VILNIUS UNIVERSITY
BUSINESS SCHOOL

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

DIGITAL MARKETING PROGRAMME

Faisal Fateh, Khan

THE FINAL MASTER'S THESIS (PROJECT)

Title in English	Title in Lithuanian
"Effectiveness of Inbound Marketing Strategies in Lead Generation and Customer Acquisition: A Study of Emerging Fashion E-Commerce Brands in Pakistan."	"Įeinančios rinkodaros strategijų efektyvumas potencialių klientų generavime ir klientų pritraukime: Besiformuojančių mados elektroninės komercijos prekės ženklų Pakistane tyrimas."

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Vilnius, 2025

SUMMARY

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

Digital Marketing Master's Programme

Faisal Fateh, Khan

Effectiveness of Inbound Marketing Strategies in Lead Generation and Customer Acquisition: A Study of Emerging Fashion E-Commerce Brands in Pakistan

Supervisor – Mikael Forsström

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Brief Description and Problem: This Master's Thesis focuses on how inbound marketing strategies are perceived in terms of their effectiveness by experts working in up coming fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan. While inbound marketing is commonly adopted because of its cost-effective nature and strong reliance on digital channels, there is still limited empirical research that reflects the perspectives of marketing practitioners in the Pakistani fashion e-commerce context. As a result, smaller and developing fashion brands often face uncertainty when making decisions about how to allocate their marketing resources to support lead generation and customer acquisition.

Aim and Objectives: The objective of this study was to know how inbound marketing strategies are perceived by marketing experts in relation to their contribution to lead generation and customer acquisition. Specifically, the study sought to identify the inbound marketing strategies most commonly used by emerging fashion e-commerce brands, to explore how these strategies

are perceived to influence lead generation, and to analyse the perceived relationship between lead generation and customer acquisition.

Research Methods: This study adopts the quantitative, cross-sectional research design to address the research objectives. Data were gathered using a structured online questionnaire, which was completed by 52 marketing professionals working in emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan. The collected data were analysed using a range of statistical techniques, including descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, and regression analysis, in order to examine the relationships between the key variables.

Results: The results show that search engine optimization (SEO) and content marketing are the inbound strategies most frequently used by the fashion e-commerce brands as compare to social media and email marketing. The correlation analysis suggests strong positive relationships between inbound marketing strategies and lead generation, as well as between lead generation and customer acquisition. Moreover, the multiple regression analysis shows that, when all strategies are examined simultaneously, SEO and social media engagement demonstrate the strongest perceived association with lead generation.

Conclusions: Overall, the study suggests that inbound marketing is perceived as a valuable approach for supporting both lead generation and customer acquisition among growing fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan. Among the various strategies examined, SEO and social media engagement appear to show the strongest perceived associations, whereas content marketing and email marketing may benefit from further strategic development. In addition to contributing to the existing literature on inbound marketing within an emerging market context, the findings also provide practical insights that can assist fashion e-commerce managers in making more effective marketing decisions.

SANTRAUKA

VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETO VERSLO MOKYKLA

Skaitmeninės rinkodaros magistrantūros studijų programa

Khan, Faisal Fateh

Įeinančios rinkodaros strategijų efektyvumas potencialių klientų generavime ir klientų pritraukime: Besiformuojančių mados elektroninės komercijos prekės ženklų Pakistane tyrimas
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Trumpas aprašymas ir problema: Šiame magistro darbe daugiausia dėmesio skiriama tam, kaip ekspertai, dirbantys su kylančiais mados e. prekybos prekių ženklais Pakistane, suvokia gaunamosios rinkodaros strategijų efektyvumą. Nors gaunamoji rinkodara yra dažnai taikoma dėl savo ekonomiško pobūdžio ir didelio pasitikėjimo skaitmeniniais kanalais, vis dar yra nedaug empirinių tyrimų, kurie atspindėtų rinkodaros specialistų požiūrį Pakistano mados e. prekybos kontekste. Todėl mažesni ir besivystantys mados prekių ženklai dažnai susiduria su netikrumu priimdami sprendimus, kaip paskirstyti savo rinkodaros išteklius potencialių klientų paieškai ir klientų įgijimui remti.

Tyrimo tikslas ir uždaviniai: Šio tyrimo tikslas buvo išsiaiškinti, kaip rinkodaros ekspertai suvokia gaunamosios rinkodaros strategijas, atsižvelgiant į jų indėlį į potencialių klientų paiešką ir klientų pritraukimą. Konkrečiai, tyrimu siekta nustatyti dažniausiai kylančių mados e. prekybos prekių ženklų naudojamas gaunamosios rinkodaros strategijas, ištirti, kaip šios strategijos, kaip

manoma, veikia potencialių klientų paiešką, ir išanalizuoti suvokiamą ryšį tarp potencialių klientų paieškos ir klientų pritraukimo.

Tyrimo metodai: Šiame tyrime taikomas kiekybinis, skerspjūvio tyrimo dizainas, siekiant įgyvendinti tyrimo tikslus. Duomenys buvo renkami naudojant struktūrizuotą internetinę anketą, kurią užpildė 52 rinkodaros specialistai, dirbantys besiformuojančiuose mados elektroninės prekybos prekės ženkluose Pakistane. Surinkti duomenys buvo analizuojami naudojant įvairius statistinius metodus, įskaitant aprašomąją statistiką, patikimumo analizę, koreliacijos analizę ir regresinę analizę, siekiant ištirti ryšius tarp pagrindinių kintamųjų.

