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AN INFLUENCE OF MULTIPLE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS ON INDIVIDUAL DECISION MAKING

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ABSTRACT

Social media is the quite new but emerging phenomenon and it has started to influence individual decision making quite impressively in recent times. Hence, this study tries to understand how multiple social media platforms in Pakistan can influence on individual decision making (IDM) in terms of social, economic and political aspects. The study conducted was quantitative in nature and employed close ended questionnaire in order to collect data from 161 university students. The study concluded at the end that, there is a significant but moderate relationship between YouTube usage, Twitter usage, LinkedIn usage and individual decision making (IDM) as a whole. However, there is a significant but strong relationship between Facebook usage, WhatsApp Usage, Instagram usage and individual decision making as a whole. Subsequently, there is a significant but strong relationship between social media platforms and individual decision making with respect to its economic, social and political aspects. In addition to that, when the model fit was applied, it was found ultimately that, the value of SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual) is less than 0.05 and NFI (Normed Fit Index) is also above 0.90, which indicates that, the model is closely fit. Hence, there is a significant relationship between independent variables (social media platforms) and dependent variable (individual decision making) of the study. Moreover, it can be concluded from the study that, social media platforms do play a vital role in economic and social decision making while, in terms of political decision making, their role is limited.

Keywords: *Social Media Platforms, Economic, Social, Political, Quantitative*

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, social media plays a vital role in one's life and especially in the decision making process of an individual with respect to his/her economic, social and political aspect. However, it was not until the start of 21st century, when the social media platforms started to emerge on the world horizon and drilled a significant space in one's life. Social media platforms can be defined as those applications used by the individuals to share their personal and professional content with the wider population through the use of internet. The major ones can be termed as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat and Pinterest (Chitra & Kalaiselvi, 2021). Historically, decision making process of an individual involves one's knowledge, experience and understanding of problem at hand along with social capital (e.g. family, friends and community) available to be used for the optimal decision to make in order to solve the issue at hand (Claridge, 2018). That process has been disturbed with the emergence of social media as, individual once reach to their immediate social capital in the case of complex decision making, now turn their consideration towards the social media platforms. Hence, social media usage has been growing in the

world populace with the each passing day (Karlson, 2022). Power & Wren (2011) argued that, there are number of ways, social media can influence on one's decision making, it is through seeking advice from online friends and communities and second, it is through getting valuable information and knowledge regarding novel problem at hand. Third, it is through the knowledge and experience shared by the wider online community on the social media platforms. However, the reliability of the information being shared on the social media is questionable. Chung et al., (2013) on the other hand mentioned that, social media can influence on the decision maker through two ways, informative and normative. If the decision maker accepts the information provided on the social media and then makes his/her mind to choose the one option over another, then that defines the informative approach. In contrast, if the individuals seek social acceptance of their choice, then the normative approach is taken into account. Similarly, Yadav et al. (2013) added that, if the social media helps an individual to make a right choice then, the positive outcome of it should be encouraged. Moreover, it has been observed that, individuals make multiple decisions daily and they can be categorized as personal, social, organizational and even political (Dellaert et al., 2018). Similarly, Rathi et al., (2021) narrated that, political choice making by an individual is also driven by the social media and social media usage with the trust on the social media campaigns and news can lead towards specific political choice. Similarly, Ahmad et al., (2019) conducted the study in Pakistan and concluded that, political awareness and political participation is directly influenced by the use of social media platforms. Hence, Carney (2022) concluded that, WhatsApp platform plays a pivotal role in providing adequate information about party policy and activities in India. Therefore, this study has taken into account six social media platforms including YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and LinkedIn in order to understand their impact on the individual decision making with respect to one's economic, social and political dimensions.

1.2 Problem Statement

According to World Bank Data (2021), 63% of the world population is using the internet, however, there are huge gaps being found between developing and developed countries. For example, 99% of Norway and 100% of Iceland population use the internet as compared to 46% in India, 62% in Indonesia, 55% in Nigeria and only 21% in Pakistan. Similarly, it has also been found that, there are 4.1 billion social media users around the world, which is more than the half of the world population (around 8 billion) (Sanchez-Paramo & Legovini, 2021). According to Digital 2023-Pakistan report (2023) that, there are almost 72 million social media users in Pakistan and 99% of them are the YouTube users, while more than 70% uses the Facebook, while all other social media platforms are also used by good number of population(Khan, 2023). Moreover, Pakistan is among the top 10 countries where the WhatsApp is mostly used- 52 million users while, India ranks the top in the list (World Bank, 2023). Zeitel-Bank & Tat(2014) argued that, social media influences on individuals through number of ways, it affects the individuals thinking mechanism, his/her capacity to reflect upon the matters at hand and take the final decision and it also contribute in the development of overall personality of an individual. Hence, Siddiqui & Singh (2016) added that, there are more number of youngsters using social media around the world, hence, the information provided through those platforms can change the course of action of those youngsters with either positive or negative outcomes. Hence, this study has taken into account the major social media platforms in order to understand their relationship with the youngsters' decision making in terms of economic, social and political aspects.

1.3 Hypothesis

H1= There is a significant relationship between YouTube Usage and Economic Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H2= There is a significant relationship between YouTube Usage and Social Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H3= There is a significant relationship between YouTube Usage and Political Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H4: There is a significant relationship between YouTube usage and Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H5= There is a significant relationship between Facebook Usage and Economic Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H6= There is a significant relationship between Facebook Usage and Social Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H7= There is a significant relationship between Facebook Usage and Political Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H8: There is a significant relationship between Facebook usage and Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H9= There is a significant relationship between Twitter Usage and Economic Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H10= There is a significant relationship between Twitter Usage and Social Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H11= There is a significant relationship between Twitter Usage and Political Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H12: There is a significant relationship between Twitter usage and Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H13= There is a significant relationship between WhatsApp Usage and Economic Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H14= There is a significant relationship between WhatsApp Usage and Social Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H15= There is a significant relationship between WhatsApp Usage and Political Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H16: There is a significant relationship between WhatsApp usage and Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H17= There is a significant relationship between Instagram Usage and Economic Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H18= There is a significant relationship between Instagram Usage and Social Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H19= There is a significant relationship between Instagram Usage and Political Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H20: There is a significant relationship between Instagram usage and Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H21= There is a significant relationship between LinkedIn Usage and Economic Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H22= There is a significant relationship between LinkedIn Usage and Social Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H23= There is a significant relationship between LinkedIn Usage and Political Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H24: There is a significant relationship between LinkedIn usage and Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H25: There is a significant relationship between the usage of Social Media Platforms and Individual Decision Making (IDM).

2.1 Literature Review

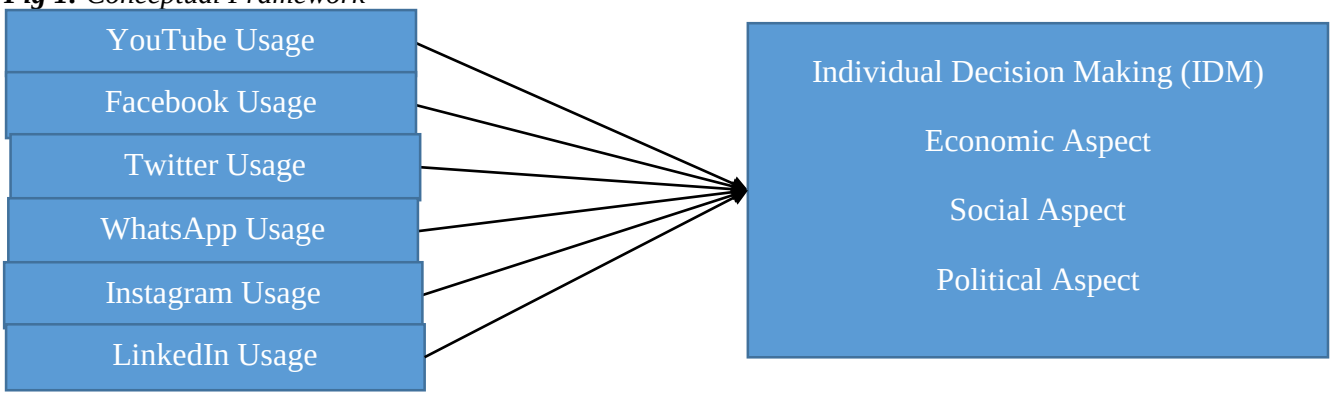
However, the concept of social media is as old as telegraph in 1792, which was used to transmit and receive messages but, it was not until the start of this century, that the concept has been evolved through the emergence of some user-friendly platforms like LinkedIn in 2003, Facebook in 2004 YouTube in 2005, Twitter in 2006, WhatsApp in 2009 and finally Instagram in 2010 (Sobrino, 2021;Edosomwan et al., 2011).However, Sobrino (2021) further added that, there are number of social media types including SNSs (social network sites- that are used to help people connect personally, professionally and otherwise(e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and etc.), User generated content- which can be used by individuals to share their personal content through creativity with others(e.g. YouTube, Flickr, Wikipedia etc.), Trading and marketing sites-which are used to sell or buy products(e.g. Amazon, eBay and etc.), Play and game sites(PGS)-which are used by individuals to play games virtually(e.g. Farmville, The Sims Social, Angry Birds and etc.). As, this is not viable to take into account all the social media types and conduct the study, hence, this study has chosen only few social media platforms in order to understand their impact on the individual decision making(IDM). Gamper(2022) although argued that, there are few number of networking theories exist, however they all emphasize upon how the social actors(agency) can build networks through their interconnections or social structures(meso-level) in order to connect ultimately with the institutions(macro-level). He further added that, there are two types of theories including grand theories and middle-range theories and social networking mainly lies into the domain of middle-range theories. Hence, Liu et al., (2017) argued in their article that, two-step communication flow theory developed by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet in 1944, better

