

AI-Generated Content and Gen-Z Purchase Intention: The Impact of Brand Authenticity, Trust and Cause Marketing in Pakistan

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence or AI has revolutionized digital marketing providing brands with the opportunity to develop personalized, cost-effective and engaging social media content at a pace that was previously unheard of. From Instagram to TikTok, Facebook to YouTube, AI-based tools are now being recognized as a key strategy for brands to create captions, graphics, videos and more. Research is sparse, however, in understanding the effect of AI-generated content on consumers' reactions in new markets like Pakistan. This study explores the impact of AI-generated social media marketing content (AIGSMC) on the trust and willingness to purchase behavior of Generation Z consumers in Pakistan. It further explores the intermediating effect of brand authenticity and brand trust, and analyzes a mediator, cause marketing, that can affect consumers' reactions to AI-generated brand content. The study also takes into account the issue of disclosure transparency in AI, which can affect the power of these relationships. About 220–300 Gen Z consumers in Pakistan who are active users of social media, and have seen AI-generated brand content. Data will be analyzed by partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) by using SmartPLS 4 software using two steps namely measurement model testing and structural model testing. The research will likely show how AI-generated social media content can impact consumer brand trust and purchase intent by shaping their brand authenticity, brand trust, and cause-related marketing efforts, while clear and honest reporting of AI-generated content can boost consumer acceptance. The results will be useful for the ongoing body of literature on AI Marketing, Cause Marketing, Brand Authenticity, and Consumer behavior, as well as offer practical applications for marketers and policymakers in Pakistan.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, AI-Generated Social Media Content, Generation Z, Brand Authenticity, Brand Trust, Cause Marketing, Purchase Intention, Digital Marketing.

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) now is not just a new technology experiment but a key part of modern marketing (Labib 2024). Now, generative AI tools that generate text, images, videos, and other forms of digital content are becoming a part of the everyday work of marketing teams and agencies. Brands can rapidly and at a relatively low cost, create personalized social media content through these technologies (Kshetri, Dwivedi et al. 2024). The chapter presents the research problem, examines the role of AI in marketing, defines a research gap, and sets the objectives, questions and significance of the research.

The use of generative AI, such as large language models and image or video creation tools, enables brands to create content on social media at a pace that was previously difficult to achieve (Mim, Nandi et al. 2024). Retail or fashion or banking enterprises appear to be getting on board with it as it can facilitate sending personal messages frequently and at a lower production cost. This can

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be even more important for small businesses in some countries, such as Pakistan (Abraham and Edelman 2024). They can remain present on the web, even with smaller groups, and can reach out to a crowd that's already tech-savvy. Perhaps the most obvious benefit of this is the savings in cost, but there are other factors.

Direct to consumer brands especially may find it helpful to maintain uniformity. I believe the speed/reach aspect of that part can become a little confusing when trying to differentiate the speed it provides them vs the reach. (Dennis 2024). But the effectiveness of AI written articles also presents a set of serious questions about consumers' brand perception. The findings from the AI-authorship effect studies indicate that viewers are likely to view AI-generated content as less authentic, with fewer perceptions of trust and engagement with the brand (Pantano, Serravalle et al., 2024). Research on AI-generated influencer and advertising content also shows that the perception of AI engagement can impact authenticity and credibility perceptions. However, other studies indicate that transparency regarding the use of AI can enhance credibility by fostering openness and honesty (Park and Yoon 2024). Therefore, the transparency of AI disclosure is still complicated, and it could be reliant on the consumer's perception of the authenticity and credibility of the brand.

brands that demonstrate genuine values, consistency, honesty, and meaningful connections with their audiences. Within this debate, brand authenticity becomes particularly important (Bulmer, Palakshappa et al. 2024). Consumers increasingly seek When AI-generated content is perceived as overly automated or impersonal, it may create doubts about whether the brand genuinely represents the values communicated through its social media platforms (Zulfiqar, Shaikh et al. 2024). Such perceptions can subsequently influence brand trust, which plays a central role in consumers' willingness to consider and purchase products or services. Therefore, understanding the relationship between AI-generated social media content, brand authenticity, and brand trust is important for explaining Generation Z consumers' responses to AI-driven marketing (Stefaniia 2024).

Another aspect of this association is Cause marketing. Cause marketing refers to associating the marketing efforts of a brand with some social, environmental, or community-oriented cause (Stefaniia 2024). In Generation Z's case, since the members of this generation often receive social and values-related information from digital channels, cause marketing could affect consumer perception of the brand's authenticity and credibility. In the context of AI-generated social media content being associated with a significant social cause, the Consumers will not only assess the content for its authenticity but will also check whether the brand cares about the cause itself. Therefore, cause marketing could increase the positive response of the consumer, especially if the content is created by AI in line with the brand's values.

From the perspectives of authenticity and cause-marketing, technology adoption research suggests that consumers are able to question the authenticity of AI-based communication but acknowledge its usefulness, relevance and convenience. For example, when considering AI-enabled online shopping, studies using structural equation modeling showed that perceived usefulness and ease of use can still be important determinants of positive consumer attitudes even when artificial intelligence (AI) tools are involved (Sivakami & Marufa, 2025). Thus, AI-generated social media content can elicit positive and negative consumer reactions. While concerns about authenticity can erode trust, usefulness, personalization, transparency, meaningful cause-related communication may result in more favorable evaluations.

The application of generative AI technology in digital marketing has increased rapidly; however, there has been no study to analyze these associations simultaneously in the case of Pakistan,

particularly GenZ consumers (Mohiuddin 2024). The previous literature on this topic has mostly focused on AI adoption and the attitudes towards AI or technology acceptance in the developed countries, which means that there is little information available regarding GenZ consumers in developing countries' perception of AI-generated brand communication.

Hence, this study aims to analyze the impact of AI generated social media marketing content on enhancing brand trust and purchase intention among Gen Z consumers in Pakistan through the lenses of brand authenticity, cause marketing, and AI disclosure transparency. The purpose of this study is to understand the consumer's response to the use of AI in the marketing of brands and how transparency and purpose-oriented communication can help brands mitigate some of the concerns about the authenticity of AI-generated content by embedding these variables in a single framework.

Problem Statement

While generative AI has been adopted quickly in brand social media, researchers still have a lack of clarity and consistency regarding the psychological processes that relate to consumer trust and purchase intent when social media content is created via AI. There are conflicting results to date. The potential benefits of AI-generated content include enhanced content quality, personalization, engagement, and consumer convenience, while the negative aspects may involve a decline in the authenticity of content and brand trust due to consumers' awareness that content is generated by AI. This is an inconsistency, which reflects some key shortcomings in the literature.

First, most studies on AI-generated marketing content, brand authenticity and consumer trust have been carried out in the western and east Asian markets. While these findings may not be fully applicable to Pakistan, cultural values, collectivism, social norms, religious and ethical concerns, price sensitivity, and the usage of social media, may all have its effect on how Generation Z consumers interpret AI-generated brand communication. Although AI-powered digital marketing is gaining momentum in Pakistan in recent years, empirical studies on these relationships in the Pakistani context are scarce.