Tyrimo rezultatai: Rezultatai rodo, kad paieškos sistemų optimizavimas (SEO) ir turinio rinkodara yra dažniausiai mados el. prekybos prekių ženklų naudojamos įeinančios rinkodaros strategijos, palyginti su socialinės žiniasklaidos ir el. pašto rinkodara. Koreliacijos analizė rodo stiprų teigiamą ryšį tarp įeinančios rinkodaros strategijų ir potencialių klientų paieškos, taip pat tarp potencialių klientų paieškos ir klientų įgijimo. Be to, daugybinė regresinė analizė rodo, kad, kai visos strategijos nagrinėjamos vienu metu, SEO ir įsitraukimas į socialinę žiniasklaidą rodo stipriausią suvokiamą ryšį su potencialių klientų paieška.

Išvados: Apskritai tyrimas rodo, kad atvykstamoji rinkodara yra vertinama kaip vertingas būdas palaikyti tiek potencialių klientų paiešką, tiek klientų įgijimą tarp augančių mados el. prekybos prekių ženklų Pakistane. Iš įvairių nagrinėtų strategijų SEO ir socialinių tinklų įtraukimas rodo stipriausias suvokiamas sąsajas, o turinio rinkodara ir el. pašto rinkodara galėtų būti toliau strategiškai plėtojamos. Be to, kad papildo esamą literatūrą apie atvykstamąją rinkodarą besiformuojančios rinkos kontekste, išvados taip pat suteikia praktinių įžvalgų, kurios gali padėti mados el. prekybos vadovams priimti veiksmingesnius rinkodaros sprendimus.

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1.   INTRODUCTION

Inbound marketing has become a cornerstone of successful digital marketing due to its customer-centric orientation. Inbound marketing defines as a strategy that focuses on attracting customers through relevant content, SEO, and other non-interruptive methods, such that the customer finds the business rather than being aggressively pursued by it. (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016).

According to Hubspot, Outbound marketing uses interruption-based tactics (TV, radio, cold calls, interruptive display ads) that push messages at a broad audience whether they are interested or not. Inbound marketing, by contrast, pulls an audience in by being discoverable (SEO, blogs), relevant (targeted content), and helpful (guides, social engagement). Many practitioners argue inbound yields better-qualified leads and is more cost-effective long term because it targets users already seeking information or solutions. A practical overview and side-by-side comparison of inbound and outbound approaches is explained in HubSpot's guides on inbound-vs-outbound marketing. (*Inbound* Marketing *vs. Outbound Marketing*, 2022)

Organizations that focus heavily on inbound marketing are often reported to experience lower cost per lead compared to those relying on outbound methods. For example, HubSpot's internal reporting suggests that inbound-dominated firms experience about 62% lower CPL than outbound-dominated ones (*Inbound Leads Cost 62% Less than Outbound [New Data]*, 2016). Further industry summaries confirm that content marketing and inbound tactics typically cost less per lead and yield better ROI than traditional marketing (Saleh, 2016).

Figure 1

Average cost per lead comparison between inbound and outbound marketing

Average Cost Per Lead
Inbound vs. Outbound
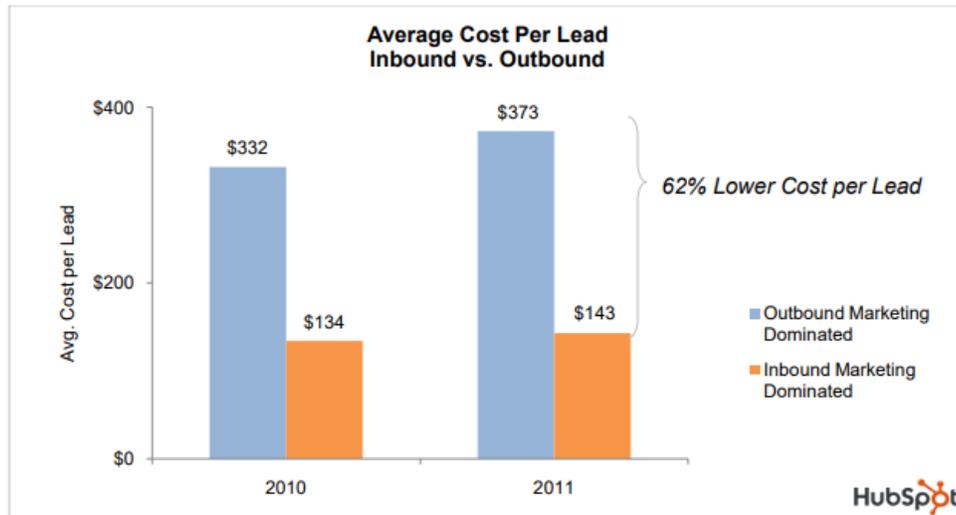
(Source: HubSpot (2016))

Because inbound marketing attracts individuals who are proactively seeking information or solutions (via SEO, content, social discovery), those leads are more likely to have genuine interest and purchase intent. This tends to increase conversion rates when paired with good user experience and nurturing. In fact, (Garner, 2025) found that inbound methods such as customized content, SEO, and engagement strategies are positively associated with customer acquisition than traditional outbound efforts.