explains how the individual is being influenced through their social networks and opinion leaders. That theory is still relevant today as, social media users do follow each other's' opinion leadership because of the common social or political narrative. It has been observed that, the extensive use of social media networking is done due to the assumption that, the extended network will help an individual to achieve his/her personal and professional goals. Shah et al., (2012) hence mentioned in their study that, rich use of Facebook can increase the academic performance of university students in USA through their frequent connectedness with their resourceful friends. However, Valenzuela et al., (2017) conducted their study on political participation of Chilean youths through Facebook and Twitter. They concluded that, both social media platforms play a significant role through encouraging youths to participate in political protests. Moreover, Zhu et al., (2022) added that, WhatsApp groups are mostly used by youngsters in Netherlands in order to have subtle political discussions even with the strangers and anyone joining those groups. They further concluded that, young adults joining those groups feel safer and committed due to having maximum control of their communication channel. However, Rajkumar et al., (2022) highlighted through their study that, LinkedIn is mostly used by professionals for the job mobility around the globe and weak ties play a major role in this regard. However, the role of weak ties diminishes after a certain extent and the impact of it also relies upon the interaction intensity and the nature of mutual connections. Thus, this study has filled the knowledge gap by combining multiple social media platforms (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and LinkedIn) in order to elaborate their individual and combined impact on the individual decision making(IDM) in terms of social, economic and political realm.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The research is based upon two concepts, theory of strong and weak ties by Granovetter (1973) and Network externality concept by McGee and Sammut-Bonnici (2014). Coulson (2009) utilized the theory of Granovetter with social capital dimension and argued that, online social networking sites are being used to tap on the weak ties in order to increase one's social capital that may help in achieving one's personal, professional and even political goals. On the other hand, Network externality concept has been elaborated by McGee and Sammut-Bonnici (2014), they explain that users can get maximum benefit from their associated network by increasing the size of the network and hence generating maximum economic value until and unless the tipping point is being touched. Hence, social media platforms encourage the existing users to add their friends, family members and others in the network because, that indirectly impacts upon the economic value of concerned organization. However, it also helps an individual to use those social media contacts for various social, economic and even political causes. Therefore, this study has been conducted in order to explain how the social media usage can impact on one's social, economic and political decisions and that indirectly hints on the interrelationships of an individual with their connections on the social media platforms as depicted in Fig 1.

Fig 1: *Conceptual Framework*



3.1 Research Methodology

This study is based upon post-positivist paradigm as, the paradigm suggests that, any research is conducted with the support from the theoretical underpinnings (Littlejohn, 2007).It is also a purely quantitative study as, it analyzes the social media phenomenon objectively and hence, the numerical data is being collected through the help of close-ended questionnaire. The study has followed non-parametric judgmental sampling as it best suits with the objectives and needs of the study as, the phenomenon is complex and sophisticated enough hence the data from the general population may not fit with the research objectives of the study. Moreover, the reliability of research instrument (which consists of 75 variable based questions and 3 demographic questions) is measured through Cronbach's Alpha, which is 0.954, which implies that, the instrument is well suited for the study under consideration. The instrument was then distributed to more than 200 students of multiple universities in Sindh, Province, however, only 161 responses were collected at the end. Then, that data was analyzed through the Spearman and Pearson correlation tests of SPSS and Consistent Path analysis of SMART PLS and hence by that way, final results were drawn.

4.1 Results Analysis

This section is divided into two parts, descriptive and inferential analysis.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis

Ibrahim (2015) defined data analysis as an analytical process of classifying and analyzing the collected data in order to conclude the study mainly through testing the research hypothesis.

Descriptive Analysis

Question No.1
Age

Table No.1: Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15-18	14	8.7	8.7	8.7
	18-21	97	60.2	60.2	68.9
	21-24	44	27.3	27.3	96.3
	24-27	5	3.1	3.1	99.4
	27-30	1	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	161	100.0	100.0	

Question No.2 Education

Table No.2: Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bachelor (BBA, BS, BA, B.com and etc.)	43	26.7	26.7	26.7
	Bachelor (Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical, Electronics, Mechanical, Chemical and etc.)	32	19.9	19.9	46.6
	Bachelor(Bachelor in Computer Science, IT, Artificial Intelligence and etc.)	32	19.9	19.9	66.5
	Bachelor(Bachelor in Maths, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Zoology and etc.)	5	3.1	3.1	69.6
	Bachelor(Bachelor in Education(B.Ed.), Bachelor of Education(Elementary) and etc.)	1	.6	.6	70.2

	Medical Qualification(MBBS,BDS,Doctor of Pharmacy, Doctor of Physiotherapy(DPT) and etc.)	48	29.8	29.8	100.0
	Total	161	100.0	100.0	

Analysis:
It has been found from above descriptive data that, 87% of the respondents are in the age category from 18-24(Table 1). Hence, it implies that, this study covers the opinion of almost 19% of the population through sampling. Moreover, 66% of the respondents were enrolled in either BBA, B.E or BSCS, which again shows that, the youngest population opinion regarding the phenomenon under investigation is recorded (Table 2).

4.3 Research Questions

Table 3: Research Questions

Questions/Assessments	***Responses***	***Frequency(n)***	***Percentage (%)***
Q1: I use YouTube to find new employment and business opportunities	Strongly Agree	22	13.7
	Agree	57	35.4
	I don't think so	26	16.1
	Disagree	38	23.6
	Strongly Disagree	18	11.2
Q2: I use Facebook to keep myself updated regarding the latest trends with respect to clothing, food, tourism and etc.	Strongly Agree	52	32.3
	Agree	70	43.5
	I don't think so	15	9.3
	Disagree	16	9.9
	Strongly Disagree	8	5.0
Q3: I use Twitter to find out about the people's likings and disliking's regarding any particular product or company	Strongly Agree	21	13.0
	Agree	48	29.8
	I don't think so	58	36.0
	Disagree	23	14.3
	Strongly Disagree	11	6.8
Q4: I use Instagram to compare my personality with the personality of my friends, colleagues and etc.	Strongly Agree	21	13.0
	Agree	63	39.1
	I don't think so	16	9.9
	Disagree	39	24.2
	Strongly Disagree	22	13.7
Q5: I use LinkedIn to compare economic and social facts related with multiple government tenures	Strongly Agree	14	8.7
	Agree	31	19.3
	I don't think so	69	42.9
	Disagree	28	17.4
	Strongly Disagree	19	11.8
Q6: I believe on all the posts related to employment or business opportunities on Facebook	Strongly Agree	21	13.0
	Agree	40	24.8
	I don't think so	30	18.6
	Disagree	49	30.4
	Strongly Disagree	21	13.0

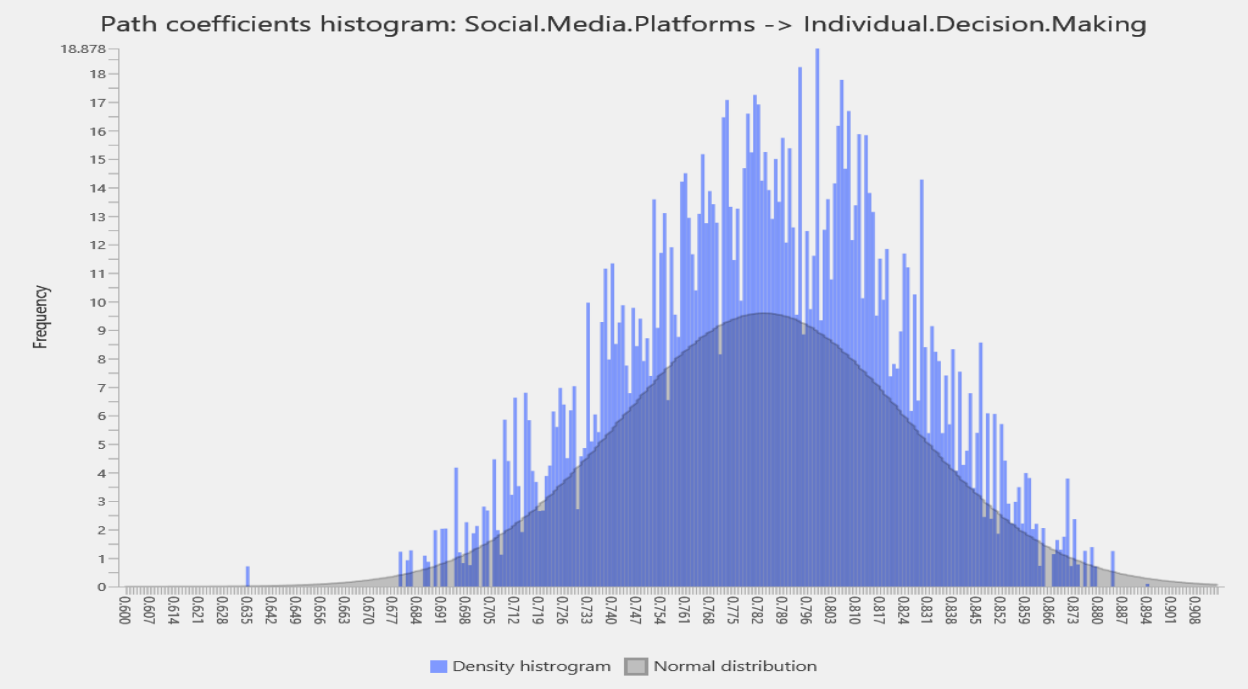
Q7: I take into account tweets of various personalities/followers while making any decision related to my social life	Strongly Agree	7	4.3
	Agree	33	20.5
	I don't think so	36	22.4
	Disagree	52	32.3
	Strongly Disagree	33	20.5
Q8: I use WhatsApp to get awareness regarding the latest activities of multiple political parties	Strongly Agree	9	5.6
	Agree	28	17.4
	I don't think so	31	19.3
	Disagree	60	37.3
	Strongly Disagree	33	20.5
Q9: I like/dislike any political party based on the contents posted through YouTube videos of various channels	Strongly Agree	10	6.2
	Agree	43	26.7
	I don't think so	31	19.3
	Disagree	44	27.3
	Strongly Disagree	33	20.5
Q10: I like/dislike any political party based on the posts came across through my various social media accounts	Strongly Agree	14	8.7
	Agree	31	19.3
	I don't think so	47	29.2
	Disagree	50	31.1
	Strongly Disagree	19	11.8
Total		161	100.0