Second, there has been a tendency in prior studies to investigate separately or in fairly elementary associations such topics as brand authenticity, brand trust, transparency of AI use disclosure, and purchase intention (Afroogh, Akbari et al. 2024). At the same time, there has been no exploration of the combined effects of these variables in a single explanation framework. However, few works have analyzed the sequential effect of AI-generated social media content and purchase intention, where brand authenticity serves as an initial condition that builds up brand trust, leading to purchase intention. In addition, it has not been clarified what advantages transparency of AI use may offer for consumers, since for some, this transparency will increase their perception of honesty and credibility, while for others – will emphasize the artificial nature of the content.

Thirdly, there is also a new dimension of cause marketing that is not widely explored in the field of AI-generated brand communication (Efthymiou, Hildebrand et al. 2024). Cause marketing is the process of putting an association between social, environmental, community and humanitarian causes and the brand and communication on social media. The messages associated with the causes can affect consumers' perceptions of the authenticity and trustworthiness of that brand, especially when the cause communicated is aligned with the brand's values and actions for Generation Z consumers. But there isn't much known about the effectiveness of cause marketing in reinforcing positive reactions to AI-generated social media content or alleviating potential concerns about its artificiality. Therefore, the relationship between the AI-generated content, cause marketing, brand authenticity and brand trust is considered a key research gap.

Fourth, previous studies have not taken a cause-marketing perspective sufficiently to combine Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and a cause-marketing perspective as a holistic model for understanding AI-generated social media marketing (Gupta and Handa 2024). Situated in the intersection of these theories, ELM provides an understanding of how consumers engage with persuasive marketing messages, TAM helps to understand how consumers accept technology-enabled marketing, and Signaling Theory offers a foundation for understanding AI disclosure as a means of signaling transparency and credibility (Nishant, Nguyen et al. 2024). Cause marketing also brings in the concept of purpose and value alignment in consumers' brand evaluations. Combining these viewpoints can help to create a more holistic understanding of how Gen Z users interact with AI-generated brand content. Bringing them together may give a more rounded understanding of how Gen Z users engage with AI-generated brand content.

It has left a dilemma in the minds of the marketers, brand managers and policymakers in Pakistan regarding AI-generated social media content and how it impacts brand authenticity, brand trust and purchase intention. However, there is not an adequate empirical guidance on the impact of AI-generated social media content on brand authenticity, brand trust and purchases in the current context in Pakistan. But, it remains to be seen if the option to reveal the use of AI and promote with a cause can reduce potential concerns about the authenticity of AI-generated content. Addressing these gaps is crucial to developing effective and responsible AI marketing strategies to address the needs and preferences of Gen Z consumers in Pakistan.

Research Objectives

To examine the effect of AI-generated social media marketing content (AIGSMC) on brand authenticity among Generation Z consumers in Pakistan.

- To examine the effect of brand authenticity on brand trust.
- To examine the effect of brand trust on purchase intention.
- To examine the direct effect of AIGSMC on purchase intention.
- To examine the effect of cause marketing on brand authenticity and brand trust among Generation Z consumers.
- To examine whether brand authenticity mediates the relationship between AIGSMC and brand trust.
- To examine whether brand trust mediates the relationship between AIGSMC and purchase intention.
- To examine the sequential mediating effect of brand authenticity and brand trust in the relationship between AIGSMC and purchase intention.
- To examine whether AI disclosure transparency moderates the relationship between AIGSMC and brand trust.
- To examine whether cause marketing moderates the relationship between AIGSMC and brand authenticity and/or brand trust.
- To assess the combined influence of AIGSMC, brand authenticity, brand trust, AI disclosure transparency, and cause marketing on purchase intention among Generation Z consumers in Pakistan.

Literature Review

This chapter reviews existing research on AI-generated social media marketing content (AIGSMC) and its influence on consumer behavior. It focuses on the key constructs relevant to this study: AI-

generated social media marketing content, brand authenticity, brand trust, cause marketing, AI disclosure transparency, purchase intention, and Generation Z consumers in Pakistan. The chapter also presents the theoretical foundations of the study, explains the integration of the selected theories, develops the research hypotheses, and presents the conceptual framework in both narrative and diagrammatic form.

AI-Generated Social Media Marketing Content

AI-generated social media marketing content (AIGSMC) shall mean content of any kind, such as text, images, videos, captions, advertisements, interactive content, interactions, and any other content that is created entirely or in significant part by a generative AI system, and not solely by a person. Brands can easily create content quickly, cost-effectively, and in bulk with LLM, image generation systems, and automated video production tools. These technologies have become more and more relevant for digital marketing because they help to achieve personalization, uniformity and regular interactions with social media (Bharti, Khatr et al. 2024).

The customer's reactions to AI-generated marketing material are still a new and developing field of study, with mixed results. There are some studies that indicate that AI-generated content can be as effective as human-generated content if it is of acceptable quality and relevance. On the other hand, some research suggests that users may think that AI content is not as real, particularly when it involves something or a message that requires emotional involvement, personal opinion, creativity, or compassion (Rae 2024). Research on the AI-authorship effect also indicates that information about AI-generated content can impact authenticity and credibility.

Thus, the impact of AIGSMC is not likely to be the same for all consumers or in all applications. The perceived quality of their content, perceived human involvement, consumer involvement, transparency about the use of AI and the values communicated through the content can be factors that they rely on (Hollebeek, Menidjel et al. 2024). Given these, the present study investigates the impact of some psychological and contextual factors rather than assuming a direct impact on the AIGSMC purchase intention.

Brand Authenticity

Brand authenticity is the degree of consumers' perception of brand as being authentic, sincere, honest, consistent and loyal to the values that the brand represents (Sun, Dai et al. 2024). Authentic brands are usually seen as having a clear identity and acting in a consistent manner in line with the values communicated. Brand authenticity can help build emotional attachment, brand loyalty, brand advocacy and consumers' desire to relate with and buy brands.

The authenticity of brands is a concern when it comes to generative AI. Authenticity might be interpreted as a human intent or creativity, effort and genuine interaction (Labrecque, Peña et al. 2024). With this in mind, the high level of automation in communication could lead to questions regarding the authenticity of the communication in terms of authenticity to the brand's identity and values. Studies on algorithm aversion also indicate that consumers might not be convinced by the information generated by algorithms if they perceive technology as lacking in emotional intelligence or understanding. Thus, brand authenticity has become especially important in the brand trust relationship between AIGSMC and brand trust. When AI-generated content is convincing and aligns with the brand's voice, it can help build trust. However, if consumers feel like the content is fake, impersonal or part of a manipulation they may lose trust. Therefore, the concept of brand authenticity is put forward as one of the important mediating variables in this study.

Brand Trust

Consumers' trust of a brand is that it will be reliable, honest, competent and uphold its promises. In an environment where consumers might not have the chance to touch or feel products before buying, especially in the digital world, trust diminishes perceived risk (Kim and Kim 2024). Brand trust has been shown to be a key determinant of purchase intention, loyalty and positive word-of-mouth in previous studies.