1.1   Why inbound marketing matters for fashion e-commerce

Fashion e-commerce is highly visual and social-media driven: platforms such as Instagram and TikTok function as discovery channels where content (UGC, short-form video) can quickly convert attention into visits and sales. For emerging fashion brands especially those using social platforms as their primary storefront or traffic source, inbound approaches (content, influencer collaborations, SEO for product pages, email automation) create a scalable path to acquire customers at lower ongoing cost than heavy paid-media reliance. According to HubSpot's marketing statistics and content guides emphasize the ongoing contribution of content & organic channels in driving ROI (HubSpot, 2025). In digital retail contexts, these inbound strategies are widely perceived by practitioners as effective tools for engaging audiences and supporting lead generation.

1.2   Overview of Pakistan's fashion e-commerce industry size

Pakistan's online fashion industry is growing quickly. According to Statista, sales is expected to reach about US $1.45 billion in 2025. Between 2025 and 2030, the market is predicted to grow at an average yearly rate of around 10.9%, reaching about US $2.43 billion by that time. By 2030, 22.7 million Pakistanis are predicted to shop online for clothing. In 2025, 16.9% of individuals are expected to buy fashion items online, and by 2030, user penetration will be around 15.3%. The average revenue per user (ARPU) is expected to be around US $99. (*Fashion* - Pakistan | *Statista Market Forecast*, 2025)

These numbers demonstrate that Pakistan's fashion e-commerce industry is growing at a strong rate, despite the fact that the US continues to lead the world in this area. This rise is jumped by social media-driven trends, the widespread use of mobile devices for shopping, and increased internet accessibility. For local firms looking to successfully compete in a digital world, knowing how inbound marketing strategies are important to promote lead generation and client acquisition within Pakistan's expanding fashion e-commerce market.

1.3   Digital marketing practices in pakistan's fashion industry

The article "The Impact of Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing and Online Convenience on Consumer Buying Decision Process in Fashion Apparel Industry of Pakistan" explore the ways in which three digital strategies such as social media marketing, content marketing, and online convenience affect consumer purchasing decisions in Pakistan's fashion industry (Siddiqui et al., 2025). Based on questionnaire data collected from fashion consumers, the study examines the extent to which different digital marketing approaches shape the buying decision-making process.

The findings tell that social media marketing has the strongest influence on consumer purchase decisions, followed by content marketing. Online convenience, including factors such as ease of purchasing, website navigation, and reliable payment options, is also shown to affect consumer behavior, although to a comparatively lesser extent. The authors further note that demographic characteristics moderate these relationships, suggesting that different consumer groups respond differently to specific digital marketing strategies.

This article is particularly relevant to the present study as it confirms that inbound marketing approaches, especially social media and content marketing, are already regarded as influential within Pakistan's fashion market. However, the study focuses primarily on consumer behavior and does not address how marketing professionals perceive the effectiveness of these

strategies in supporting lead generation and customer acquisition at the organizational level. Building on this gap, the current research shifts the focus from consumer decision-making to managerial perceptions, thereby extending existing literature by examining how emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan evaluate the outcomes of inbound marketing practices.

1.4   Background of the study

The ongoing shift toward digital commerce has significantly changed the way businesses attract and retain customers. The fashion e-commerce sector in Pakistan has shown notable growth in recent years, supported by increased internet accessibility, the widespread use of affordable smartphones, and the growing influence of social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. According to Statista (2025), revenue in Pakistan's online fashion market is expected to reach approximately US $1.45 billion in 2025 and increase to around US $2.43 billion by 2030 due to steadily increasing user base. This expansion creates both opportunities and challenges for emerging fashion brands that they need to stand out in a competitive market.

Inbound marketing can be described as an approach that attracts customers through the use of relevant content, search engine optimization (SEO), social media engagement and email marketing. Marketing experts often view inbound marketing as a cost-effective method for supporting lead generation and customer acquisition. In contrast to traditional outbound marketing, which typically depends on paid advertising and unsolicited outreach, inbound strategies aim to attract consumers who are already seeking information or products. Existing research and industry reports generally suggest that leads generated through inbound marketing are perceived to be more cost-efficient and of higher quality than those obtained through outbound techniques.

Inbound marketing provides an opportunity to engage consumers, establish brand authority, and make long lasting customer relationships in emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan. Many of these brands operate under low budget bracket, which increases their dependence on marketing strategies that are perceived efficient and sustainable for attracting and converting the customers.

Against this background, examining the perceived effectiveness of inbound marketing in getting lead generation and customer acquisition is both timely and relevant. Looking at how marketing professionals assess inbound strategies such as content marketing, influencer collaborations, and social media campaigns can offer valuable insights. Which practices are considered most effective within growing fashion e-commerce sector of Pakistan. The results may help new and old brands in improving their inbound marketing efforts, allocating marketing resources in more wisely, and empower their position within an increasingly competitive digital environment.

1.5   Aim

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceived effectiveness of inbound marketing in lead generation and customer acquisition for Pakistani fashion e-commerce sector. It wants to know how inbound practices help business growth in a quickly growing digital retail environment.