Analysis:

It has been observed that, 49% of the respondents were agreed and 34% disagreed that, they used YouTube for new employment and business opportunities. Similarly, 75% agreed on the idea that, they used Facebook for latest trends of multiple things. Moreover, 42% agreed on the notion that, they used Twitter to know about people's linking and disliking, however, 36% disagreed with it was well. On the other hand, 57% disagreed with the statement that, they used WhatsApp to get awareness regarding the latest activities of political parties. Similarly, 43% also disagreed that, they believe on the posts related to employment or business opportunities on Facebook. In similar fashion, it is also noted that, 47% also disagreed with the perception that, they used YouTube videos to like or dislike any political party in Pakistan. Conclusively, 42% were not agreed and 29% had no idea about whether the posts/contents on their social media accounts influence on their opinion regarding the liking or disliking of any political party (Table 3).

4.4 Normality of the Data

Fig 2: Normality of the Data



Analysis:
It can be analyzed from the above histogram that, all the research data is between 0.667 and 0.887 hence, the data can be considered normal in nature (Fig 2).

4.5 Inferential Analysis

Marshall & Jonker (2011) defined inferential analysis as a technique to find relationship between sample and population through some tests applied on the sample population. It is used to conclude the characteristics of targeted population through the collected sample. The analysis mostly applies different types of statistical tests (Spearman, Pearson, Regression and SEM-structural equation modelling and etc.). Hence, individual hypothesis of this study was tested either by using Pearson and Spearman correlation tests (through SPSS) or Consistent PLS-SEM and Consistent Bootstrapping (through Smart PLS).
Subsequently, this study has used both methods descriptive and inferential statistics in order to find the trends in the data and also to test individual hypothesis by using Spearman and regression analysis.

4.5.1 YouTube Usage

H1= There is a significant relationship between YouTube Usage and Economic Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H2= There is a significant relationship between YouTube Usage and Social Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)
H3= There is a significant relationship between YouTube Usage and Political Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

Table 4: *Statistical relationship between YouTube Usage and Individual Decision Making*

YouTube. Usage	**Individual.Decision.Making**	
	Pearson Correlation (r)	Spearman's Correlation (ρ)
H1	0. 327(P: 0.000)	0. 361(P: 0.000)
H2	0.402 (P: 0.000)	0.424 (P: 0.000)
H3	0.293 (P: 0.000)	0.317 (P: 0.000)

H4= There is a significant relationship between YouTube usage and Individual Decision Making (IDM)

Fig 3: *Relationship between YouTube Usage and Individual Decision making as a whole*

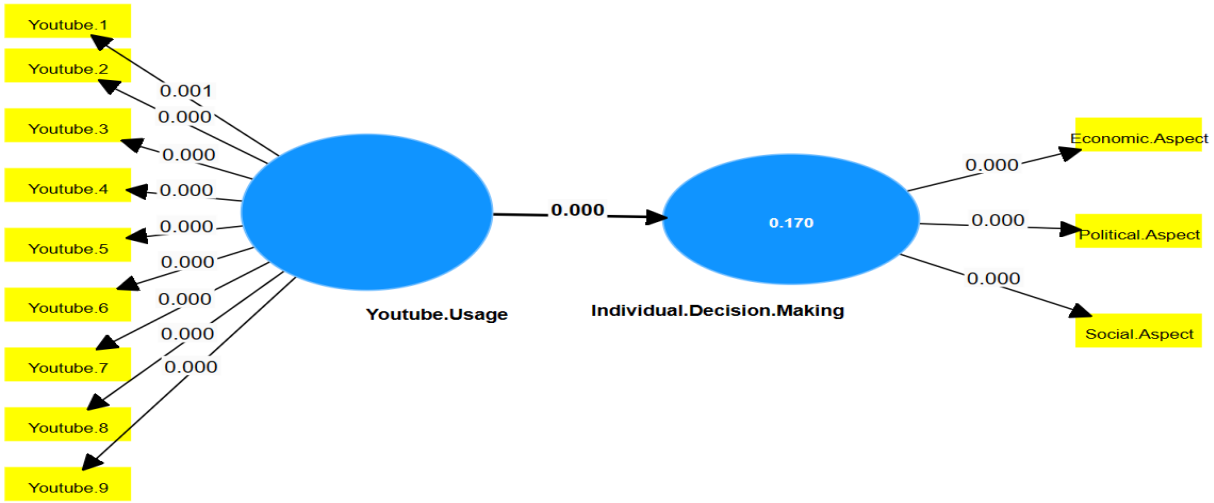
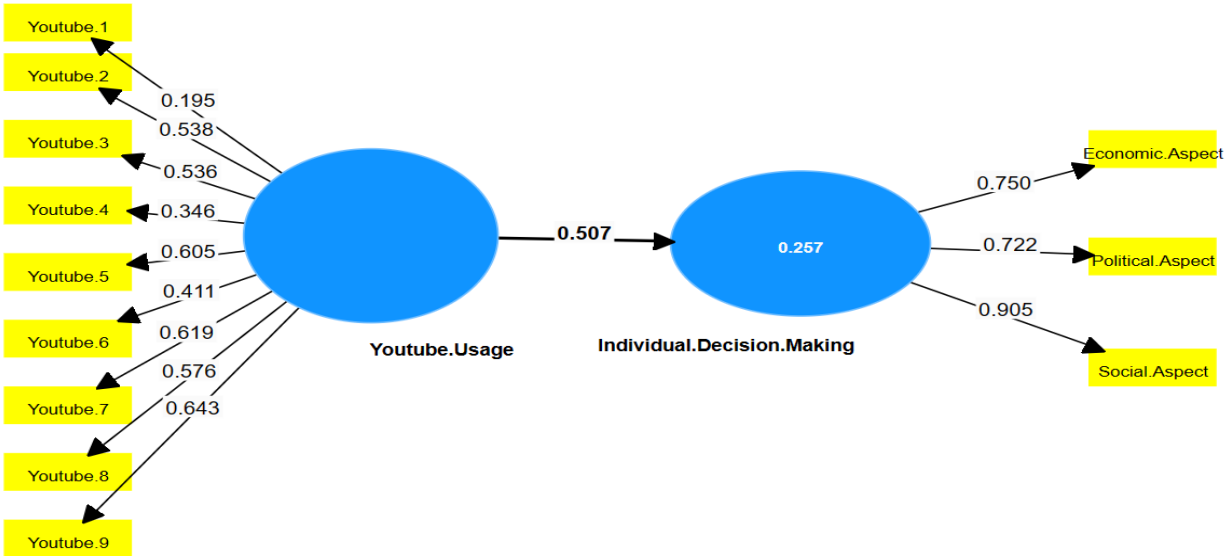


Fig 4: *Correlation Coefficient between YouTube Usage and Individual Decision making as a whole*



Analysis:

It can be observed from the above data analysis by using Spearman and Pearson correlation tests that, there is a significant but weak relationship between YouTube usage and economic aspect of individual decision making (IDM), YouTube usage and social aspect of individual decision making (IDM) and finally YouTube usage and political aspect of IDM (Table 4). However, while using consistent path analysis Smart PLS, it is found that, there is a significant but moderate relationship (Beta value) between the YouTube usage and individual decision making (IDM) as a whole(Fig 3 & 4). Hence, H1, H2, H3 and H4 are accepted.

