ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Impact of Social Media Engagement on Consumer well-being with mechanism of Anti-Consumption behavior

Asia Bibi [1], Dr. Muhammad Irfan [2], Dr. Ammarah Ahmed [3]

Authors' Affiliations:

[1]PhD Scholar/Lecturer, Baluchistan University of Information Technology, Engineering, and Management Sciences (BUITEMS), Quetta. Pakistan

[2]Associate Professor, Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUITEMS), Quetta. Pakistan

[3]Assistant Professor, Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUITEMS), Quetta. Pakistan

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Corresponding author(s):

Asia Bibi
Email: Asia.bibi@buitms.edu.pk

A B S T R A C T

The study aims to examine impact of Social Media Engagement (SME) on Consumer Well-Being (CWB), mediated by Anti-consumption Behavior (ACB). Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory was used to test relationships. Main variable of this research is Consumer well-being which is aligned with sustainable development goals (SDGs) 3, good health and well-being. A convenience sampling was implied, and 414 responses were collected to check the fashion and apparel industry in Pakistan. Quantitative data was analyzed by Smart PLS software. The findings indicate positive impact of SME on CWB with mechanism of ACB. The findings are important for academicians and practitioners as well. Moreover, this research model refers to real-world concerns through aligning key constructs with broader SDGs.

Keywords: Social Media Engagement, Anti-Consumption Behavior, Consumer Well-Being, Sustainable Development Goals, Fashion & Apparel Industry.

1 | INTRODUCTION

With ever-increasing human progress, improved quality of life and well-being have emerged as global issues faced by the humankind (Arutyunov, 2021; Shaker & Mackay, 2021). The sustainable development goal (SDG) number three of "good health and well-being" represents the UN's global commitment towards the value of a balanced life (Venkatesh, 2022). This goal needs to be achieved by concerted global efforts in multiple domains including the consumer well-being domain. A recent study suggests that to gain well-being fair distribution of wealth and resources is an appropriate approach (sustainable environment etc) (Bhogal-Nair et al., 2024). Moreover, if firms do not adopt corporate responsibility and sustainability in their day-to-day operations, it may also influence the well-being of consumers. This issue can be resolved through

regulating advertising and imposing penalties on deceptive claims (Louis & Lombart, 2024). Social media engagement is an energetic interaction of consumers through likes, comments, subscribes in multiple social media platforms. Therefore, High engagement reinforces viewer's connections, brand loyalty, boosting visibility, and customer relationships. Hence social media engagement is one of the important predictors of consumer well-being. SME is positively linked with ACB and the following execution of well-being. Consequently, ACB is taken as a mediator in the relationship between SME and CWB.

Consumer well-being plays a vital role for attaining consumer's quality of life and satisfaction. Fashion brands encounter a rapid cycle of new collections, and their presence on social media places this cycle directly in front of consumers every day. How consumers evaluate their own lives, finances, and purchases under such conditions remains insufficiently understood.

Prior research has shown that social media engagement with brands reinforces brand attachment, loyalty and purchase intention. Therefore, evidence on its welfare consequences is less consistent. Some work reports gains in enjoyment and a sense of belonging, while other work points to social comparison, financial strain, and post-purchase dissatisfaction. These contradictory findings suggest that the link between engagement and well-being is not simply direct, and that an intervening mechanism may be at work.

Anti-consumption is a plausible candidate for that mechanism. Frequent exposure to brand content may lead some consumers to reflect on their buying habits and respond by cutting back, avoiding particular brands, or resisting impulsive purchases. Such behavior has mostly been studied as an ethical or environmental stance, and little research has examined it as a response to digital brand engagement or as a pathway that shapes well-being. Empirical tests of this mediating role among consumers of clothing brands are especially rare.