1.6   Objectives

The objectives of this study are to identify the inbound marketing strategies currently adopted by growing fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan and to explore how marketing professionals perceive the effectiveness of these practices in lead generation and convert them into paying customers. In addition, the study intends to examine how inbound marketing is viewed as contributing to lead generation and customer acquisition. The research aims based on these perceptual insights offer practical recommendations that can helps emerging fashion e-commerce companies in improving their inbound marketing practices to increase their outcomes.

1.7   Problem Statement

Even though Pakistan's fashion e-commerce market is growing quickly, many new brands have trouble getting and keeping customers in very competitive online spaces. People often think that traditional outbound marketing methods are too expensive and don't work well, especially for small businesses with tight budgets. People often say that inbound marketing is a better way to focus on the customer, but there hasn't been enough research on how well it works for getting leads and customers in Pakistan's fashion e-commerce sector. This absence of empirical evidence based on managerial perceptions creates uncertainty for emerging brands when they

have to allocate marketing resources. By filling this gap, we can better understand of which inbound marketing strategies are most effective in this situation.

1.8   Research Question

Q1: Which inbound marketing strategies (SEO, content marketing, social media engagement, and email marketing) are most commonly used by emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan?

Q2: How effective are inbound marketing strategies for lead generation and customer acquisition?

1.9   Hypotheses

H1: SEO has a positive and significant effect on Lead Generation.

H2: Content Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Lead Generation.

H3: Social Media Engagement has a positive and significant effect on Lead Generation.

H4: Email Marketing has a positive and significant effect on Lead Generation.

H5: Lead Generation has a positive and significant effect on Customer Acquisition.

1.10   Variables Linked to Each Hypothesis

Table 1 shows the independent variable (IV) and dependent variable (DV) for each hypothesis in this study. This makes it easier to understand the structure of the proposed hypotheses and the relationships that were tested. This helps show how each part of inbound marketing is supposed to affect lead generation and how lead generation then affects customer acquisition.

Table 1

Independent and Dependent Variables for Each Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Independent Variable (IV)	Dependent Variable (DV)
H1	SEO	Lead Generation
H2	Content Marketing	Lead Generation

H3	Social Media Engagement	Lead Generation
H4	Email Marketing	Lead Generation
H5	Lead Generation	Customer Acquisition

(Source: Author's own work)

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review the current research from a number of academic and industrial studies over the inbound marketing and its perceived effectiveness in lead generation and customer acquisition. This chapter provides the theoretical foundation for the study to help us understand how inbound marketing strategies has evolved and how this strategy approach differs from the traditional approach (Outbound) whilst also understanding why the approach is becoming relevant for business when looking to attract and convert customers within the digital environment.

The scope of this review includes peer reviewed journal articles, conference papers and professional reports that were taken from trustworthy academic database websites including the Vilnius University Virtual Library, Google Scholar and Researchgate. These sources were chosen to make sure the review is based on current high quality and internationally recognised research, paying special emphasis to research studies that investigate evaluations, perceptions and reported outcomes of inbound marketing practices.

The chapter is structured as follows: the chapter starts with a discussion of what inbound marketing is and how it has evolved, and then its outbound counterpart is compared based on reported effectiveness and evaluative findings in the existing literature. It then discusses inbound marketing in the context of e-commerce, with special focus on the fashion industry, and then goes on to discuss the digital marketing practices in Pakistan. Finally, the chapter establishes some prominent research gaps that point out the need for the current study and the use of research methodology applied in this thesis.

2.1   Theoretical foundation of inbound marketing

Inbound marketing has come about as a strategic response to the limitations of traditional, interruption-based advertising. (Bezovski, 2015) offers an early and detailed discussion of this concept, defining inbound marketing as a digital marketing strategy that is pull-oriented and attracts customers by creating valuable, relevant and consistent content as opposed to pushing messages to a mass audience. This framework builds upon the previous concepts of "permission marketing", in which customers voluntarily interact with messages from a brand, as well as the use of new digital technologies, such as search engine optimization (SEO), content creation, social media engagement and marketing automation (Bezovski, 2015).

Historically, marketing communication had an outbound approach in which companies tried to attract attention through television, radio, print and later online ads in banner advertising. Bezovski says that too often these channels disrupt consumers and create poor quality leads because they are not customized to a customer's informational needs or purchase intention. Inbound marketing, by contrast, orients marketing efforts to the contemporary consumer decision process: people now do a lot of research online before buying, they compare products across digital platforms, and they often make a buying decision before ever speaking with a salesperson. By reaching these consumers with information-filled blog posts, optimized websites, and useful social interactions, inbound marketing delivers value to consumers during every part of their buyer's journey, as well as establishes trust long before a sales conversation begins.

One of the major contributions of Bezovski's work is the recognition of the importance of inbound marketing as a system, not as a group of tactics. He brings out functions of SEO between which Customer Relationship Management(CRM), Email marketing & Social media outreach all backed by Data analytics and marketing automation tools. The author emphasizes on the importance of successful inbound campaigns which rely on a constant cycle of visiting, converting, closing the sale, and delighting customers to become promoters of the brand. This cyclical model represents a move away from single transaction marketing to relationship marketing where there is long-term engagement and customer lifetime value are important performance measures.