4.5.2 Facebook Usage

H5= There is a significant relationship between Facebook Usage and Economic Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H6= There is a significant relationship between Facebook Usage and Social Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H7= There is a significant relationship between Facebook Usage and Political Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM

Table 5: *Statistical relationship between Facebook Usage and Individual Decision Making*

Facebook. Usage	**Individual.Decision.Making**	
	Pearson Correlation (r)	Spearman's Correlation (ρ)
H5	0.569 (P: 0.000)	0.569 (P: 0.000)
H6	0.534 (P: 0.000)	0.571 (P: 0.000)
H7	0.366 (P: 0.000)	0.379 (P: 0.000)

H8: There is a significant relationship between Facebook usage and Individual Decision Making (IDM)

Fig 5: *Relationship between Facebook Usage and Individual Decision making as a whole*

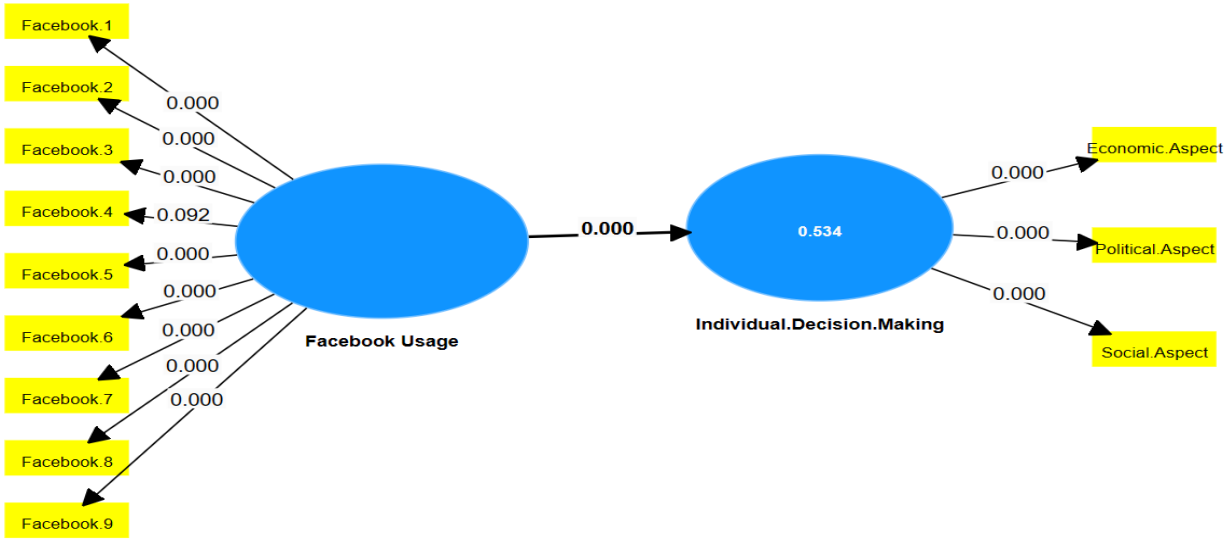
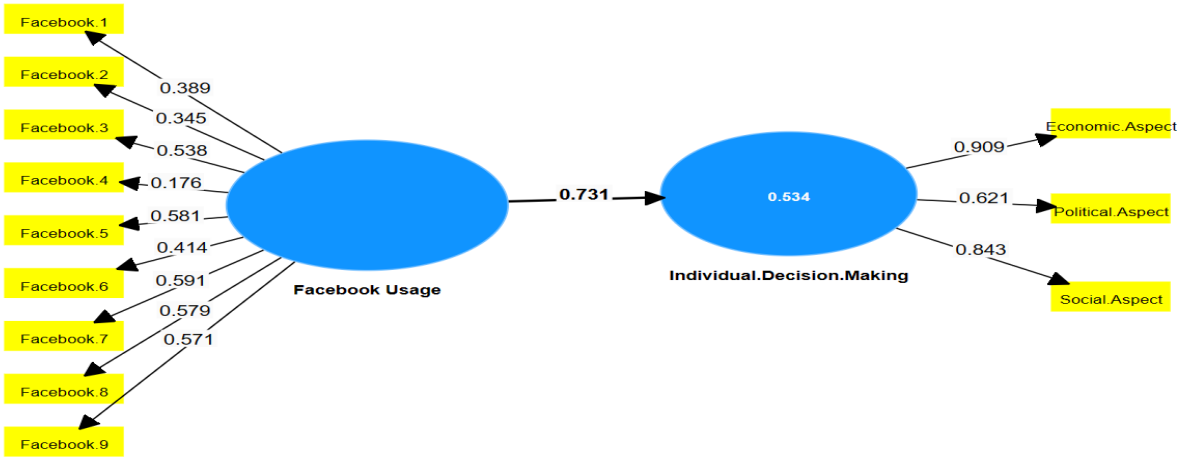


Fig 6: *Correlation Coefficient between Facebook Usage and Individual Decision making as a whole*



Analysis:
It can be noticed from the above analysis that, there is a significant and moderate relationship between Facebook usage and economic aspect of IDM, there is a significant and moderate relationship between Facebook usage and social aspect of IDM. But, there is a significant and weak relationship between Facebook usage and political aspect of IDM (Table 5). However, there is a significant but strong relationship (Beta value) between Facebook usage and individual decision making (IDM) as a whole (Fig 5 & 6). Hence, H5, H6, H7 and H8 are accepted.

4.5.3 Twitter Usage

H9= There is a significant relationship between Twitter Usage and Economic Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H10= There is a significant relationship between Twitter Usage and Social Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H11= There is a significant relationship between Twitter Usage and Political Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

Table 6: *Statistical relationship between Twitter Usage and Individual Decision Making*

Twitter. Usage	**Individual.Decision.Making**	
	Pearson Correlation (r)	Spearman's Correlation (ρ)
H9	0.377 (P: 0.000)	0.373 (P: 0.000)
H10	0.365 (P: 0.000)	0.327 (P: 0.000)
H11	0.312 (P: 0.000)	0.251 (P: 0.000)

H12: There is a significant relationship between Twitter usage and Individual Decision Making (IDM)

Fig 7: *Relationship between Twitter Usage and Individual Decision making as a whole*

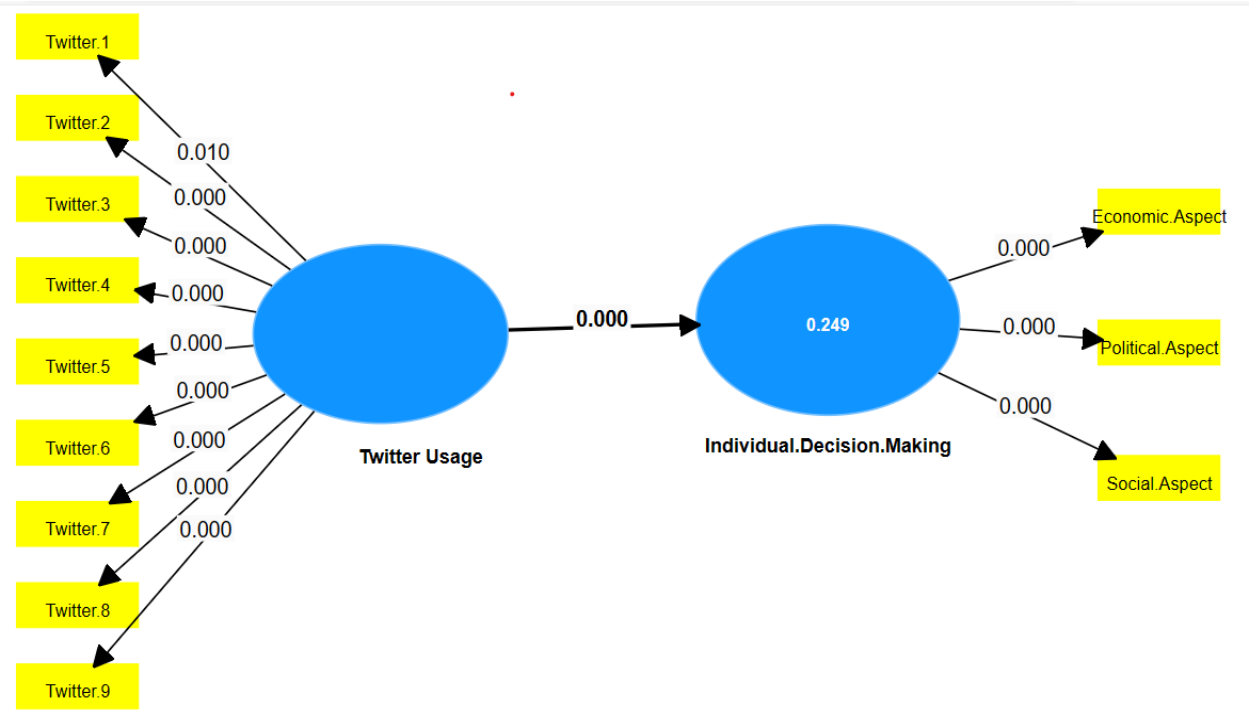
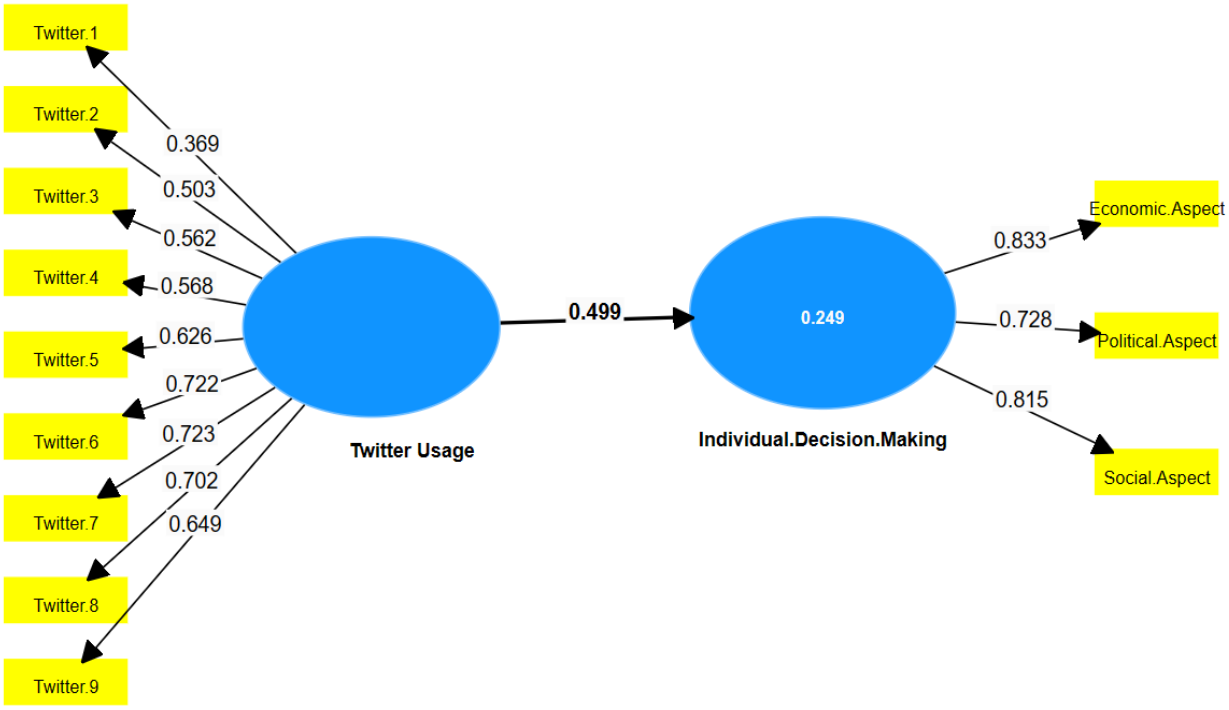