The perception of source and credibility of marketing communication may play a role in the brand trust in AI marketing (Mogaji and Jain 2024). Transparency around AI usage can serve as an important trust factor. A transparency on how brands are utilizing AI may be interpreted as a symbol of honesty and transparency with consumers. But there can also be negative side effects, such as making consumers aware that it is artificial communication and fostering doubt when customers have doubts regarding AI.

This mixed evidence raises doubts about disclosure's positive impact on trust, and indicates that transparency in disclosure of AI usage should be considered as a boundary condition of the disclosure-trust relationship. So, the present study aims to explore potential effects of transparency regarding the use of AI on consumers' response to AI-generated social media content (Wortel, Vanwesenbeeck et al. 2024).

Cause Marketing

Consumers' trust in a brand is that it is reliable, honest, competent, and will keep its commitments. In an environment where consumers might not have the chance to touch or feel products before buying, especially in the digital world, trust diminishes perceived risk (Wortel, Vanwesenbeeck et al. 2024). Brand trust has been shown to be a key determinant of purchase intention, loyalty and positive word-of-mouth in previous studies.

Consumer perception of source and credibility of marketing communication could be a factor of brand trust in AI-driven marketing (Khan and Mishra 2024). Openness about the use of AI can be a key trust signal. Consumers might see openness about brands' use of AI as a sign of honesty and transparency. But there can also be negative side effects, such as making consumers aware that it is artificial communication and fostering doubt when customers have doubts regarding AI.

This mixed evidence calls into question whether disclosure is always a positive influence on trust and suggests that AI disclosure transparency should be explored as one of the boundary conditions of the disclosure-trust relationship. The present study, therefore, investigates potential impacts of transparency about AI use on consumers' reactions to AI-generated social media content.

AI Disclosure Transparency

The transparency of AI disclosure is the degree to which a brand acknowledges the use of AI in the creation of their marketing content, in a clear and transparent manner (Labrecque, Peña et al. 2024). Transparency can act as an information cue that helps to decrease the ambiguity of marketing communication origin. In the signaling sense disclosure can be a message of honesty, and responsible use of technology.

But disclosure can have a negative effect, too. Consumers are already suspicious of the inauthenticity in connection with AI-generated content, and informing them about this authenticity will only reinforce that feeling (Han 2024). Therefore, the impact of AI disclosure can vary based on the quality of the disclosure, the brand's credibility, the type of disclosure message, and the attitude of the consumer towards AI.

Based on this context, this study proposes to conceptualize the AI disclosure transparency as a moderating variable that may impact the relationship between AIGSMC and brand trust. This means transparency can be both a strength to consumer confidence or be a worry regarding artificiality, depending on the situation.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention is a consumer's readiness or expectedness to buy a product or service from a specific brand (B Javareshk 2024). It has become an important measurement of behavioral response for consumer research because it gives an opportunity to understand consumers' future buying decisions.

Perceived value, brand attitude, communication credibility, brand authenticity and brand trust are factors that drive purchase intention (Liu and Zheng 2024). Consumers can get purchase intentions in AI-generated marketing both in a cognitive and affective way. Trust in content created with AI might be lower than normal because there is a possibility of it being less authentic, which decreases purchase intent and leads to lower engagement. There is a risk that the authenticity of AI-generated content could be lower than usual, potentially lowering trust and ultimately purchase intent.

Brand trust is expected to be a key factor in bridging the gap between consumers' perceptions of AI-generated content and their purchase intention (Abu-Gharbieh 2024). The process can be further affected by the brand authenticity, which will serve to define the consumer's perception of the brand's communication. Cause marketing can bolster this when consumers believe that the brand has a socially responsible mission in keeping with the brand's values.

Generation Z Consumers in Pakistan

The term "Generation Z" typically applies to people born from around 1997 to 2012 (Wajdi, Susanto et al. 2024). This generation has been born into a world of smartphones, social networking, digital communication, and even more and more AI-driven technologies. Instagram, Tik Tok, Facebook and YouTube are the social media platforms that are indispensable for Gen-Z consumers to search, discover, interact with brands, research and take buying decisions (Yahya and Mammadzada 2024).

There will also be cause marketing, customized advertising and messaging, and influencer marketing for Generation Z consumers. They are a crucial consumer cohort to analyse the impact of AI in marketing since they are accustomed to digital technologies. Concurrently, they might be more attuned to the need for credibility, transparency, authenticity and brand purpose when absorbing a lot of digital content.

As Pakistan's digital landscape evolves at a rapid pace, there's a strong reason for brands to take advantage of AI-generated content for their social media marketing strategies (Mohiuddin 2024). On the contrary, there is limited empirical work that investigates the response of the Pakistani Generation Z consumers towards AI-generated brand communication, especially if it includes cause-related messaging and AI disclosure.

Theoretical Perspective

This study combines the three complementary theories, namely Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Signaling Theory.

The theory which explains consumers' processing of persuasive information in two ways is ELM (Hafyana and Alzubi 2024). While visual interest, personalization, brand reputation and cause-

related messages can all be peripheral cues, information emerged from AI in social media can be a factor to consider.

TAM provides an explanation of how consumers' perception of the usefulness and ease of use of technology can affect their attitude towards technology-enabled experiences. The useful, personalized and convenient nature of AI-generated content can be a boon for consumers, and it can also be a tool for determining authenticity.

The Signaling Theory provides a framework for understanding transparency of AI disclosure as well as cause marketing as signals of brand intent (Nishant, Nguyen et al. 2024). Truthful AI disclosure can be used to display honesty and social responsibility or brand values can be displayed with credible cause marketing. These signals may impact perceptions of authenticity and trust.

The study integrates these theories, providing a comprehensive picture of the relationship between the use and assessment of the social media content created by AI and the purchase decision of Generation Z consumers.

Proposed Relationships

Based on the reviewed literature, this study proposes that AI-generated social media marketing content influences purchase intention both directly and indirectly. Brand authenticity is expected to influence brand trust, while brand trust is expected to influence purchase intention. AIGSMC may therefore affect purchase intention through a sequential pathway:

AI-Generated Social Media Content → Brand Authenticity → Brand Trust → Purchase Intention

In addition, cause marketing is expected to influence consumers' perceptions of brand authenticity and trust by communicating social purpose and value alignment. AI disclosure transparency is proposed as a moderating factor that may alter the relationship between AI-generated content and brand trust.

Overall, the proposed framework recognizes that Generation Z consumers may simultaneously evaluate the technological nature, authenticity, transparency, social purpose, and credibility of AI-generated brand communication. This integrated perspective provides a basis for understanding the conditions under which AI-generated social media content can strengthen or weaken consumer trust and purchase intention in Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Signaling Theory are three complementary theories that are integrated in this study as a framework to understand how consumers in the Generation Z process, evaluate and respond to AI generated social media marketing content (AIGSMC). The framework is extended further by introducing the concept of cause marketing which introduces a value- and purpose-oriented perspective to consumers' judgments of AI-generated brand communication.

Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) explains how individuals process persuasive messages through two primary routes: the central route, which involves careful and systematic evaluation of message content, and the peripheral route, which involves relatively quick judgments based on cues such as source credibility, attractiveness, reputation, and emotional appeal (Cervi, 2021).

In the context of AI-generated social media marketing, Generation Z consumers may evaluate the actual quality, relevance, and usefulness of AI-generated content through the central route.

Alternatively, they may rely on peripheral cues such as brand reputation, perceived authenticity, AI disclosure, visual appeal, and cause-related messages. Cause marketing can therefore operate as an important persuasive cue when consumers associate a brand with a meaningful social or environmental purpose.

ELM provides the theoretical foundation for explaining how AIGSMC, cause-related messages, and AI disclosure can influence perceptions of brand authenticity and brand trust, which may subsequently affect purchase intention.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a model that tries to understand technology-related behavior based on the consumers' perceptions of usefulness and ease of use (Amin, 2025; Bowen & Watson, 2025). Consumers' positive attitudes and behavioral intentions for technology facilitated experiences are more likely to be formed when they feel that the technology helps them, is convenient, and easy to engage with.

In marketing, TAM proposes that AI-generated social media content could be beneficial for consumers, as it has the potential to deliver tailored, timely, informative, and visually impactful messages. Whether it's human or AI-generated content, when consumers feel it enhances the value and quality of their shopping experience online, it can be a welcome change.

Based on TAM, the potential direct relationship between AIGSMC and purchase intention could be considered. It also provides a rationale for the fact that technologies can be useful without being authentic. This means that consumers can see the value of AI-generated content but wonder if the brand is authentic.

Signaling Theory

Signaling Theory is a theory that helps to explain how parties can minimize information asymmetry by offering a signal that assists others in assessing the otherwise hard-to-observed qualities. Digital marketing can lead to consumers having incomplete information about the creation of marketing content and whether a brand's claims are actually true. Hence, transparency, consistency, and meaningful communication can serve as an indication of credibility and reliability (Abdulsalam & Tajudeen, 2024).

In this research, transparency about the use of AI in content creation is a key indicator, as disclosing the use of AI in producing content to consumers could help mitigate the uncertainty of the source of the content. This disclosure may help to improve levels of trust and honesty. But when consumers believe that using AI is an effort to create something more fake, disclosure might highlight the artificialness. For this reason, Signaling Theory does not impose a blanket endorsement of the positive effects of disclosing AI transparency.

Cause Marketing and Theoretical Integration

Theoretically, cause marketing adds a layer of social purpose and value alignment to consumers' assessments of the marketing communication created by artificial intelligence. Cause marketing is a technique that lets brands link their offerings and messaging to social, environmental, community, or humanitarian causes. If these efforts are seen as authentic and aligned with the brand's values, they can be understood as positive indicators of corporate responsibility and authenticity by the consumer.

From an ELM perspective, cause-related messages can serve as persuasive cues that influence consumers' evaluations of AI-generated content. At a Signaling Theory level, an effective cause

marketing message can indicate that a brand has authentic social values and is not just a business marketing tactic. Relevant and useful cause-related information that is provided via AI-enabled platforms can play a role in consumers' favorable perceptions of digital communication from a brand.

Combining these viewpoints suggests that the acceptance of AIGSMC products is not only technologically determined, but also consumer-centric. Generation Z consumers can assess the utility of the AI-generated content, its authenticity, transparency of AI usage, and the authenticity of the brand's social purpose.

Accordingly, the proposed theoretical framework suggests that AI-generated social media marketing content influences brand authenticity, which contributes to brand trust and ultimately purchase intention. Cause marketing provides an additional value-based dimension that may strengthen perceptions of authenticity and trust, while AI disclosure transparency may condition the relationship between AI-generated content and consumer trust.

The combined application of ELM, TAM, and Signaling Theory therefore provides a multidimensional explanation of how Generation Z consumers in Pakistan process and respond to AI-generated social media marketing content.

AI-Generated Social Media Marketing Content and Brand Authenticity

Artificial intelligence has become an important tool for producing personalized and large-scale social media marketing content (Korsunova 2024). Although AI enables brands to develop cost-effective and engaging communication, consumers may question the originality, genuineness, and human involvement behind AI-generated messages. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), consumers may evaluate marketing messages through careful consideration of their content or rely on cues such as credibility, visual appeal, and perceived authenticity (Evans, Bardus et al. 2024). When Generation Z consumers perceive AI-generated content as relevant, credible, and consistent with a brand's identity, their perceptions of brand authenticity may improve. Conversely, content perceived as artificial or impersonal may weaken authenticity judgments. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: AI-generated social media marketing content has a significant effect on brand authenticity.

Brand Authenticity and Brand Trust

Brand authenticity reflects consumers' perceptions that a brand is genuine, honest, consistent, and faithful to its values. Authenticity can reduce uncertainty and strengthen consumers' confidence in a brand's intentions and behavior. In social media environments, where consumers frequently encounter promotional messages without directly evaluating products, perceived authenticity becomes particularly important. When Generation Z consumers perceive AI-generated content as reflecting genuine brand values rather than merely automated commercial communication, they may develop greater confidence in the brand. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Brand authenticity has a significant positive effect on brand trust.

Brand Trust and Purchase Intention

Brand trust is consumers' confidence in the reliability, honesty and fulfillment of a brand's promises. Trust mitigates perceived purchasing risk and facilitates positive behavioral intentions. In digital marketing environments, customers are likely to trust the brand and the communication if they have had good experiences in the past before making a decision on purchasing a product or service. The brand's trustworthiness would boost the likelihood of consumers considering the brand's offerings and purchase intent. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Brand trust has a significant positive effect on purchase intention.

AI-Generated Social Media Marketing Content and Purchase Intention

AI-generated social media marketing content may influence purchase intention directly by providing relevant information, personalized recommendations, attractive visuals, and engaging promotional messages. From the perspective of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), consumers may respond favorably to technology-enabled experiences when they perceive them as useful and convenient. Accordingly, AI-generated content that communicates product benefits effectively may stimulate purchase intention independently of its indirect effects through brand authenticity and brand trust. However, the strength of this relationship may depend on consumers' perceptions of content quality and credibility. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: AI-generated social media marketing content has a significant effect on purchase intention.

Mediating Role of Brand Authenticity

Brand Authenticity could be a possible reason as to why AI-based content in social media marketing affects brand trust. The consumer does not look at the technology involved in marketing communication alone but also considers whether the marketing communication looks real and represents what the brand stands for. This could increase brand trust when AI-based content reflects this perception. On the other hand, artificial perception could reduce this effect.

H5: Brand authenticity mediates the relationship between AI-generated social media marketing content and brand trust.

Mediating Role of Brand Trust and Serial Mediation

Brand trust is a tool which allows converting the perception of marketing communication by consumers into purchase intention. The AI-generated content can affect purchase intention in two ways: directly by affecting brand trust, and indirectly by influencing brand authenticity. Within the proposed sequence, consumers initially assess brand and content authenticity, then create trust, and only after this proceed to forming purchase intention. The analysis of these relations together would allow understanding the place of psychological assessment of consumers in making decisions related to marketing communication generated by AI.

