–50. <https://doi.org/10.63544/ijss.v2i1.21>
- Asif, M., Pasha, M. A., Shafiq, S., & Craine, I. (2022). Economic impacts of post COVID-19. *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 56–65. <https://doi.org/10.63544/ijss.v1i1.6>
- Asif, M., Pasha, M. A., & Shahid, A. (2025b). Energy scarcity and economic stagnation in Pakistan. *Bahria University Journal of Management & Technology*, 8(1), 141–157.
- Asif, M., & Sandhu, M. S. (2023). Social media marketing revolution in Pakistan: A study of its adoption and impact on business performance. *Journal of Business Insight and Innovation*, 2(2), 67–77. <https://doi.org/10.52783/eel.v13i5.901>
- Asif, M., Shah, H., & Asim, H. A. H. (2025a). Cybersecurity and audit resilience in digital finance: Global insights and the Pakistani context. *Journal of Asian Development Studies*, 14(3), 560–573. <https://doi.org/10.62345/jads.2025.14.3.47>
- Asif, M., & Shaheen, A. (2022). Creating a high-performance workplace by the determination of importance of job satisfaction, employee engagement, and leadership. *Journal of Business Insight and Innovation*, 1(2), 9–15.
- Asif, M., Shahid, S., & Rafiq-uz-Zaman, M. (2025d). Immersive technologies, awe, and the evolution of retail in the metaverse. *International Premier Journal of Languages & Literature*, 3(4), 713–748. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18136481>
- Aslam, M., & Asif, M. (2025). Organizational power structures and the reproduction of gender inequality. *Apex Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(1), 57–67. <https://apexjss.com/index.php/AJSS/article/view/19>
- Asmussen, B., Harridge-March, S., Occhiocupo, N., & Farquhar, J. (2013). The multi-layered nature of the internet-based democratization of brand management. *Journal of Business Research*, 66(9), 1473–1483.
- Aurangzeb, & Asif, M. (2021). Role of leadership in digital transformation: A case of Pakistani SMEs. In *Fourth International Conference on Emerging Trends in Engineering*.
- Aurangzeb, Asif, M., & Amin, M. K. (2021). Resources management and SME's performance. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*, 9(3), 679–689. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2021.9367>
- Aurangzeb, Mushtaque, T., Tunio, M. N., Zia-ur-Rehman, & Asif, M. (2021). Influence of administrative expertise of human resource practitioners on the job performance: Mediating role of achievement motivation. *International Journal of Management*, 12(4), 408–421. <https://doi.org/10.34218/IJM.12.4.2021.035>
- Bagozzi, R. P., & Dholakia, U. M. (2002). Intentional social action in virtual communities. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 16(2), 2–21.
- Barrera, M. (1986). Distinctions between social support concepts, measures, and models. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 14(4), 413–445.
- Berton, A. (2008). The role of social media in marketing. *Marketing Intelligence Review*.
- CMO Council. (2011). *The economics of engagement*. Palo Alto, CA: CMO Council.
- Constantinides, E. (2006). The marketing mix revisited: Towards the 21st century marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*.
- Dong, X., Kalugina, O. A., Vasbieva, D. G., & Rafi, A. (2022). Emotional intelligence and personality traits based on academic performance. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 894570.



- Gensler, S., Völckner, F., Liu-Thompkins, Y., & Wiertz, C. (2013). Managing brands in the social media environment. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27(4), 242-256.
- Gibbs, J. L., Kim, H., & Ki, E. J. (2019). Investigating the role of social support in online health communities. *Health Communication*.
- Gottlieb, B. H., & Bergen, A. E. (2010). Social support concepts and measures. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*.
- Gruzd, A., Wellman, B., & Takhteyev, Y. (2011). Imagining Twitter as an imagined community. *American Behavioural Scientist*, 55(10), 1294-1318.
- Gunelius, S. (2011). *30-minute social media marketing*. McGraw-Hill.
- Hajli, N. (2014). A study of the impact of social media on consumers. *International Journal of Market Research*, 56(3), 387-404.
- Hajli, N., & Lin, X. (2014). The role of social support in e-commerce. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*.
- Hajli, N., Sims, J., Zadeh, A. H., & Richard, M. O. (2017). A social commerce investigation of the role of trust in a social networking site on purchase intentions. *Journal of Business Research*, 71, 133-141.
- Hajli, N., Shanmugam, M., Papagiannidis, S., Zahay, D., & Richard, M. O. (2020). Social media and value co-creation: A review and future research agenda. *Journal of Business Research*.
- Hanaysha, J. (2017). The impact of social media marketing on brand equity in the hotel industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*.
- Hassan, M., Rafi, A., & Kazmi, S. S. (2016). Impact of differentiated customer service, brand trust, brand commitment, and brand salience on brand advocacy. *International Review of Management and Marketing*, 6(4), 232-238.
- Iqbal Nawaz, I. (2022). Collaboration between sales and marketing increases the business performance: Evidence from Pakistani export industry.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.