Fig 8: *Correlation Coefficient between Twitter Usage and Individual Decision making as a whole*



Analysis:

It can be extracted from the above analysis that, there is a significant but weak relationship between Twitter usage and economic, social and political aspects of IDM (Table 6). However, there is a significant but moderate relationship between Twitter usage and IDM as a whole (Fig 7 & 8). Hence, H9, H10, H11 and H12 are accepted.

4.5.4 WhatsApp Usage

H13= There is a significant relationship between WhatsApp Usage and Economic Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H14= There is a significant relationship between WhatsApp Usage and Social Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H15= There is a significant relationship between WhatsApp Usage and Political Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

Table 7: *Statistical relationship between Whatsapp Usage and Individual Decision Making*

WhatsApp. Usage	**Individual.Decision.Making**	
	Pearson Correlation (r)	Spearman's Correlation (ρ)
H13	0.574 (P: 0.000)	0.577 (P: 0.000)
H14	0.598 (P: 0.000)	0.596 (P: 0.000)
H15	0.453 (P: 0.000)	0.413 (P: 0.000)

H16: There is a significant relationship between WhatsApp usage and Individual Decision Making (IDM)

Fig 9: *Relationship between WhatsApp Usage and Individual Decision making as a whole*

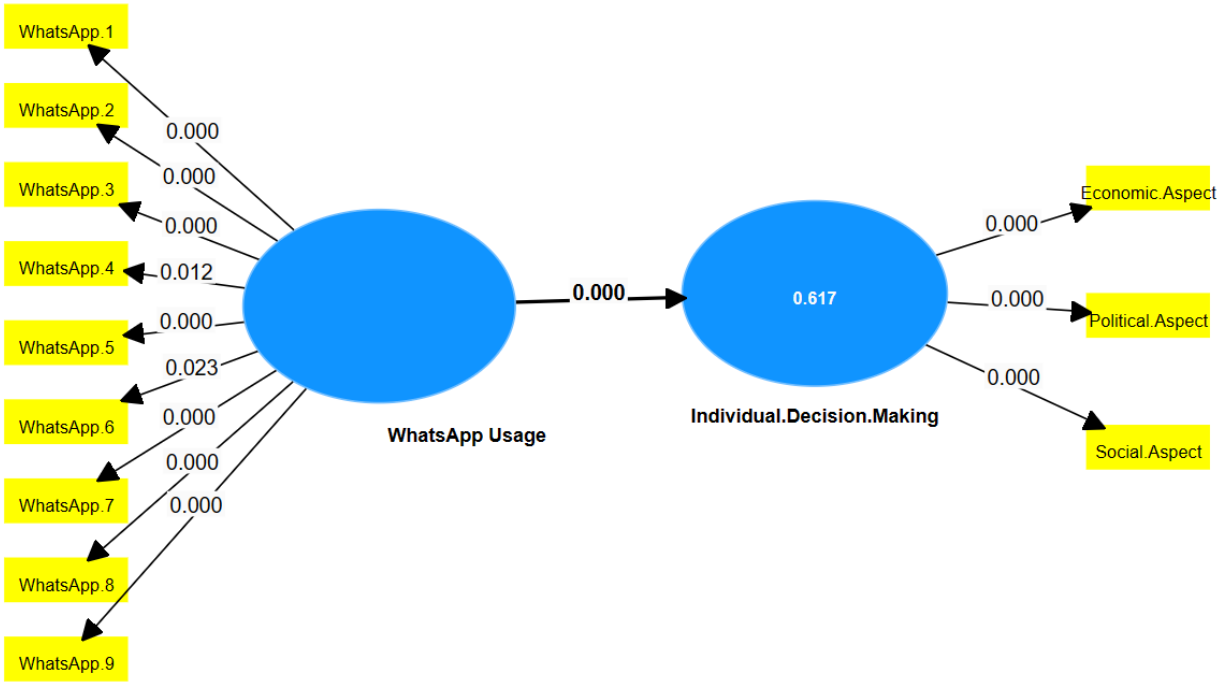
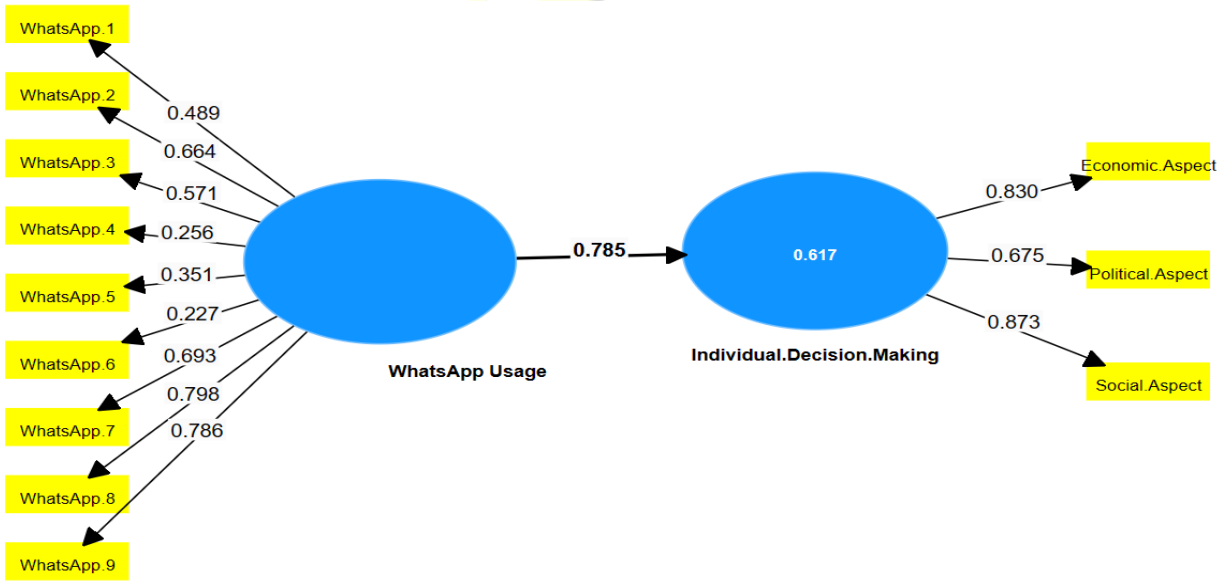


Fig 10: *Correlation Coefficient between WhatsApp Usage and Individual Decision making as a whole*



Analysis:

It can be taken out from the above analysis that, there is a significant but moderate relationship between WhatsApp usage and economic aspect of IDM. Moreover, there is a significant but moderate relationship between WhatsApp usage and social aspect of IDM. However, there is a significant but weak relationship between WhatsApp usage and political aspect of IDM (Table 7). Moreover, there is a significant but strong relationship between WhatsApp usage and IDM as a whole (Fig 9 & 10). Hence, H13, H14, H15 and H16 are accepted.

4.5.5 Instagram Usage

H17= There is a significant relationship between Instagram Usage and Economic Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H18= There is a significant relationship between Instagram Usage and Social Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H19= There is a significant relationship between Instagram Usage and Political Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

Table 8: *Statistical relationship between Instagram Usage and Individual Decision Making*

Instagram. Usage	**Individual.Decision.Making**	
	Pearson Correlation (r)	Spearman's Correlation (ρ)
H17	0.659 (P: 0.000)	0.639 (P: 0.000)
H18	0.658 (P: 0.000)	0.619 (P: 0.000)
H19	0.512 (P: 0.000)	0.500 (P: 0.000)

H20: There is a significant relationship between Instagram usage and Individual Decision Making (IDM)

Fig 11: *Relationship between Instagram Usage and Individual Decision making as a whole*