Guided by the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework, this study therefore examines the effect of social media engagement on consumer well-being, with anti-consumption behavior as a mediating variable. Data were collected from consumers of clothing brands, with the aim of clarifying whether engagement with brand content supports or undermines well-being, and whether anti-consumption explains the process.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation: This research is based on Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), which postulates that environmental stimuli affect an individual's internal state, that in turn shapes behavioral and evaluative consequences. The framework has been extensively employed in consumer research, particularly in online and social media settings, because it enlightens how external marketing signals translate into consumer reactions. In the present model, social media engagement with clothing brands represents the stimulus, because consumers are constantly exposed to brand content, promotions, and interactive features that encourage their attention and participation. Anti-consumption behavior signifies the organism component, portraying the consumer's processing of this exposure through reflection, restraint, and deliberate reduction or avoidance of clothing purchases. Additionally, consumer well-being characterizes the response, reflecting the overall evaluation consumers form about their lives and consumption experiences after passing through this process. The framework thus provides a coherent logic for

positioning anti-consumption as the mechanism of mediating between social media engagement and consumer well-being.

2.1 | Social Media Engagement and Consumer well-being

Social media engagement denotes interaction of consumers with digital content, through comments, likes, shares, and other reactions, reflecting an attention in the content. Consumer well-being refers to life satisfaction and happiness in life through health, emotional satisfaction and material well-being. Social media engagement has a noteworthy impact on consumer well-being. Contemporary research has discovered in-depth understanding the link between social media influencers and consumer well-being. Jamil et al. (2024) studied the impact of social media influencers on consumer well-being and purchase intentions. The verdicts showed that dynamics such as source credibility, argument quality, and the influencer's perceived kindness positively forecast consumer well-being, which in turn increases purchase intentions. Hence, it suggests that meaningful engagement with social media influencers can contribute positively to consumers' perceptions and behaviors.

However, the impact of social media engagement on well-being is not universally positive. A systematic review by Murari et al. (2024) analyzed the effects of social media use on various aspects of social well-being. The research revealed that increased social media use, especially among youngsters, is associated with negative outcomes such as cyber bullying, lifestyle comparisons, and decreased self-esteem. These findings highlight the potential risks of social media engagement on consumer well-being. In this regard this study suggested a complex impact of social media on well-being which depends upon individual differences and their usage patterns (Yang & Feng, 2024). Therefore, the relationship between social media engagement and consumer well-being is unexplored. Hence, the first hypothesis of the study is projected below:

H1: Social Media Engagement is positively linked with consumer well-being.

2.2 | The mediating role of Anti-Consumption Behavior between Social Media Engagement and Consumer well-being

Studies are unexplored regarding the complex relationships between social media engagement, anti-consumption behavior, and consumer well-being. There is a need to investigate this link to confirm the consumerism to attain consumer well-being. In has been found that digitalization era is sifted from brick to click strategies through social media (Bibi et al., 2026). Therefore, contemporary studies revealed that consumption-oriented engagement on social networking sites can lead to decreased self-esteem and enhanced anxiety amongst young consumers, advising possible negative impacts on well-being which highlights the significance of understanding how different types of social media engagement influence consumer behavior and well-being (Ho & Ito, 2019).

Accordingly anti-consumption behaviors, for example voluntary simplicity and reduced materialism, have been linked with enhanced well-being. A recent research investigated the effects of simplifying behaviors found that individuals who consciously reduce their consumption levels often experience increased life satisfaction and psychological well-being. Hence, this advocates that anti-consumption behaviors may serve as a safeguard/buffer counter to the negative effects of excessive social media engagement (Zhao et al., 2024).

However, there is significant public and political concern regarding the impact of social media on the well-being of children and young people. Politicians, tapping into popular sentiment and parental anxieties, are actively pursuing legislation to ban or restrict social media use for those under 16, as seen in Australia and other countries like Spain, France, and the USA. These concerns are fueled by the belief that social media negatively impacts childhood, leading to nostalgia for "social-media-free childhoods" and anxieties about children's future (Archer, 2025).