H6: Brand authenticity and brand trust sequentially mediate the relationship between AI-generated social media marketing content and purchase intention.

Moderating Role of AI Disclosure Transparency

AI disclosure transparency refers to the extent to which brands clearly communicate their use of artificial intelligence in producing social media marketing content. According to Signaling Theory, transparent disclosure can reduce information asymmetry and signal honesty and responsible communication. However, disclosure may also make the artificial origin of content more salient, potentially increasing consumer skepticism. Therefore, the effect of AI-generated content on brand trust may differ depending on the level of disclosure transparency. This study examines whether transparency changes the strength of this relationship among Generation Z consumers in Pakistan.

H7: AI disclosure transparency moderates the relationship between AI-generated social media marketing content and brand trust.

Moderating Role of Cause Marketing

Cause marketing involves associating a brand's promotional activities with a social, environmental, humanitarian, or community-related cause. Such initiatives may communicate a brand's values and demonstrate its commitment to objectives beyond commercial gain. From the perspectives of ELM and Signaling Theory, cause-related messages can act as persuasive cues and

signals of brand purpose, particularly when consumers perceive the cause as relevant and the brand's commitment as genuine.

In the context of AI-generated social media content, cause marketing may influence how consumers interpret the authenticity of brand communication. When AI-generated content communicates a meaningful cause that aligns with the brand's identity, consumers may perceive the content as more purposeful and consistent with the brand's values. This may strengthen the relationship between AI-generated content and brand authenticity. However, if cause-related communication appears opportunistic or inconsistent with the brand's actual behavior, its positive influence may be limited. Based on this reasoning, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H8: Cause marketing moderates the relationship between AI-generated social media marketing content and brand authenticity.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework considers AI-Generated Social Media Marketing Content (AIGSMC) as the independent variable and purchase intention as the dependent variable. On the other hand, brand authenticity and brand trust are the suggested mediators that describe how consumers react to the marketing content generated by AI. That is, AIGSMC is hypothesized to affect brand authenticity (H1) that affects brand trust (H2), hence purchase intention (H3). Additionally, there is an anticipated link between AIGSMC and purchase intention (H4), as well as a mediation of brand authenticity in the connection between AIGSMC and brand trust (H5), and sequential mediation of brand authenticity and brand trust in the connection between AIGSMC and purchase intention (H6).

In addition, the framework incorporates AI Disclosure Transparency and Cause Marketing as moderators. AI disclosure transparency is proposed to moderate the relationship between AIGSMC and brand trust (H7), reflecting the possibility that consumers' awareness of AI use may influence their trust in AI-generated marketing content. Cause marketing is proposed to moderate the relationship between AIGSMC and brand authenticity (H8). This relationship suggests that AI-generated marketing content associated with a credible social, environmental, or community-related cause may be perceived as more authentic when the cause aligns with the brand's values and actions. Conversely, a perceived mismatch between the brand's claims and its actual practices may weaken this effect.

Figure 2.1 presents the proposed conceptual framework, illustrating the direct relationships, sequential mediation pathways, and moderating effects of AI disclosure transparency and cause marketing.

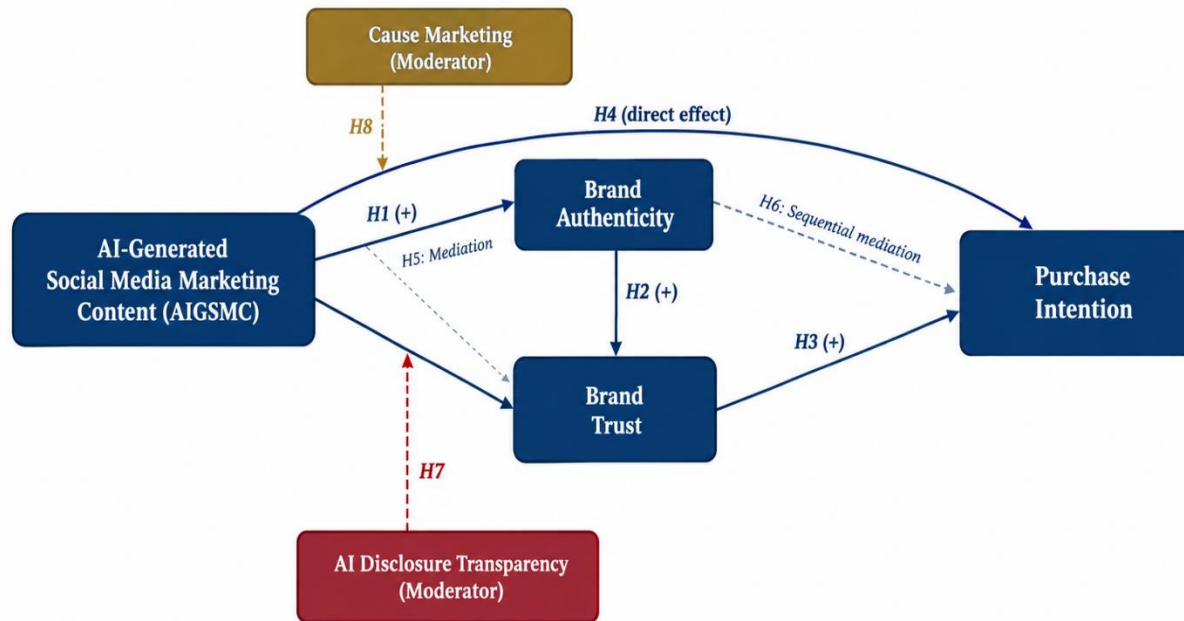
Table 2.1. Summary of Hypothesized Relationships

Hypothesis	Relationship	Type	Expected Direction
H1	AIGSMC → Brand Authenticity	Direct effect	Positive
H2	Brand Authenticity → Brand Trust	Direct effect	Positive
H3	Brand Trust → Purchase Intention	Direct effect	Positive
H4	AIGSMC → Purchase Intention	Direct effect	Significant effect; direction may vary
H5	AIGSMC → Brand Authenticity → Brand Trust	Mediation	Significant indirect effect
H6	AIGSMC → Brand Authenticity → Brand Trust → Purchase Intention	Sequential mediation	Significant indirect effect

Hypothesis	Relationship	Type	Expected Direction
H7	$\text{AIGSMC} \times \text{AI Disclosure Transparency} \rightarrow \text{Brand Trust}$	Moderation	Moderating effect; direction to be tested
H8	$\text{AIGSMC} \times \text{Cause Marketing} \rightarrow \text{Brand Authenticity}$	Moderation	Positive in

2.2 Schematic Diagram

Conceptual Framework: AI-Generated Social Media Marketing Content, Brand Authenticity, Brand Trust, Purchase Intention, AI Disclosure Transparency, and Cause Marketing



Research Methodology

The methodology used for this chapter is presented to investigate the effect of AI-Generated Social Media Marketing Content (AIGSMC) on the brand authenticity, brand trust, and purchase intention of Generation Z in Pakistan. It describes the Research Philosophy, Approach, Design, Population, Sampling, Sample Size, Research Instrument, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Validity and Reliability, and Ethical Considerations. The methodology will evaluate the proposed conceptual model with the mediated role of brand authenticity and brand trust and the moderated role of AI disclosure transparency and cause marketing.