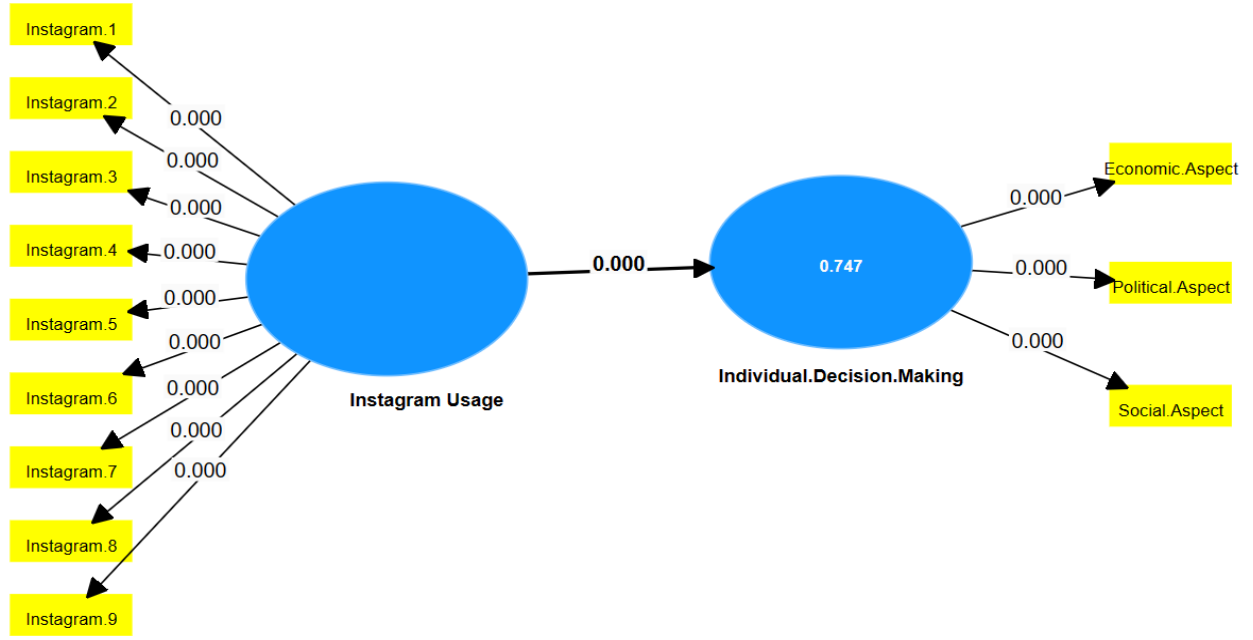
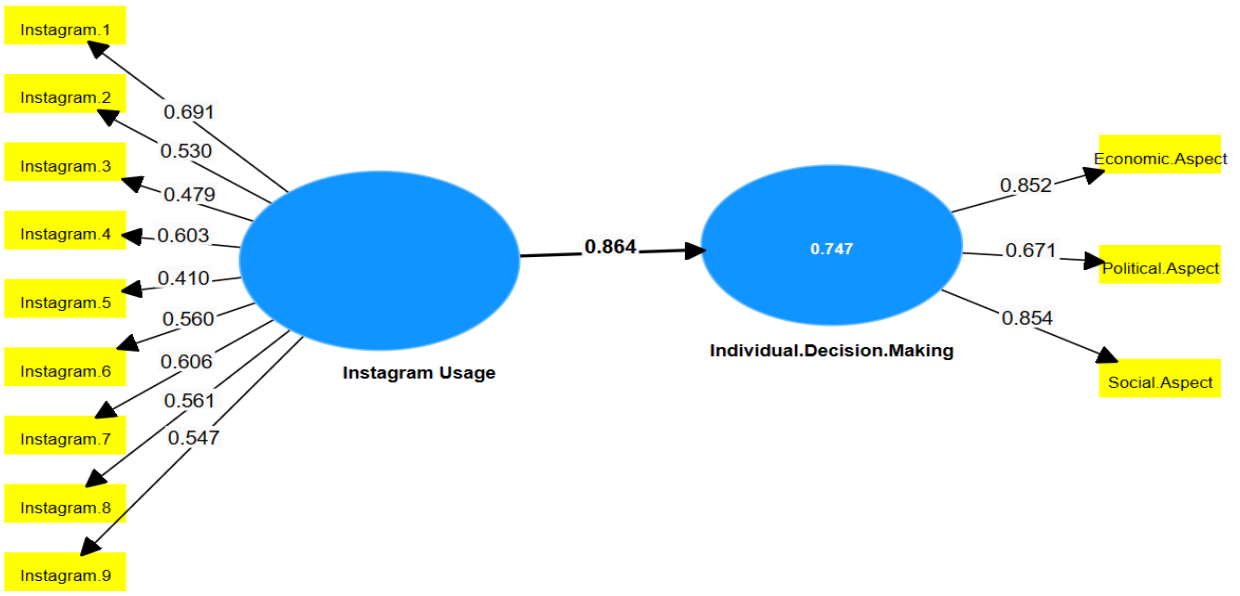


Fig 12: *Correlation Coefficient between Instagram Usage and Individual Decision making as a whole*



Analysis:

It can be observed from the above data analysis that, there is a significant but moderate relationship between Instagram usage and economic aspect of individual decision making (IDM), Instagram usage and social aspect of individual decision making (IDM) and finally Instagram usage and political aspect of IDM (Table 8). However, there is a significant but strong relationship (Beta value) between the Instagram usage and individual decision making (IDM) as a whole (Fig 11 & 12). Hence, H17, H18, H19 and H20 are accepted.

4.5.6 LinkedIn Usage

H21= There is a significant relationship between LinkedIn Usage and Economic Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H22= There is a significant relationship between LinkedIn Usage and Social Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

H23= There is a significant relationship between LinkedIn Usage and Political Aspect of Individual Decision Making (IDM)

Table 9: *Statistical relationship between LinkedIn Usage and Individual Decision Making*

LinkedIn. Usage	**Individual.Decision.Making**	
	Pearson Correlation (r)	Spearman's Correlation (ρ)
H21	0.460 (P: 0.000)	0.470 (P: 0.000)
H22	0.460 (P: 0.000)	0.452 (P: 0.000)
H23	0.438 (P: 0.000)	0.454 (P: 0.000)

H24: There is a significant relationship between LinkedIn usage and Individual Decision Making (IDM)

Fig 13: *Relationship between LinkedIn Usage and Individual Decision making as a whole*

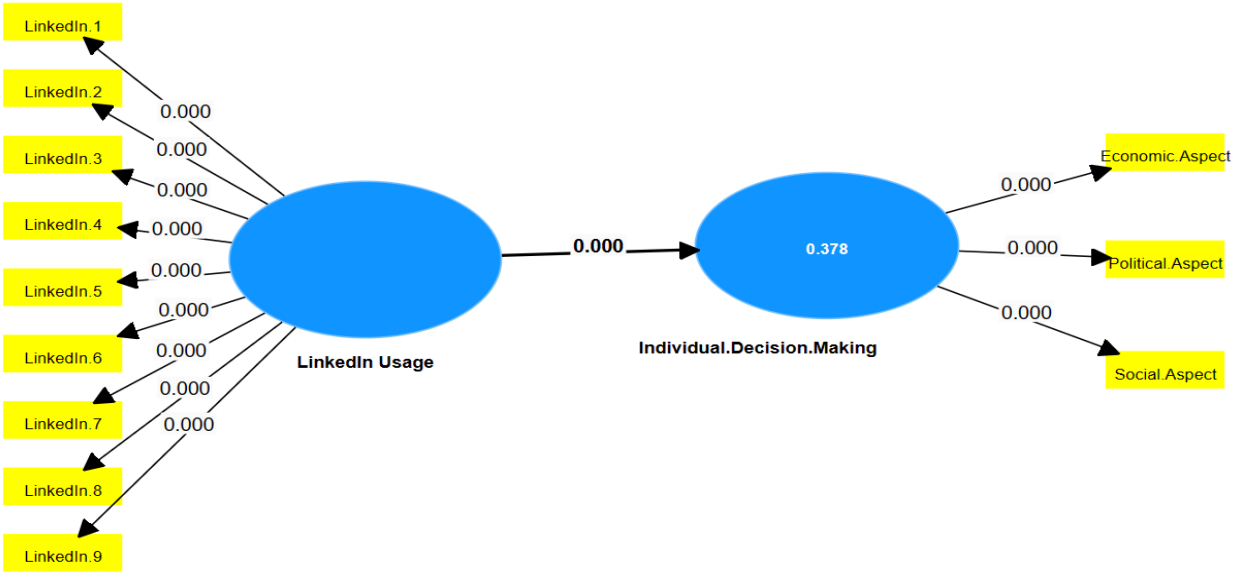
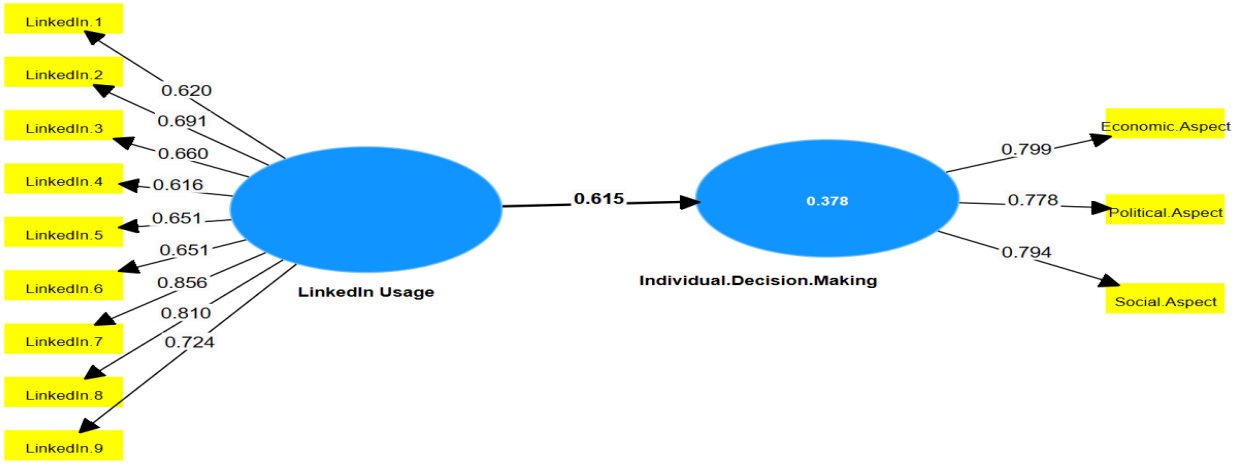


Fig 14: *Correlation Coefficient between LinkedIn Usage and Individual Decision making as a whole*



Analysis

It can be noticed from the above analysis that, there is a significant and weak relationship between LinkedIn usage and economic aspect of IDM, there is a significant and weak relationship between LinkedIn usage and social aspect of IDM. Similarly, there is a significant and weak relationship between LinkedIn usage and political aspect of IDM (Table 9). However, there is a significant but moderate relationship (Beta value) between LinkedIn usage and individual decision making (IDM) as a whole (Fig 13 & 14). Hence, H21, H22, H23 and H24 are accepted.