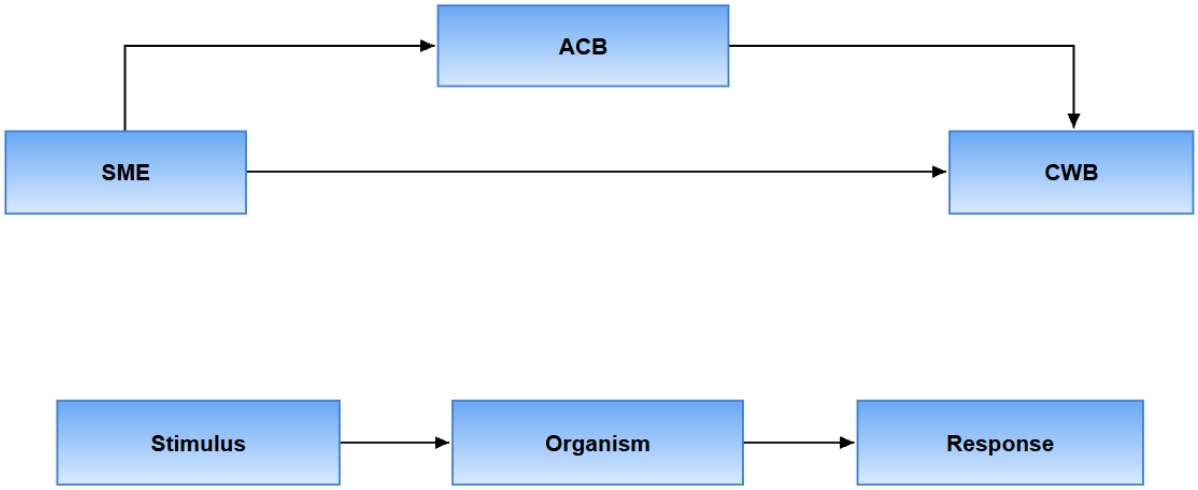
Thus, in a specific context, SME related to pro-environmental activism can positively contribute to mental well-being. Research indicates that environmental activism can act as a "buffer" against climate change anxiety and mental health issues. Given that social media can encourage pro-environmental activism and consumption, this suggests an indirect positive link to well-being through collective action (Panni et al., 2025).

Accordingly, the luxury fashion industry's approach to SMM highlights how marketing strategies are adapting to consumer preferences, including a shift towards content emphasizing comfort, wellness, and sustainability, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This adaptation indicates that brands are responding to evolving consumer values that implicitly touch on aspects of well-being, aiming to align their image with what consumers find meaningful and purpose-driven (Huang & Zhou, 2025).

The mediating role of anti-consumption behavior between social media engagement and consumer well-being is an area warranting further inquiry. Hence, it is plausible that consumers who are involved in anti-consumption practices may mitigate the adverse effects of social media-induced consumption pressures, thus enhancing their overall well-being. Understanding this mediating role could inform strategies to promote healthier social media use and foster consumer well-being. Therefore, the second hypothesis of the study is proposed below:

H2: Anti-consumption behavior mediates the relationship between social media engagement and consumer well-being.