- Kazmi, S. S., Rafi, A., & Hassan, M. (2016). Impact of benefit realization management on two-dimensional model of project success: evidence from Pakistani telecom industry. *International Review of Management and Marketing*, 6(4), 32-37.
- Kement, U., Çavuşoğlu, S., & Bükey, A. (2020). The effect of COVID-19 perception on travel intentions. *Journal of Tourism and Gastronomy Studies*.
- Kim, A. J., & Ko, E. (2012). Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brand. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(10), 1480-1486.
- Kumar, A., Bezawada, R., Rishika, R., Janakiraman, R., & Kannan, P. K. (2016). From social to sale: The effects of firm-generated content in social media on customer behaviour. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(1), 7-25.
- Liang, T. P., Ho, Y. T., Li, Y. W., & Turban, E. (2011). What drives social commerce: The role of social support and relationship quality. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 16(2), 69-90.
- Liew, V. K. (2020). The effect of COVID-19 on tourist behaviour. *Tourism Management Perspectives*.
- Mahroof, J., Rafi, A., & Ahmad, A. (2025). Talent management during digital transformation: Role of transformational leadership and resistance to change. *Technology in Society*, 83, 102964.
- Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons*, 52(4), 357-365.
- Mehmood, K., Rehman, M. A., Rafi, A., & Mogaji, E. (2024). Amplifying personalized experiences in the metaverse: a tourism and hospitality perspective. In *A Research Agenda For Tourism, Hospitality And The Metaverse* (pp. 9-24).
- Misbah, H. (2018). The impact of social media marketing on consumer buying behaviour. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*.



- Mumtaz, A., Munir, N., Mumtaz, R., Farooq, M., & Asif, M. (2023). Impact of psychological & economic factors on investment decision-making in Pakistan stock exchange. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 7(4), 130–135.
- Nicholl, J. (2020). The psychology of travel during a pandemic. *Annals of Tourism Research*.
- Park, D. H., Lee, J., & Han, I. (2007). The effect of on-line consumer reviews on consumer purchasing intention: The moderating role of involvement. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 11(4), 125-148.
- Pasha, M. A., Ramzan, M., & Asif, M. (2019). Impact of economic value added dynamics on stock prices fact or fallacy: New evidence from nested panel analysis. *Global Social Sciences Review*, 4(3), 135–147. [http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2019\(IV-III\).13](http://dx.doi.org/10.31703/gssr.2019(IV-III).13)
- Pelaez, A., Yu, M. Y., & Lang, K. R. (2013). Social buying: The effects of group size and communication on buyer performance. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 18(1), 127-158.
- Rachmawati, I., & Shishido, K. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on tourism demand. *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*.
- Rafi, A., Ahsan, M., Saboor, F., Hafeez, S., & Usman, M. (2011). Knowledge metrics of brand equity: critical measure of brand attachment and brand attitude strength. *Asian Journal of Business Management*, 3(4), 294-298.
- Rafi, A., Ali, A., & Waris, S. (2011). Knowledge metrics of brand equity; critical measure of brand attachment. *Far East Journal of Psychology and Business*, 3(1), 41-50.
- Rafi, A., Arzu, F., Khan, W. A., ul Haq, I., & Kashif, A. R. (2013). HEXACO model of personality traits and considerations with respect to entrepreneurial performance. *Asian Journal of Business Management*, 5(3), 320-325.
- Rafi, A., Jamil, A., & Arslan, H. R. (2022). The importance of color appropriateness in today's marketing; contingent role of persuasive knowledge. *Webology*, 19(2), 9754-9767.
- Rafi, A., Khan, A. J., Gill, S. A., & Imdadullah, M. (2021). The philosophy of electronic word of mouth and consumer buying behaviour in modern era. *iRASD Journal of Economics*, 3(3), 402–411.
- Rafi, A., & Rather, R. A. (2024). Consumer-brand relationships in tourism and hospitality research. In *Consumer Brand Relationships in Tourism: An International Perspective* (pp. 1-14).
- Rafi, A., Rehman, M. A., & Awan, A. (2024). Augmented reality, a tool to enhance the visitor tourism experience in ecotourism: A systematic review with future research directions. In *Supporting Environmental Stability Through Ecotourism* (pp. 99-116).
- Rafi, A., Rehman, M. A., Hussain, M., & Arslan, A. (2024). Consumer–brand relationship research: Emerging knowledge clusters and future research directions. In *Consumer Brand Relationships in Tourism: An International Perspective* (pp. 449-465).
- Rafi, A., Rehman, M. A., Musu, A., Rather, R. A., & Kautish, P. (2025d). Revisiting sustainable tourism research: bibliometric insights and future research agenda. *Anatolia*, 36(2), 347-362.
- Rafi, A., Rehman, M. A., Rather, R. A., & Mogaji, E. (2025b). Emotional well-being in peer-to-peer tourism: evidence from the couchsurfing community. *Consumer Behaviour in Tourism and Hospitality*, 1-17.