H25: There is a significant relationship between the usage of Social Media Platforms and Individual Decision Making (IDM).

Fig 15: *Relationship between social media platforms and Individual Decision Making*

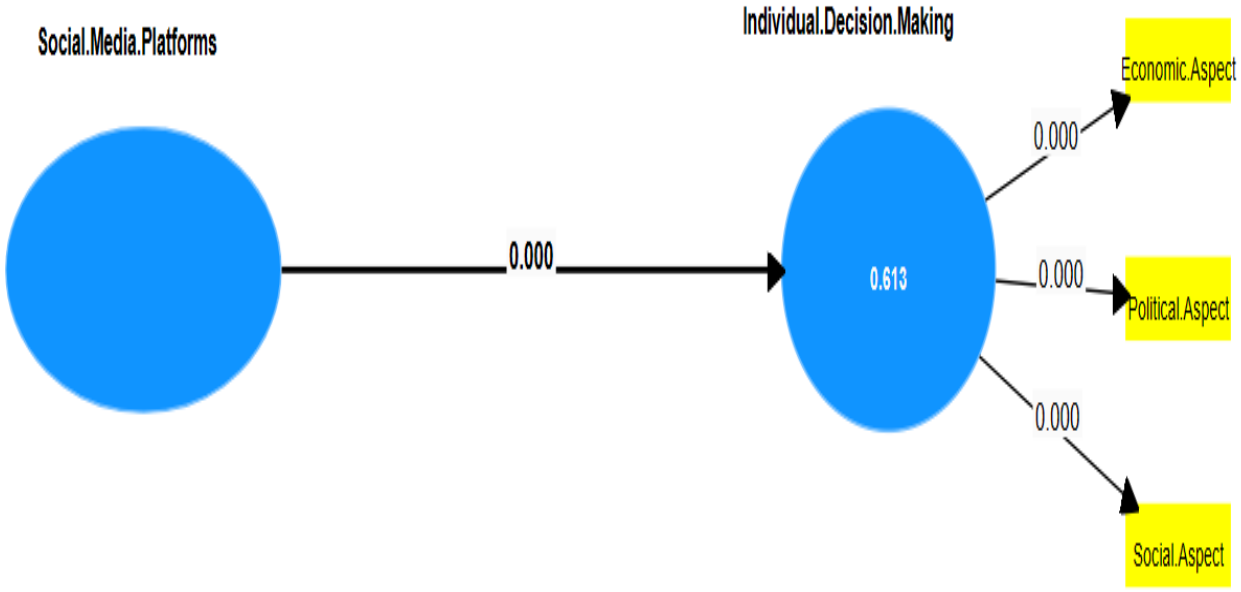


Fig 16: *Correlation Coefficient between Social media platforms and Individual Decision making as a whole*

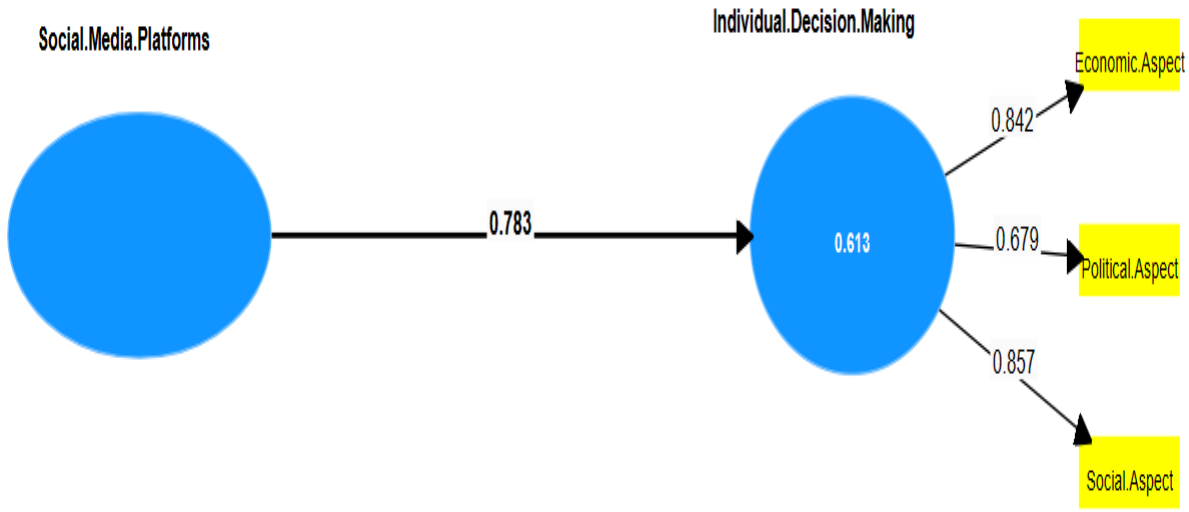
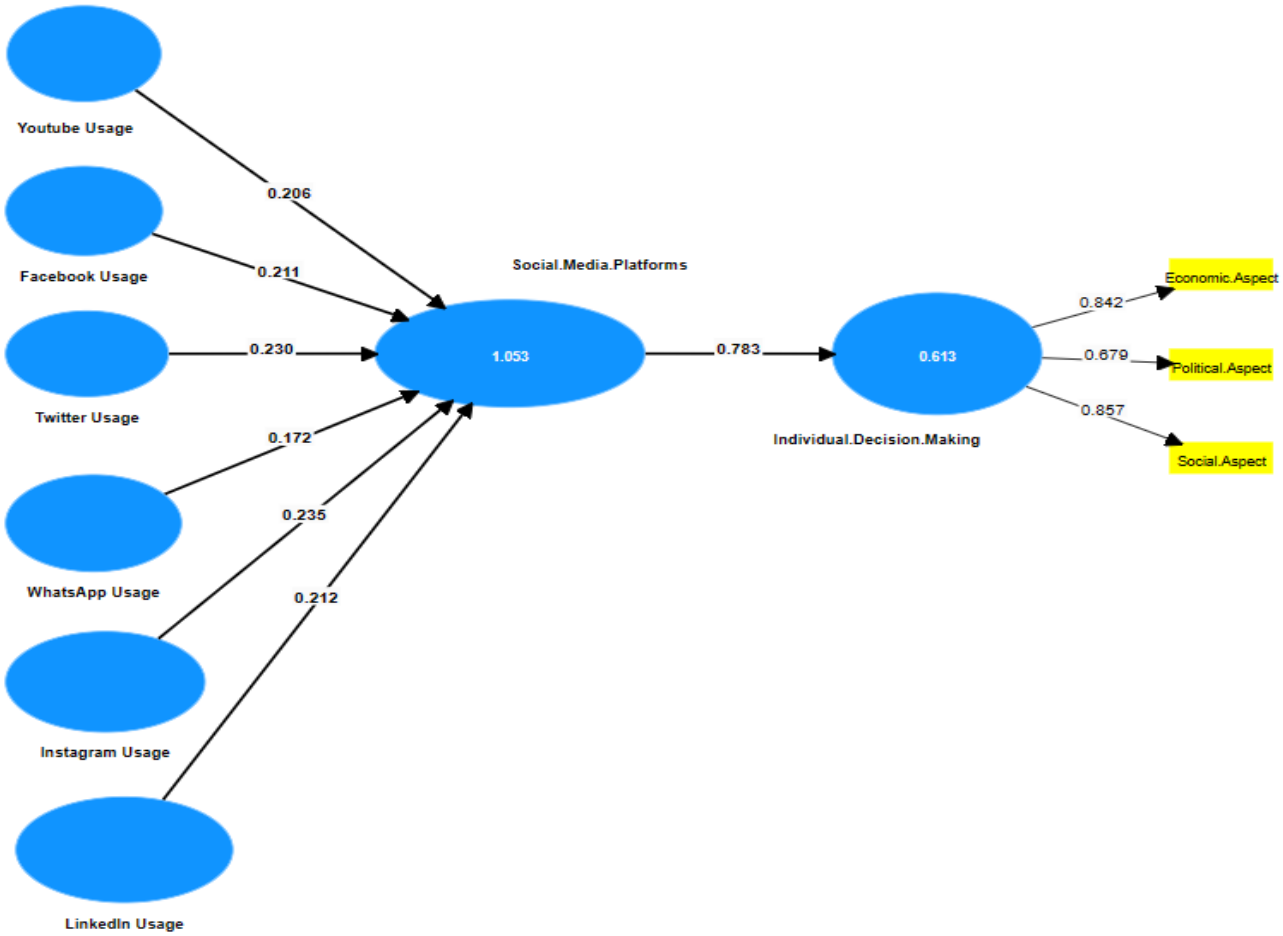


Fig 17: *Correlation Coefficient between each platform of social media and Individual Decision making as a whole*



Analysis:

It is observed from the above analysis by using consistent PLS-SEM and consistent Bootstrapping that, there is a significant relationship between social media platforms and individual decision making with respect to its economic, social and political aspects. Interestingly, the relationship is strong in nature as beta coefficient is above 0.70(Fig 15, 16, 17).