Research Approach

The study follows a **deductive research approach**, moving from established theoretical perspectives to hypothesis formulation and empirical testing. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Signaling Theory provide the theoretical foundations for explaining how consumers evaluate AI-generated marketing content and how these evaluations may influence brand authenticity, brand trust, and purchase intention.

Eight hypotheses developed in Chapter 2 will be tested using survey data. These hypotheses examine the direct effects of AIGSMC on brand authenticity and purchase intention, the relationships between brand authenticity, brand trust, and purchase intention, the mediating and

sequential mediating mechanisms, and the moderating roles of AI disclosure transparency and cause marketing. The deductive approach is therefore appropriate for assessing whether the empirical findings support the proposed theoretical relationships.

Research Design

A cross-sectional survey design will be used with a quantitative approach (Choudhury, Elkefi et al. 2024). Quantitative research allows consumers' perceptions to be measured and relationships between the various variables can also be examined statistically. Since the cross-sectional design is to collect data from respondents at one specific time, the design is appropriate for examining the proposed conceptual model within the time frame of the research.

The data will be gathered by using a structured questionnaire from which the eligible Generation Z consumers of Pakistan will be selected. The measurement model will be evaluated, and the structural relationships (moderation, mediation, sequential mediation) will be tested by using PLS-SEM.

The cross-sectional survey can be used for theory testing, but is less effective than an experimental or longitudinal design in establishing causality. For this reason, the results will be analysed in terms of hypothesized statistical relationships and not as causal relationships.

Target Population

The target population comprises Generation Z consumers residing in Pakistan who actively use social media and have encountered branded social media content. For operational purposes, the study will use the birth-year definition of Generation Z adopted in the research. Respondents born between 2000 and 2012 may be considered, subject to the study's eligibility requirements and applicable consent procedures.

Eligible participants must meet the following criteria:

1. Reside in Pakistan.
2. Fall within the study's defined Generation Z age range.
3. Use at least one major social media platform, such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, X, or LinkedIn, at least three times per week.
4. Have encountered branded or promotional content on social media.
5. Be able to provide informed consent and understand the questionnaire.

In addition, this survey will gauge whether the respondents are aware of AI-created content and exposed to cause-related brand communication activities. These questions will be used to test whether the respondents have an understanding of the constructs being measured in the study. Should the respondents be unaware of AI-created content or cause-related marketing, brief explanations may be offered to them before the item.

Sampling Technique

A non-probability sampling approach, incorporating purposive and convenience sampling, will be used for data collection. Purposive sampling will ensure that those people who meet the set criteria are included as respondents, while convenience sampling will make the process of respondent selection easier by leveraging networks in universities, among students and on social media.

This method is useful in accessing digitally active members of the Generation Z cohort in various locations in Pakistan. Nevertheless, since the participants will not be selected using a probabilistic sampling approach, there might be issues of self-selection and sampling biases in the data collected. Therefore, generalization will be done very carefully.

In as much as possible, respondents will be selected in order to reflect differences based on the city of residence, educational background, gender and social media usage.

Sample Size

It is expected that 300 valid responses will be collected for the final analysis. Taking into consideration the issue of incomplete questionnaires, non-eligible participants and poor responses, it is expected that around 350 to 400 initial responses will be collected.

The proposed sample size is supposed to allow estimating measurement and structural models of the study, including indirect effects and interactions connected with mediation and moderation. Nevertheless, the justification of sample size should not be based on some general rules only. The adequacy of sample size should be estimated taking into account the complexity of the proposed model, the number of predictors, effect sizes, statistical power and significance level.

Therefore, the formal power analysis or PLS-SEM sample-size assessment should be carried out in order to test whether the target of 300 valid responses is adequate for detecting the hypothesized effects. This issue is especially topical for moderation hypotheses since the interaction effects usually require larger samples than the direct effects.

The sample size of the final sample will be determined after data collection and screening. Sample-size recommendations based on previous studies will be supported by full references.

Research Instrument

Primary data will be collected using a structured, self-administered questionnaire developed from established measurement scales and adapted to the context of AI-generated social media marketing in Pakistan. The questionnaire will contain three main sections.

Section A: Screening and Demographic Information

This section will establish respondent eligibility and collect relevant background information, including age or birth year, residency, gender, city, education, social media usage frequency, platforms used, and previous exposure to branded social media content. Questions assessing familiarity with AI-generated content and cause-related marketing will also be included.

Section B: Measurement of Research Constructs

This section will measure the six principal constructs in the conceptual framework:

1. AI-Generated Social Media Marketing Content (AIGSMC)
2. Brand Authenticity
3. Brand Trust
4. Purchase Intention
5. AI Disclosure Transparency
6. Cause Marketing

The questionnaire items will be adapted from relevant, previously validated scales wherever suitable. The wording will be reviewed to ensure that respondents can distinguish AI-generated marketing content from general social media advertising and can understand the concepts of AI disclosure and cause marketing.

AI disclosure transparency will measure perceptions of how clearly brands communicate their use of AI in marketing content. Cause marketing will assess respondents' perceptions of brand communications that connect products or services with social, environmental, humanitarian, or community-related causes. Its measurement will be aligned with its proposed role as a moderator of the relationship between AIGSMC and brand authenticity.

Section C: Additional Feedback

A limited set of open-ended questions could be asked so that the respondents can give their opinions on the topics like AI-generated content related to brands, brand credibility, and cause-related marketing. These will be useful for the contextual understanding of the responses and will not be taken into account for the main analysis of PLS-SEM.

Main construct items will be measured by the use of the five-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire will be checked for its clarity, validity, and consistency before it is applied on a large scale. It would be desirable to conduct a pilot testing if possible.

Data Collection Procedure

Data will be collected via an online questionnaire through university networks, students' groups, and social media platforms. Before conducting the survey, the participants will be briefly informed on the aim of the study, on the voluntary nature of participation, on confidentiality policy, and on the possibility of quitting the survey.

The respondents who will not qualify to participate in the study will be eliminated from the data collection via screening questions. Data will be screened for completeness, duplicates, unrealistically short completion times, and other signs of poor-quality data. Criteria for screening out the data will be determined prior to the data analysis.

Data collection will be continued until the required number of valid data will be collected or the specified data collection time will expire. The final report will include information about the dates of data collection, channels of recruitment, number of collected responses, number of screened out data, and the final sample size.