- Rafi, A., Rehman, M. A., Sharif, S., & Lodhi, R. N. (2025a). The role of social media marketing and social support in developing value co-creation intentions: a Couchsurfing community perspective. *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*, 74(3-4), 1275-1294.
- Rafi, A., Roy, S. K., Rehman, M. A., & Hasni, M. J. S. (2025c). Impact of multidimensional presence on user well-being in metaverse communities. *Decision Support Systems*, 189, 114382.
- Rafi, A., & Saeed, T. (2019a). Impact of salespersons' skill-set on customer behaviour: Mediating role of salespersons' relational behaviour in pharmaceutical industry. *City University Research Journal*, 9(3), 626-644.



- Rafi, A., & Saeed, T. (2019b). Salespersons as boundary spanners: Moderating role of salespersons' emotional intelligence in the pharmaceutical industry. *Paradigms: A Research Journal of Commerce, Economics & Social Sciences*, 13(1).
- Rains, S. A., & Young, V. (2009). A meta-analysis of research on the effects of social support. *Health Communication*.
- Ramaswamy, V., & Ozcan, K. (2016). Brand value co-creation in a digitalized world: An integrative framework and research implications. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 33(1), 93-106.
- Rasool, F., Arzu, F., Hasan, A., Rafi, A., & Kashif, A. R. (2013). Workplace bullying and intention to leave: The moderating effect of the organizational commitment. *Information Management and Business Review*, 5(4), 175-180.
- Rather, R. A., & Rafi, A. (2024). Consumer-brand relationships in tourism and hospitality research. In *Consumer Brand Relationships in Tourism: An International Perspective* (pp. 1-14).
- Reisinger, Y., & Mavondo, F. (2005). Travel anxiety and intentions to travel internationally: Implications of travel risk perception. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43(3), 212-225.
- Ridings, C. M., & Gefen, D. (2004). Virtual community attraction: Why people hang out online. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 10*(1).
- Schau, H. J., Muñiz Jr, A. M., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 30-51.
- Seema Mehta, S. (2020). Smart lockdown: A strategy for economic stability during COVID-19. *Journal of Economic Policy*.
- Selman Repišti, S. (2020). Psychological and behavioural responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. *PsyArXiv*.
- Selman, L. E., Chao, D., Sowden, R., Marshall, S., Chamberlain, C., & Koffman, J. (2020). Bereavement support on the frontline of COVID-19: recommendations for hospital clinicians. *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, 60(2), e81-e86.
- Senecal, S., & Nantel, J. (2004). The influence of online product recommendations on consumers' online choices. *Journal of Retailing*, 80(2), 159-169.
- Shafiq, K., Waqas, M., & Rafi, A. (2017). Impact of salespersons' skill-sets on sales performance: An empirical investigation of a telecommunication company. *IBT Journal of Business Studies (JBS)*, 2(2).
- Shahid, N., Asif, M., & Pasha, A. (2022). Effect of internet addiction on school going children. *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 12-47. <https://doi.org/10.63544/ijss.v1i1.3>
- Shahid Satar, M., Ahmad Rather, R., Hussain Parrey, S., Elbayoumi Salem, I., & Rafi, A. (2025). Understanding customer brand engagement through service environment: a multilevel analysis. *The Service Industries Journal*, 45(5-6), 500-525.
- Tajvidi, M., Wang, Y., Hajli, N., & Love, P. E. (2017). Brand value Co-creation in social commerce: The role of interactivity, social support, and relationship quality. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 105238.
- Tajvidi, M., Richard, M. O., Wang, Y., & Hajli, N. (2018). Brand co-creation through social commerce information sharing. *Journal of Business Research*.
- Trainor, K. J., Andzulis, J. M., Rapp, A., & Agnihotri, R. (2014). Social media technology usage and customer relationship performance: A capabilities-based examination of social CRM. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(6), 1201-1208.
- Usama, H. A., Riaz, M., Khan, A., Begum, N., Asif, M., & Hamza, M. (2022). Prohibition of alcohol in Quran and Bible (A research and analytical review). *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 19*(4), 1202-1211.
- Vargo, S. L., Maglio, P. P., & Akaka, M. A. (2008). On value and value co-creation: A service systems and service logic perspective. *European Management Journal*, 26(3), 145-152.
- Wang, Y., & Hajli, M. N. (2014). Co-creation in branding through social commerce: The role of social support. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*.



- Wang, X., Yu, C., & Wei, Y. (2014). Social media peer communication and impacts on purchase intentions: A consumer socialization framework. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(4), 314-326.
- Wen, J., Kozak, M., Yang, S., & Liu, F. (2020). COVID-19: potential effects on Chinese citizens' lifestyle and travel. *Tourism Review*, 76(1), 74-87.
- Xie, B. (2008). The mutual shaping of online and offline social relationships. *Information Research*.
- Zhang, T., Lu, C., Torres, E., & Chen, P. J. (2018). Engaging customers in value co-creation in the hotel industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*.