4.5.6 Model Fit

Fig 18: Social Media Platforms and Individual Decision Making

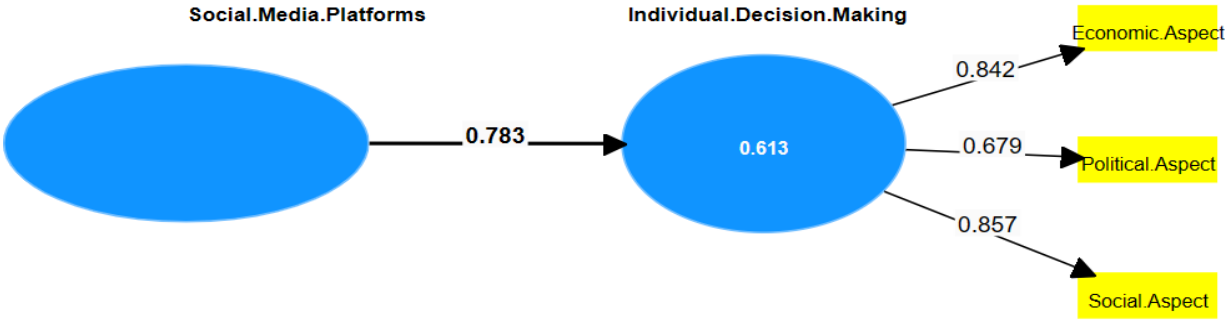


Table 10: SRMR Model

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.009	0.009
d_ULS	0.001	0.001
d_G	0.001	0.001
Chi-square	0.816	0.816
NFI	0.997	0.997

Analysis:

The model fit has been calculated through Smart PLS and it is found that, the value of SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual) is less than 0.05 and it is almost close to zero, which suggest that, the model is almost perfectly fit(Fig 18). Moreover, the NFI (Normed Fit Index) is also above 0.90 and close to 1, which also indicates that, the model is closely fit, hence there is a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable of the study (Table 10).

4.6 Discussion

The study was conducted in order to understand how the multiple social media platforms may influence on the decision making of young individuals with respect to their social, economic and political choices in Pakistan. Hence, the most of the respondents (96%), who participated in the study were in the age bracket of 15-24.The study used the close-ended questionnaire in order to explain the phenomenon under investigation. However, while asking multiple questions from the respondents, 83% of them agreed that, they used YouTube to learn new skills and gather new knowledge. They also agreed that, they used YouTube to find about new cultural trends in the society. Moreover, 60% disagreed with the idea that, they have used YouTube to make any final opinion regarding any political party in Pakistan. Furthermore, most of them nodded their heads in agreement that, they used Facebook to gather information related to internship and job trends. Similarly, 52% of them agreed that, they will use Facebook to decide about their career after graduation. In the similar vein, 46% agreed that, they will use Facebook to decide regarding their lifestyle in the future. Subsequently, while asking regarding whether the Twitter can be used to get expert advice from the prominent figures of multiple industries, almost 50% of them agreed with the notion. Similarly, 47% also agreed that,

they have used Twitter to share their own understanding regarding the latest cultural and social trends. Although, 56% of the respondents agreed that, they have used WhatsApp to find new job opportunities and training programs. Interestingly, 45% of them agreed that, they used WhatsApp to increase their earnings by using multiple channels but, 42% of them also disagreed with the same notion. In addition to that, 63% agreed with the idea that, they used Instagram to find out which products are getting more attention from the customers or consumers. Moreover, 52% also agreed that, they used Instagram to compare their personality with the personality of their friends and colleagues. Finally, while asking regarding the LinkedIn usage, 46% of the respondents agreed that, they used the platform to find new opportunities inside and outside the country and 42% of them also showed their consent regarding the notion that, they will use LinkedIn to enhance their social image by sharing their professional success stories. At the end, almost 60% respondents agreed that, social media platforms is the best channel through which employment or business opportunities are gathered. This is in line with the McGee and Sammut-Bonnici (2014) study in which, they explain that the users can get maximum benefit from their associated network by increasing the size of the network and hence generating maximum economic value until and unless the tipping point is being touched.

In addition to above, quite a good number of individual hypothesis was tested as, researcher was interested to cover as many social media platforms as possible. Hence, 25 hypotheses were tested by using Spearman and Pearson Correlation tests along with SMART PLS Consistent Path analysis. However, four individual hypothesis was tested in order to find the relationship between a single social media platform and IDM. Hence, firstly, it was found that, there is a significant but weak relationship between YouTube usage and economic aspect of individual decision making (IDM), YouTube usage and social aspect of individual decision making (IDM) and YouTube usage and political aspect of IDM. However, it was noticed that, there is a significant but moderate relationship (Beta value) between the YouTube usage and individual decision making (IDM) as a whole. Hence, H1, H2, H3 and H4 are accepted. On the second spot, it is observed that, there is a significant and moderate relationship between Facebook usage and economic as well as social aspects of IDM. But, there is a significant and weak relationship between Facebook usage and political aspect of IDM. However, it is exhibited that, there is a significant but strong relationship (Beta value) between Facebook usage and individual decision making (IDM) as a whole. Hence, H5, H6, H7 and H8 are accepted. Thirdly, it is extracted that, there is a significant but weak relationship between Twitter usage and economic, social and political aspects of IDM. However, it is found that, there is a significant but moderate relationship between Twitter usage and IDM as a whole. Hence, H9, H10, H11 and H12 are accepted. Furthermore, it is noted by using different analysis that, there is a significant but moderate relationship between the WhatsApp usage and economic and social aspects of IDM. However, there is a significant but weak relationship between WhatsApp usage and political aspect of IDM. On the other hand, it is found that, there is a significant but strong relationship between WhatsApp usage and IDM as a whole. Hence, H13, H14, H15 and H16 are accepted. Subsequently, when the second last platform data was analyzed, it was found that, there is a significant and weak relationship between LinkedIn usage and economic, social as well as political aspects of IDM. However, there is a significant but moderate relationship (Beta value) between LinkedIn usage and individual decision making (IDM) as a whole. Hence, H21, H22, H23 and H24 are accepted. Finally, when it was analyzed that, whether all the platforms influence on the individual decision making by using Consistent bootstrapping and Consistent PLS that, that, there is a significant relationship between social media platforms and individual decision making(IDM) with respect to its economic, social and political aspects. Surprisingly, the relationship is also strong in nature as beta coefficient is above 0.70. Hence, social media platforms do contribute significantly in the decision making of young populace in Pakistan.

5.1 Conclusion

The study was conducted in order to understand that, whether or not the multiple social media platforms influence on the economic, social and political decision making of younger bachelor

degree students in Pakistan. The study has to be considered unique in nature as, it covers almost all the major social media platforms and tried to find their impact on the decision making of young populace. The study was quantitative in nature and employed close-ended questionnaire to collect data from the targeted population. While, the research data was analyzed, it was found that, most of the respondents agreed in one way or another that, they are using social media platforms for the economic and social decision making, while they don't use them for making political choices. Moreover, it is concluded at the end that, there is a significant but moderate relationship (Beta value) between the YouTube usage and individual decision making (IDM) as a whole, there is a significant but strong relationship (Beta value) between Facebook usage and individual decision making (IDM) as a whole, there is a significant but moderate relationship between Twitter usage and IDM as a whole, there is a significant but strong relationship between WhatsApp usage and IDM as a whole, there is a significant but strong relationship (Beta value) between the Instagram usage and individual decision making (IDM) as a whole, there is a significant but moderate relationship (Beta value) between LinkedIn usage and individual decision making (IDM) as a whole. Subsequently, there is a significant relationship between social media platforms and individual decision making with respect to its economic, social and political aspects. Interestingly, the relationship is strong in nature as beta coefficient is above 0.70. In addition to that, when the model fit was applied by using SMART PLS, it was found ultimately that, the value of SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual) is less than 0.05 and NFI (Normed Fit Index) is also above 0.90, which also indicates that, the model is closely fit. Hence, there is a significant relationship between independent variables (social media platforms) and dependent variable (individual decision making) of the study. It can be concluded from the study that, social media platforms do play a vital role in economic and social decision making while, in terms of political decision making, their role is limited.

5.2 Recommendations

1. It is highly recommended that, individuals must make their respective decisions based on the proper due diligence rather than on popular posts wired through social media platforms
2. It is also understandable that, social media platforms are the excellent and quick substitute for the information gathering on any new or old issue or topic but, the reliability of the content must be taken into account before relying solely on that information
3. It is also highly recommended that, government around the world must develop a suitable mechanism(may be through the help of AI) that regulates the contents on the social media in order to combat with the menace of fake news and disinformation
4. It is also advisable that, more research must be done in order to understand that, how social media platforms influence positively or negatively in one's life
5. The two major social institutions, family and education, they must take the responsibility of guiding the young individuals towards the more responsible and intelligent use of social media platforms.
6. Open-source fact checking platforms (through the help of AI) must be developed in order to facilitate the young individuals to check the reliability of the contents posted through social media platforms.

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