Figure 1



3 | METHODOLOGY

3.1 | Sample and data collection

Positivism philosophy with deductive and quantitative data was used as this study needs empirical evidence to check the accuracy of data collected by consumers of fashion and apparel industry. Therefore, this research consists of survey, used to test the data through structured questionnaire (Ghazinoory & Aghaei, 2024). Consumers responded through questionnaire and expressed their opinion and views on the subject matter under investigation. Cross sectional design was used which states gathering of data from many participants at one time. Questionnaires were filled with minimal or no interference and the data was collected by consumers, who use clothing brands. 500 questionnaires were distributed among Pakistani consumers through hybrid mood (google forms & physical collection). 414 usable data was incorporated for analysis and Smart PLS was implied to test the data collected.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Description	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	220	53.14
	Female	194	46.86
Age	18–24 years	166	40.10
	25–31 years	88	21.26
	32–38 years	88	21.26
	39–45 years	52	12.56
	46 & above	20	4.83
Marital Status	Single	242	58.45
	Married	172	41.55
Qualification Level	Matriculation	3	0.72
	Intermediate	81	19.57
	Bachelors Degree	135	32.61
	Masters or higher Degree	195	47.10
	Both equally	161	38.89
Family Monthly Income (PKR)	Below 50,000	51	12.32
	51,000 to 100,000	95	22.95
	100,001 to 150,000	74	17.87
	151,000 to 200,000	62	14.98
	Above 200,000	132	31.88

Instrumentation: Constructs for this study were measured through standard instruments which have been validated and developed earlier. All items were adapted and measured by 7-point Likert scale.

Table 2

Instrumentation

S#	Constructs	Authors	Items
1	SME	Ni et al. (2020)	11
2	ACB	Iyer and Muncy (2009)	8
3	CWB	Diener et al. (2010)	8

3.2 | Assessment of Measurement Model

Measurement model consists of Reliability (consistency) and Validity (accuracy). Measurement model composed of convergent validity and discriminant validity. To assess convergent validity of items outer loadings, cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and average variance extract are used. Hence, outer loadings must be greater than 0.70 and all constructs met the set criterion. In addition to checking the construct's reliability Cronbach alpha, composite reliability and average variance extract. Moreover, values of Cronbach alpha values must be greater than 0.70 and, in this study, all constructs according to standard. Whereas composite reliability values also met the said criterion of greater than 0.70. Likewise, Average variance extract (AVE) values are greater than 0.50 considered good and in this research all constructs meet the set criteria.

All the values met the thresholds according to set criteria for assessment of measurement model.

Table 3

Constructs factor/outer loadings

Constructs	Outer loadings
AE	0.704-0.843
BE	0.710-0.811
CE	0.769-0.805
GIC	0.764-0.827
S	0.780-0.829
CWB	0.722-0.857

Table 4

Reliability Assessment

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extract
ACB	0.918	0.933	0.635
CWB	0.929	0.941	0.668
SME	0.930	0.940	0.589

Discriminant validity specifies that constructs are different from each other and it can be assessed through Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT), Fornell-Larker and cross loadings. Mostly used criteria for discriminant validity are HTMT and Fornell-Larker. Therefore, HTMT is used to check discriminant validity as the ratio of between-construct correlations to within-construct correlations. Hence, values of TMT should be less than 0.85 (strict) or 0.90 (lenient).

Table 5

Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT)