From a theoretical perspective, Bezovski (2015) places inbound marketing in the nexus of digital Communication theory and study of relationship marketing. He suggests that inbound marketing meets the principles of two-way communication model in which dialogue and that feedback loops are important. In addition, it operationalizes the relationship marketing emphasis on customer retention, incorporating the content and engagement strategies for promoting ongoing interaction. This is one such connection to a larger marketing theory which shows that inbound marketing is not some new buzzword but an evolution of previous and established academic concepts brought to the digital age.

For the emerging brands based in Pakistan to participate in fashion e-commerce, these insights are of utmost relevance. As mobile and social media usage is massively expanding in the region, consumers increasingly are finding products through internet searches and word of mouth rather than through traditional media of Advertising. Bezovski's (2015) analysis raises the potential use of inbound marketing implemented as one marketing tool with special success potential in such markets. Inbound marketing provides a cost effective marketing by marketing to

consumers who are already requiring information, and the inbound channel has the effective ability to scale with digital content that can be constantly discovered. The importance of the long-term customer relationships also go hand in hand with the need for repeat purchase and brand loyalty in the highly competitive fashion sector.

However, Bezovski (2015) also specifies difficulties, such as the need for ongoing production of content, and the need for skilled individuals to handle SEO, analytics, and automated campaigns. These barriers can be substantial for small and medium enterprise or start-ups with limited resources. This observation forms a point of inquiry for the current study which explores and examines the adoption and adaptation by emerging fashion e-commerce businesses in Pakistan adopting inbound marketing under resource constraint. The gap identified is quite evident: while the conceptual foundations of inbound marketing are quite established in the global context, empirical research on the application and effectiveness of inbound marketing in the fashion e-commerce market in Pakistan is quite rare.

In summary, the work of Bezovski (2015) gives a basic concept of inbound marketing as a customer-centered strategy, integrated approach, data-driven approach (WAW) that has a fundamental difference with traditional promotion (outbound). His framework is attraction, conversion, closing, and delight offers a frame of reference through which we can analyze how Pakistani fashion e-commerce brands can generate qualified leads, and how they can better customer acquisition and retention. Building upon this foundation from the theory, the present research would investigate the particular types of inbound strategies that will resonate most with Pakistani consumers and the impact of these practices upon generating leads and developing long-term customer relationships.

The article, "A New Development in Online Marketing: Introducing Digital Inbound Marketing" by Opreana and Vinerean (2015) provides one of the first comprehensive definitions of inbound marketing in the digital context. The authors call digital inbound marketing (DIM) a natural evolution of online marketing practices, where companies move away from interrupt-based, push-based communication strategies to ones that focus on attracting, engaging and converting customers through relevant and personalized content. According to them, this change has not only been a reflection of the development of technology but also a reflection of a change in consumer behavior. Modern consumers actively search for information on the Internet, consider alternatives, and take purchase decisions based on the credibility and usefulness of digital content. As a result, companies that concentrate on offering content that is helpful and create

meaningful interactions stand a better chance to be discovered and to be selected by potential customers (Opreana & Vinerean, 2015).

One of the important contributions of Opreana and Vinerean is the identification of four foundations of digital inbound marketing. These include: content marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), marketing on social networks, brand-based communications. Content marketing is shown as the fundamental procedure of getting online visitors as it allows structured to attribute firms to publish data which also directly answers their customer requirements, create credibility, and produce natural visibility. SEO is couched in terms of the tool that makes sure that this content is easy enough to find in search engines which still remain the dominant starting point for consumer journeys. Social media marketing is highlighted for the potential of increasing the reach of content as well as stimulate two-way interaction, and brand communication is encouraged as a means of establishing authenticity and loyalty in the long run. Together these four dimensions form a holistic approach where all the digital activities work towards pulling customers in to the brand's ecosystem', as opposed to imposing messages on them.

Measurability is also mentioned to be important in inbound marketing in the article. Unlike traditional campaigns, where the effectiveness of the campaign is determined by reaching to a great extent or exposure, inbound marketing allows the exact tracking of customer journeys through web data analytics & digital metrics. Opreana and Vinerean say that companies should consider inbound efforts of various factors such as website traffic, traffic sources, website bounce rates, time on page, content engagement and lead conversion. Further, they recommend long-term metrics like customer acquisition cost (CAC), customer life-time value (CLV) & retention is important with regard to determining if inbound strategies are producing sustainable business outcomes. This information focus has implications in different areas: the increased pressure for marketing accountability, in which managers want to know the evidence that marketing campaigns result in attracting visitors but also in meaningful growth in the business.

While the article has a very strong conceptual framework, it also recognizes that there are a number of limitations of inbound marketing research. Opreana and Vinerean acknowledge that many inbound strategies do not produce immediate results, as content, SEO, and social engagement often take months or even years to produce results in traffic and conversions. Therefore, short-term evaluations can underestimate the impact of inbound marketing. Moreover, the article is very theoretical in nature as they rely on conceptual definition and non-empirical testing across industries or geographic markets. The authors themselves advocate for additional

applied research exploring how digital inbound marketing strategies are used in particular instances, especially in emerging markets and small businesses that have certain unique challenges, including limited budgets and shortages of resources.