Table 3.1. Summary of Measurement Constructs and Instrument Sources

Construct	Sub-dimensions / Items	Sample Item	Source / Basis
AI-Generated Content (AIGC)	18 items across Perceived Content Quality (6), Perceived Content Originality (6), and AI Origin Awareness (6)	"AI-generated brand posts on social media appear visually professional and well-designed."	Singh (2024); Sivakami & Marufa (2025)
Brand Authenticity	5 items	"Brands that use AI to generate content can still communicate their genuine identity and values."	Adapted from Pichler et al. (2021); Qadeer & Awad (2025)
Brand Trust	5 items	"I trust brands that use AI-generated content to communicate with consumers."	Adapted from Koleva (2025); Ninan et al. (2020)
Cause Marketing	5 items measuring consumer perceptions of brand support for social/environmental causes	"I am more likely to purchase from a brand when its social media content supports a cause that I care about."	Adapted from cause-related marketing literature and consumer response scales

Purchase Intention	5 items	“I would consider buying products from a brand that uses AI-generated social media content.”	Adapted from established purchase-intention scales in Gen Z consumer behavior research (Kapoor et al.)
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The survey will be disseminated through electronic channels, such as Google Forms, through universities, student groups, and social media sites targeted at Generation Z in major Pakistani cities. The participation in the study will be voluntary and informed consent will be sought from each participant before taking him/her to the questionnaire. A short explanation regarding the nature of the research, confidentiality of responses and completion time of the questionnaire will be provided at the beginning of the questionnaire. The questionnaire will measure the perceptions of respondents in regard to AI generated content, brand authenticity, brand trust, cause marketing, and purchase intention. Pilot study with 30-40 respondents in the target population will be conducted to test the clarity, relevance of questions, and reliability of the questionnaire.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis will be carried out in two phases. The first phase will involve the use of IBM SPSS Statistics to perform data screening, which will include checking for missing values, possible outliers and common method bias through Harman's one factor test. SPSS will be further used to derive descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means and standard deviations in order to describe the demographics and responses of the participants.

The second phase will involve performing PLS-SEM using SmartPLS 4. Data analysis will start with the measurement model to check for reliability and validity of the constructs before moving to the structural model to test for the hypothesized relationships between AI-generated content, brand authenticity, brand trust, cause marketing and Gen Z purchase intention. Bootstrapping will be done using 5,000 resamples in order to derive standard errors, t-statistics, confidence intervals and significance levels for the hypothesized effects.

Where applicable, the analysis will also examine the role of brand authenticity, brand trust, and cause marketing in explaining the relationship between AI-generated content and Gen Z purchase intention. Mediation and/or moderation analysis will be conducted according to the relationships specified in the conceptual framework.

Validity and Reliability

The reliability and validity of the measurement instruments will be assessed before testing the structural relationships. Internal consistency reliability will be evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), with values of 0.70 or above generally considered acceptable. Convergent validity will be assessed using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with an AVE value of 0.50 or above indicating satisfactory convergent validity.

Discriminant validity will be assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The Fornell-Larcker criterion will be used to confirm that each construct shares greater variance with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model, while the HTMT ratio will provide an additional assessment of discriminant validity. Content validity will be supported through the adaptation of measurement items from previously established and

validated scales. In addition, expert review and the pilot study will be used to assess the clarity, relevance, and suitability of the measurement items for the Pakistani Gen Z context.

Reliability and Validity Output

Since data collection has not yet taken place, the reliability and validity tables and figures presented in the following sections will serve only as illustrative formats for reporting the expected PLS-SEM results. The numerical values presented in these tables are hypothetical placeholders and do not represent actual empirical findings. Once the survey data have been collected and analyzed using SmartPLS 4, the placeholder values will be replaced with the actual results.

The final analysis will report Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and indicator loadings for the measurement model. Discriminant validity will be reported through the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT values. The structural model results will subsequently report path coefficients, t-values, p-values, confidence intervals, effect sizes, and coefficient of determination (R^2), where appropriate.

Table 4.1. Cronbach's Alpha Values

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
AI-Generated Content (AIGC)	0.887
Brand Authenticity (BA)	0.812
Brand Trust (BT)	0.845
Cause Marketing (CM)	0.779
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.831

Note: All reported values are hypothetical placeholder values for illustrative purposes only. All values are above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency reliability. These values will be replaced with the actual Cronbach's Alpha results obtained from the final survey data analysis.

Table 4.2. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	AIGSMC	BA	BT	ADT	PI
AIGSMC	0.742				
BA	0.418	0.731			
BT	0.389	0.512	0.756		
ADT	0.276	0.334	0.298	0.718	
PI	0.402	0.447	0.561	0.312	0.764

The diagonal values represent the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct; the values off the diagonal represent correlations between constructs. Discriminant validity is supported when each diagonal value is higher than the other values in its row and column.

Table 4.3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Construct	AIGC	BA	BT	CM	PI
AI-Generated Content (AIGC)	—				
Brand Authenticity (BA)	0.512	—			
Brand Trust (BT)	0.478	0.612	—		
Cause Marketing (CM)	0.341	0.398	0.356	—	
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.489	0.534	0.652	0.371	0.764

The values presented are hypothetical placeholder values for illustrative purposes only and will be replaced with the actual HTMT results obtained from the final PLS-SEM analysis. All placeholder HTMT values are below the conservative threshold of **0.90**, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity among the constructs.

Table 4.4. Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Indicator Items	Factor Loadings (Illustrative Range)	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
AI-Generated Content (AIGC)	AIGC1–AIGC18	0.71–0.86	0.887	0.901	0.568
Brand Authenticity (BA)	BA1–BA5	0.72–0.84	0.812	0.865	0.562
Brand Trust (BT)	BT1–BT5	0.74–0.87	0.845	0.891	0.621
Cause Marketing (CM)	CM1–CM5	0.70–0.82	0.779	0.850	0.532
Purchase Intention (PI)	PI1–PI5	0.73–0.85	0.831	0.881	0.597

All values are hypothetical placeholders for illustrative purposes only and must be replaced with actual SmartPLS 4 results after data collection. Indicator loadings of approximately 0.70 or higher, Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values of 0.70 or higher, and AVE values of 0.50 or higher generally indicate acceptable measurement quality.

Table 4.5. F-Square (f^2) Effect Size Values

Structural Relationship	f^2 Value	Effect Size
AI-Generated Content → Brand Authenticity	0.185	Medium
AI-Generated Content → Brand Trust	0.072	Small
Brand Authenticity → Brand Trust	0.214	Medium
Brand Authenticity → Purchase Intention	0.096	Small
Brand Trust → Purchase Intention	0.267	Medium
Cause Marketing → Purchase Intention	0.143	Small
AI-Generated Content → Purchase Intention	0.035	Small

The values presented are hypothetical placeholders for illustrative purposes only and must be replaced with actual results from SmartPLS 4 after data collection. The f^2 effect size assesses the contribution of an exogenous construct to the explained variance of an endogenous construct. Common guidelines classify f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 as small, medium, and large effects, respectively; values below 0.02 indicate negligible effects.