Constructs	ACB	CWB	SME
ACB			
CWB	0.608		
SME	0.475	0.435	

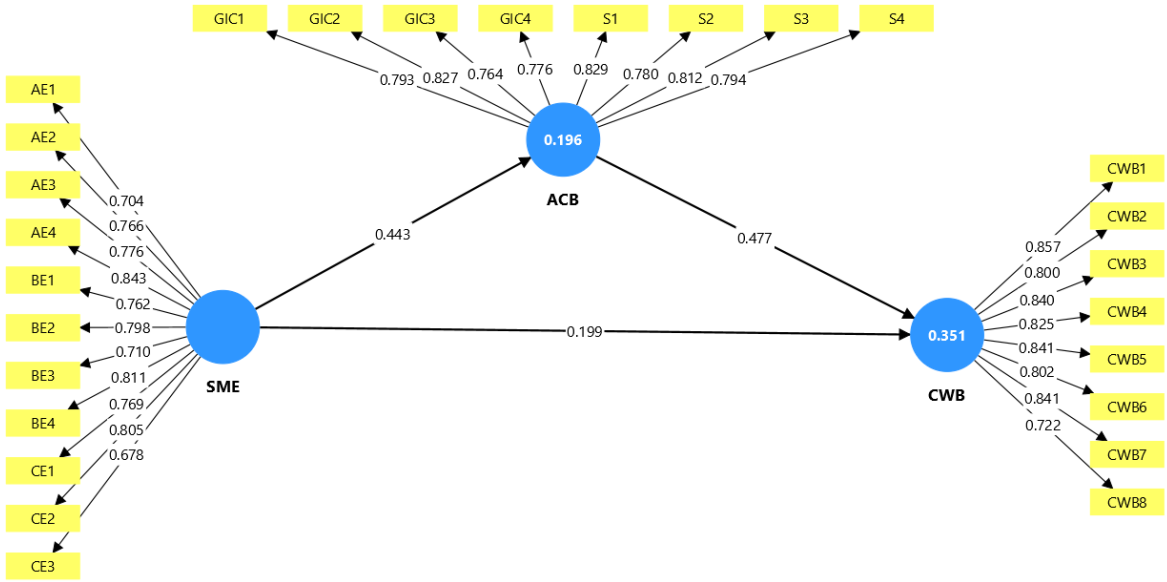
Discriminant validity is also assessed by Fornell-Larcker**,** where we compare the square root of each construct's AVE with that construct's correlations with every other construct. According to standard the square root of a construct's AVE should be greater than its highest correlation with any other construct.

Table 6

Fornell-Larker Criterion

Constructs	ACB	CWB	SME
ACB	***0.797***		
CWB	0.565	***0.817***	
SME	0.443	0.410	***0.767***

Figure 2



Assessment of Structural Model: The second part of smart PLS-SEM consists of Structural Model. It explains the relationships between constructs through beta values, p values, t values, R^2, f^2 and Q^2. According to results all hypotheses have positive and significant ($t > 1.96$) results, which support the hypotheses. Therefore, Social Media Engagement has a weak-to-moderate direct effect on Consumer well-being ($\beta = 0.199$, $f^2 = 0.049$, small), a stronger effect on ACB ($\beta = 0.443$, $f^2 = 0.244$, medium). Additionally, ACB has the strongest effect on CWB ($\beta = 0.477$, $f^2 = 0.281$, medium to large).

Table 7

Hypothesis	Relationship	B	S. E	T-statistic	R^2	Q^2	f^2	Decision
H1	SME → CWB	0.199	0.044	4.514	0.351	0.160	0.049	Supported
H2	SME → ACB	0.443	0.038	11.594	0.196	0.189	0.244	Supported
H3	ACB → CWB	0.477	0.042	11.385	0.351	0.160	0.281	Supported

Table 8

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	B	T-statistic	S. E	p-value	Confidence Interval 95%		Decision
						Confidence interval 2.5%	Confidence interval 97.5%	
H4	SME → ACB → CWB	0.211	8.166	0.026	0.000	0.164	0.264	Supported

4 | DISCUSSION

The research objectives were about the relationship of SME and CWB and the mediating role of ACB in the said relationship. The hypotheses were formulated accordingly, for which the results are supported empirically. The result shows that consumers who are actively engaged in social media activities can attain well-being. Social media engagement provides individuals with the opportunities to interact with influencers and other netizens, information exchange, explore consumption preferences and participation in online discussions. These meaningful interactions and experiences can lead to their well-being as a consumer since they feel connected, involved and have a chance to reflect on the satisfaction (purpose, positive relations, autonomy etc.) obtained through their consumption choices, preferences and experiences.

The positive relationship between SME and CWB is aligned with the existing research in the field that reports the positive influence of meaningful social media engagement on overall wellbeing. Extant literature demonstrates that social media facilitates social interactions, knowledge sharing, expression of individuality and engagement in virtual communities that lead to enhanced psychosocial experiences. The present findings broaden this view to consumer wellbeing indicating that positive and active engagement with social media can be a source of well-being to consumers as they obtain enhanced satisfaction and meaning from their experiences associated with consumption. Consequently, the finding is broadly consistent with the literature that cites the positive impact of constructive social media engagement on wellbeing (Al Amin et al., 2026; Dahiya et al., 2024; McLean et al., 2025; Shafqat et al., 2023; Verduyn et al., 2022).