This gap in the literature is where our study can make useful contributions. While Opreana and Vinerean provide a theoretical foundation for the marketing of inbound marketing, the authors do not test the hypothesis of how the of these inbound marketing strategies affect the lead generation and customer acquisition for dynamic and fast-growing industries like the fashion e-commerce industry in Pakistan. The Pakistani market has the following features in common: fast internet penetration, mobile shopping popularity, and the dominance of social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. However, there is very little research conducted to set an empirical measure of which inbound strategies are most effective to local fashion brands in attracting and retaining customers. By applying the dimensions proposed by Opreana and Vinerean: content, SEO, social media and brand communications, our study can fill in this gap and offer a venue of practical evidence about the role of inbound marketing in supporting the growth of businesses in an emerging economy.

Furthermore, the article points out the difficulty in being able to integrate inbound into business models traditionally built on paid advertising. Many companies still invest heavily in outbound channels since they give them immediate visibility, even if they are less efficient cost-wise. Our research will investigate whether such inbound strategies can complement or even replace such outbound practices in the context of the Pakistani fashion e-commerce scenario, where marketing budgets are constrained and where brand differentiation plays a very crucial role. This research focuses on the lead generation, customer acquisition, and sticking of customers, it is studied that how inbound marketing contribution is perceived to the competitive positioning and long-term sustainability by the emerging fashion E-Commerce brands.

In summary, Opreana and Vinerean make an important contribution by conceptualizing digital inbound marketing and emphasizing four dimensions and frameworks for measuring inbound marketing. However, the empirical lack in specific industries is a research gap that our thesis intends to make a difference in. By conducting testing with respect to the effectiveness of inbound marketing in the fashion e-commerce space in Pakistan, our study works on the theoretical model and puts it into practice by providing insights that are not only great from an academic perspective but have a significant practical utilization for emerging brands who are trying to make it big into the competitive space of digital markets.

The article "Inbound Marketing the most important digital marketing strategy" calls for burning inbound marketing as the fundament of digital marketing and not an additional marketing tactic. (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016). It focuses on the fact that inbound marketing is all about how you create value for prospective customers using non-interruptive methods like content creation, search optimization, and social engagement. So that the customers find the business naturally as opposed to being pushed to it. This conceptualization is extremely important in stressing that the core of inbound is attraction as opposed to interruption.

One of the great things about this article is how it puts inbound marketing into context of the ever-changing digital communication landscape. The authors mention that the development of search engines, social media platforms and content platforms has given consumers more access to information in tremendous ways. In such landscape, interruptive advertisement loses effectiveness and inbound strategies, become relevant as they are more aligned to the way digital users behave. The paper further discusses the interrelated things with inbound components (content, SEO, social medias) to create exposure on the brand; engagement and lead conversion over time.

However the article is more of a theoretical article, many of which lack solid empirical evidence. It describes the theoretical benefits of inbound marketing such as improved brand credibility, cumulative traffic growth and sustainable returns but doesn't provide quantitative metrics (e.g. percentage improvements in leads or conversion rates) tied to real-world campaigns. More generic in orientation, it does not distinguish which and tactic inbound national most effective certain sectors and location.

For our study, this article is valuable because it provides us with the definitions of the foundations and a conceptual framework that can be used to understand what is inbound marketing and why it matters in a general sense. It also points out the theoretical potential of inbound, the theory that inbound assets (content, SEO, social profiles) accumulate value. But, it leaves unanswered questions, such as: In the case of Pakistani Fashion E-Commerce, what inbound tactics are leading to most leads? How measurable are they in a developing market?

Soegoto and Simbolon hold an important contribution to the understanding of inbound marketing in the context of digital advertising. Their study explains that inbound marketing is focused on generating and sharing content as a draw card to customers such as blogs and social media updates as well as podcasts and SEO-optimized webpages. Unlike traditional outbound

strategies, which tends to interrupt consumers, inbound methods provide value by focusing on specific consumer needs and interests which is more sustainable and cost efficient (Soegoto & Simbolon, 2018).

The research is based on the qualitative research design that involves the use of interviews of university students who are active consumers of digital media. Findings suggest that many internet users view online advertising as an intrusion on their lives or even a harm related to their perceptions of internet advertising including privacy issues, distraction, and irrelevance. However, when digital advertising is combined with inbound techniques such as personalized content, native advertising and target-specific social media engagement then user experience becomes more positive and less disruptive. This is an important insight considering that inbound marketing often play an important role, but does not exist in isolation, and often need to be combined with digital advertising channels for getting the best results possible.

A particularly relevant insight for our study is the stress laid on native and social advertising as inbound compatible tools. For example, advertisements that are embedded into a social media feed or subscription-based email marketing campaigns are considered as less intrusive as consumers have influence over what they are engaging in. This is in sharp contrast with pop-ups or auto-play video ads, trigger negative perception (Soegoto, & Simbolon, 2018, p. 3-4). Such findings are useful to paint a picture about the important equilibrium between the advertising and inbound practices, especially in visually-intensive industries such as fashion e-commerce, where consumer experience and brand image are closely interrelated

Another strength of this article is that the value driven advertising is discussed. The authors write that digital campaigns which are not based on generating revenues through difficult sales of products but provide helpful information and experiences to the customers. By doing so, businesses can make their targeting more efficient and help them to more effectively satisfy their customers as well as reduce wasted advertising spend (Soegoto & Simbolon, 2018, p. 4). This perspective has direct implications on our study, because brands of clothing e-commerce in Pakistan are often under budget and have to strategically allocate money to strategies that will attract and retain customers.