Table 4.6. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hyp.	1) Relationship	Effect Type	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	STDEV	T Statistics	P Values
H1	AIGC → Brand Authenticity	Direct	0.325	0.331	0.052	6.250	< 0.001
H2	Brand Authenticity → Brand Trust	Direct	0.298	0.304	0.049	6.082	< 0.001
H3	Brand Trust → Purchase Intention	Direct	0.276	0.281	0.055	5.018	< 0.001
H4	AIGC → Purchase Intention	Direct	0.142	0.146	0.061	2.328	0.020
H5	AIGC → BA → BT	Mediation	0.097	0.101	0.023	4.217	< 0.001
H6	AIGC → BA → BT → PI	Sequential Mediation	0.027	0.029	0.010	2.700	0.007
H7	AIGC × CM → Brand Trust	Moderation	0.089	0.093	0.041	2.171	0.030
H8	AIGC × CM → Brand Authenticity	Moderation	0.104	0.108	0.040	2.600	0.010

A hypothesis is considered supported when the p-value is below 0.05 and the 95% confidence interval does not include zero.

Data Analysis and Results

Since this is a proposal for research, Chapter 6 outlines the anticipated structure and process of analysis after the collection of data, unlike an actual empirical analysis. The analysis process is bound to follow the guidelines set out in Chapter 3 on methodology. This will entail the use of SmartPLS 4 software to evaluate both the measurement and structural models and test hypotheses.

Respondents' Demographic Profile

This section will discuss the demographics and social media characteristics of the respondents. It will cover factors such as gender, age group, education level, city, social media platforms used, frequency of social media use, exposure to AI-generated content, and knowledge of brands using AI-generated content. Frequencies and percentages will be used to describe the characteristics of the respondents. This will give a clear picture of the sample for the analysis of the structural model results that follow.

Descriptive Statistics

This section will report descriptive statistics for all measured items and constructs, including the mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum, skewness, and kurtosis. These statistics will provide an initial assessment of the distribution and general pattern of responses. Descriptive results will be reported for the major constructs of the study, including AI-Generated Content, Brand Authenticity, Brand Trust, Cause Marketing, and Gen Z Purchase Intention.

Measurement Model Assessment

Reliability and validity will be checked by evaluating the measurement model. The reliability of the indicators will be measured using outer loading, and values above 0.70 will be deemed acceptable. Internal consistency reliability will be examined using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. Convergent validity will be measured using Average Variance Extracted

(AVE), with an acceptable minimum value of 0.50. Discriminant validity will be measured using the Fornell-Larcker Criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio. Indicators that do not meet the recommended criteria will be considered for elimination based on statistical as well as theoretical reasons.

Structural Model Assessment

Following the assessment of reliability and validity of the measurement model, the structural model will be tested. Multicollinearity will first be tested by Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) with the value less than 5 being acceptable. The structural model will then be tested using standardized path coefficients (β), coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). These tests will show the strength of the hypothesized relationship, the explanatory power of the model, the practical significance of each predictor, and the predictive ability of the model.

Hypothesis Testing

The proposed hypotheses will be tested using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS 4 with 5,000 resamples. The analysis will report standardized path coefficients (β), t-statistics, p-values, and 95% confidence intervals. A hypothesis will generally be considered supported when the p-value is below 0.05 and the corresponding confidence interval does not include zero. The analysis will examine the direct relationships between AI-generated content, brand authenticity, brand trust, cause marketing, and Gen Z purchase intention according to the proposed conceptual model.

Mediation Analysis

The study will examine whether Brand Authenticity and Brand Trust mediate the relationship between AI-generated content and Gen Z purchase intention. The indirect effects will be tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The analysis will determine whether AI-generated content influences purchase intention directly and/or indirectly through brand authenticity and brand trust.

Where the proposed model specifies a sequential mediation relationship, the analysis will also examine whether AI-generated content enhances brand authenticity, which subsequently strengthens brand trust, ultimately influencing Gen Z purchase intention. The type of mediation will be determined by examining the significance and direction of the direct and indirect effects.

Moderation Analysis

This section will examine the moderating role of Cause Marketing in the relationship between AI-generated content and Gen Z purchase intention, where specified in the conceptual framework. The moderation effect will be tested in SmartPLS 4 using an appropriate interaction-term approach and bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

A significant interaction effect will indicate that the strength of the relationship between AI-generated content and purchase intention changes according to the level of cause marketing perceived by Generation Z consumers. Where the moderation effect is significant, a simple slopes analysis will be conducted to demonstrate how the relationship differs at higher and lower levels of cause marketing.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter will serve as the conclusion of the study and will give a summary of the contributions of the study to knowledge regarding the association between AI-generated content and Gen Z

purchase intention in Pakistan. This chapter will highlight the implications of the anticipated findings, the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and will situate the study in the existing literature on AI-based marketing and CRM.

Theoretical Implications

This study is expected to contribute to the literature in several ways. First, it will provide a framework for understanding how AI-generated content influences Generation Z consumers' purchase intentions within the Pakistani context. By incorporating brand authenticity and brand trust into the model, the study will explain the psychological mechanisms through which AI-generated marketing content may influence consumer responses.

Second, the study will highlight the importance of brand authenticity in an environment where consumers increasingly encounter AI-generated marketing communication. It will examine whether authenticity perceptions can transform AI-generated content from a technology-driven communication tool into a credible and meaningful brand experience.

Third, the study will emphasize the role of brand trust as an important mechanism connecting AI-generated content with consumers' purchase intentions. This will provide greater insight into how Gen Z consumers evaluate and respond to AI-supported brand communication.

Fourth, by incorporating cause marketing, the study will extend existing AI marketing research by examining whether a brand's association with social or societal causes can strengthen consumer responses to AI-generated content. This is particularly relevant for Generation Z, a consumer group that may place considerable importance on brands' social values, purpose, and contribution to society.

Lastly, this paper will provide empirical evidence in the context of Pakistan, which is a developing economy and is less represented in the literature about AI-generated marketing content, brand authenticity, brand trust, cause marketing, and Generation Z purchase behaviors. Lastly, this paper will provide empirical evidence in the context of Pakistan, which is a developing economy and is less represented in the literature about AI-generated marketing content, brand authenticity, brand trust, cause marketing, and Generation Z purchase behaviors.

Practical Implications

The expected findings will provide useful guidance for marketers, brand managers, advertising agencies, and digital marketing professionals in Pakistan. If AI-generated content is found to positively influence purchase intention through brand authenticity and brand trust, marketers should focus not only on the efficiency of AI-generated content but also on its ability to communicate genuine, credible, and consistent brand values.

If brand authenticity emerges as a significant mediator, organizations should ensure that AI-generated content remains aligned with the brand's identity, values, tone, and consumer expectations. Human oversight may be particularly important to prevent AI-generated communication from appearing artificial, misleading, or disconnected from the brand.

If brand trust is found to be a significant mechanism, marketers should prioritize transparency, accuracy, consistency, and credibility when developing AI-generated content. Content should provide meaningful value rather than focusing solely on automation and engagement.

If cause marketing significantly strengthens the relationship between AI-generated content and purchase intention, brands may benefit from integrating relevant social and community causes into their AI-supported marketing strategies. However, cause-related communication should be

genuine and consistent with the brand's actual activities to avoid perceptions of cause-washing or opportunistic marketing.

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