The study also proposed that ACB mediates the relationship between SME and CWB. The results confirmed that SME leads to consumer well-being through ACB representing an underlying behavioral mechanism. This shows that meaningful social media engagement not only becomes a source of CWB in a direct psychosocial way but also induces them to be involved in conscious consumption choices. Through social media interactions, consumers get more awareness related to consumption. This shows that ACB serves as a mediating mechanism transforming SME into CWB, implying that SME does not influence CWB only directly, part of its positive influence operates via ACB.

These direct and indirect relationships between SME and CWB can be explained from the view of Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory. When consumers meaningfully interact online with communities and others, they get a chance to share knowledge, gain new perspectives and to express themselves. Through meaningful social media engagement, consumers share their consumption experiences and start making conscious consumption decisions in the form of ACB.

The findings are significantly important from the perspective of young consumers in the fashion/apparel industry of Pakistan. Young consumers usually rely on social media to have product information, consumption-related experience and knowledge sharing. Their online interactions may go further to discuss issues like responsible consumption and conscious consumption. These discussions can lead them to review their consumption choices and move towards reducing consumption in the form of ACB and hence meet their wellbeing goals of leading a value-driven life. In this way, the findings fit into the context of Pakistani young

consumers in the fashion/apparel industry where social media is on the front stage as an interaction platform and a tool to get exposure to modify their consumption practices and adopt conscious ones.

4.1 | Theoretical Implications

This research extends the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model where social media engagement act as stimulus, anti-consumption behavior act as organism that shapes consumer well-being in terms of response (organism). It has been noticed that generally SOR model has been used purchase-related outcomes, so considering anti-consumption as an internal state that carries the effect of social media into well-being is a novel contribution. The findings of this study show that social media is not only a driver of consumption but can also persuade reflective, responsible choices. This study also links consumer research to sustainability narrative by connecting well-being (SDG 3) with anti-consumption behavior (SDG 12), and it confirms ACB as a mediator in the SME-CWB relationship.

4.2 | Practical Implications

For practitioners such as brands and marketers, the findings suggest that social media engagement need not rely on promoting excessive consumption, because content that supports mindful and sustainable lifestyles that can build healthier consumer relationships. Companies or clothing brands can use educational content, influencer campaigns and community discussions that promote reuse, repair, sharing and conscious buying, which supports responsible consumption (SDG 12). Policymakers and public health organizations can use social media to run awareness campaigns on responsible consumption, which in turn improves consumer well-being and contributes to good health and well-being (SDG 3). Platform designers and consumers can also benefit by encouraging purposeful rather than passive or compulsive use of social media.

4.3 | Limitations and Future Recommendations

This study used cross-sectional data from consumers of different clothing brands, so it cannot find true causality to show how engagement, anti-consumption behavior and well-being change over time. In this regard, future longitudinal or experimental designs must be used. The sample is limited to one industry and one cultural context, so future studies should replicate with other sectors, countries and platforms. Future studies could add mediators or moderators such as social comparison, digital literacy, materialism or environmental concern and could compare platforms like Facebook, TikTok and Instagram.

5 | CONCLUSION

This research shows that social media engagement positively influences consumer well-being, and that this relationship is mediated by anti-consumption behavior supported by SOR model. Engagement with social media encourages consumers to adopt more conscious and responsible consumption patterns, that leads to improving their well-being. The findings support the Sustainable Development Goals on good health and well-being (SDG 3) and responsible consumption and production (SDG 12). Future research could test the model across different cultures, platforms and time periods, and could add moderators such as digital literacy, environmental concern or materialism.

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