At the same time, some gaps exist in the article. While it focuses on the Indonesian digital market and the student respondents, it does not examine the function of inbound strategies in certain industries including fashion, tourism or home services. Nor does it quantify the contribution

of inbound techniques to such metrics as conversion rate or customer lifetime value. This gap strengthens the importance of our research that aims to apply the inbound marketing theory specifically with emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan, as this is a sector with peculiar consumer behaviors and fast-growing digital.

Halligan and Shah's Inbound Marketing: Get Found Using Google, Social Media, and Blogs is a creed in the field of digital marketing and is used as a framework to reference how inbound marketing works in practice. The authors claim that traditional outbound methods such as advertising, cold calls and interruption have become less effective, as consumers have increasingly become more adept at filtering out unwanted messages. Instead, business should focus on developing content and digital experience that will draw customers to them and not push messages out to audiences (Halligan & Shah, 2009).

One key concept that the book introduces is the sales funnel model as modified to fit inbound marketing: visitors → leads → opportunities → customers. Halligan & Shah highlight that inbound is not a process with one step, however: nurturing prospects by way of content and engagement. They describe strategies such as content marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), blogging and use of social media to make businesses discoverable and valuable. The authors also preach the use of lead magnets, landing pages, calls-to-action and automation to convert and nurture leads.

The book goes on to further develop the idea of delight as going beyond conversion to creation of promoters of the brand. Inbound is not presented as a tool of acquisition but long-term engagement: making customers happy assures word-of-mouth, loyalty, and long-term growth. In Halligan & Shah's view, inbound marketing becomes a virtuous cycle: content and engagement attract visitors, conversions generate leads, nurturing turns leads into customers, and delighted customers in turn help market the brand organically.

2.1.1 Customer journey model

The Customer Journey Model explains the steps a customer goes through from first hearing about a brand to becoming a loyal customer. These stages include Awareness, Consideration, Decision, Retention, and Advocacy (*Customer Journey Stages*, 2024)

In inbound marketing, this model helps businesses create content that matches each stage such as blog posts for awareness, social media for consideration, and email follow-ups for

retention. It fits well with this research because it shows how inbound marketing guides customers naturally through the journey, helping fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan generate leads and turn them into loyal buyers.

Figure 2

Customer journey model illustrating the stages from awareness to advocacy

(Source: Adapted from Customer Journey Stages (2024))

2.1.2   AIDA Model

The AIDA Model outlines four key stages that a consumer goes through when deciding to purchase: Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action (Hanlon, 2025). At the Attention stage, brands aim to capture the consumer's awareness of a product or service. At Interest, they engage the consumer with useful information or emotional appeal. The Desire stage moves the consumer from "liking" toward "wanting" the product by highlighting benefits and creating an emotional connection. Finally, the Action stage prompts the consumer to take a next step. For example, subscribe, purchase, or engage with the brand.

Figure 3

AIDA model illustrating the stages of attention, interest, desire, and action

THE AIDA MODEL
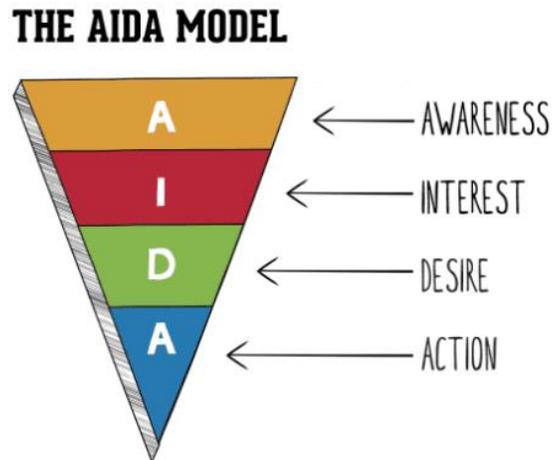
(Source: Adapted from Hanlon (2025))

In the context of inbound marketing, this model supports how tactics such as SEO-optimized content, social media engagement, and landing-page calls-to-action can guide prospects through the funnel. For your study on fashion e-commerce in Pakistan, the AIDA Model helps explain how inbound strategies might more effectively lead to qualified leads and new customers by moving users from the first stage of awareness all the way to action (customer acquisition).

2.1.3 Connection to the study

Both models show how inbound marketing works as a complete system attracting people, building trust, and turning them into customers. For emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan, understanding these models helps identify which inbound steps are most effective for bringing in new customers and growing sales sustainably.

2.1.4 Theoretical findings on inbound marketing

Most researchers agree that inbound marketing is a modern, customer-focused approach that attracts people through valuable and relevant content rather than interrupting them with ads. Bezovski (2015) and Opreana, Vinerean (2015) describe it as a pull strategy through the use of things such as SEO, content, and social media that will future customers in. Halligan and Shah (2009) originally defined it as a way for businesses to be "found" online with information that is helpful for customers. All the writers concur that inbound marketing is more effective for building trust and attracting qualified leads as compared to traditional outbound methods.

However, they are concerned with different things. Bezovski (2015) describes inbound as being a complete system supported by automation and analytics, Opreana and Vinerean (2015) emphasize the measurable results by using web metrics such as traffic and conversions. Patrutiu-Baltes (2016) and Halligan and Shah (2009) point out its long-term advantages, demonstrating how inbound marketing creates loyalty and brand awareness in the long-term. Soegoto and Simbolon (2018) add that inbound ads and digital ads can be used together for promoting online with targeted information so that it may become less intrusive and more customer-friendly.

Despite this consensus on the inbound importance, the researches highlight the same common obstacles: it requires time, coherent content production and good people to control tools such as SEO and automation. Also, most of the research is focused on developed countries and does not have data from emerging markets. There is little availability of information regarding performance of inbound marketing activities in Pakistan's fashion e-commerce industry.

This gap shows why our study is needed to find out which inbound strategies (such as content, SEO, or social media) are most effective for generating leads and acquiring customers in Pakistan.

2.2 Inbound vs. outbound marketing effectiveness

The article Inbound Vs. Outbound Digital Marketing: A Comparative Analysis of Strategies, Effectiveness, and Business Impact by Tanmaykumar Shah provides a direct comparison between inbound and outbound marketing strategies in terms of their methods, effectiveness, advantages, and drawbacks. According to this work, inbound marketing is defined as the approach that attracts customers using helpful content, social media, SEO, blogs, and email campaigns. Outbound marketing is described as using more interruptive tactics such as cold calls, TV/radio ads, print media, and banners which push messages to broad audiences regardless of their immediate interest (Shah, 2025).

Shah outlines a four-step process for inbound marketing: Attract, Engage, Close, and Delight. Each stage is meant to guide leads through a journey toward purchase and then turn them into promoters of the brand. The article highlights that inbound comes with benefits including cost efficiency, ability to properly target audiences who are high intent, better trust, ability to measure outcomes more precisely with the usage of analytics tools, and improved long term engagement. On the other hand, outbound is linked to swift results, wider reach for awareness, but higher costs, lower engagement and less precise measure.

An important strength of Shah's work is the fact that it is a comparative study. It does not merely list advantages and disadvantages but is based on recent data and business practices to demonstrate that as consumer behavior moves toward online research and content consumption, inbound marketing becomes more successful than traditional outbound methods. For instance, through Shah's analysis, businesses that focus on inbound report a higher return on investment (ROI) in terms of lead quality over time, and better engagement metrics than those that focus primarily on outbound channels. However, Shah is also aware of limitations: it takes more time for inbound approaches to gain traction; they need continual content creation, talented teams and solid analytics infrastructure to track performance. Outbound for immediate awareness or to move into new market segments.

In relation to our study, Shah's article helps us to better understand which kinds of performance indicators are commonly discussed, especially cost per lead, lead quality, conversion metrics and engage the customer for long term. But it is not specifically focused on fashion E-Commerce in Pakistan and emerging small fashion brands or do much analysis on retention or repeat purchase. Thus, our study can extend the findings by Shah's work by paying attention to these particular measures in the context of fashion e-commerce in a developing digital market such as Pakistan. This research aims to fill in the gaps by investigating how they are perceived as more effective for achieving their objective by marketing professionals in terms of inbound and outbound marketing practices for resource constrained brands operating in highly competitive social media environments.

The article titled "Influential Article Review Objective or Interrelated Strategies: Inbound Marketing vs. Outbound Marketing" states that Inbound and outbound marketing are often compared in regards to their efficacy and long term business effect. Oftentimes referred to as interruption-based, outbound marketing is the traditional one in which consumers receive promotion messages via channels like television, radio or print ads, whether they are looking for the information or not. In contrast, inbound marketing is built around customer attraction by offering valuable, relevant and engaging content that meets their needs and interests (Holden et al., 2021).

Evidence from Holden points out the fact that inbound marketing has seen substantial growth, where outbound channels are either stagnant or on the declining trend. Investments in inbound have grown enormously because of its ability to reach more audiences effectively through the digital channel (i.e., blogs, SEO, social media). The research highlights inbound marketing as

better for creating "Top of Mind Preference" which is the positioning of a brand as the preferred choice over the other, while outbound marketing creates mostly "Top of Mind Awareness" which only ensures that a consumer is aware of a brand name's existence without necessarily giving it a preference.

Despite these distinctions, however, the authors suggests that the division is "artificial and meaningless," and proposes a gray area in which both strategies intersect. The importance of inbound as a major challenge is highlighted, given that it is almost always the competitive digital environment which is saturated with keywords, potentially leading to a loss of sales opportunity if visibility cannot be gained rapidly.

The conclusion of the review is that inbound and outbound marketing are not necessarily exclusive, but can be complementary, if used strategically. A hybrid approach can often be the most effective approach, especially when outbound approaches help to amplify the visibility of inbound content. However, the effectiveness advantage still works in favor of inbound because it enables targeting the audience better and communicating with them on a personal level. This is consistent with wider digital marketing trends where consumer-centric engagement has become a critical success factor for firms as they look for sustainable growth.

The article "Inbound Marketing vs. Outbound Marketing: Independent or Complementary Strategies" addresses the changing roles of inbound and outbound marketing in a digitally dominant environment. The authors define outbound marketing as interruption-based marketing including television, radio, cold calls, print advertising and digital ads that force a message on audiences regardless of their current interest. Unlike that, inbound marketing is framed from the perspective of being a pull-based approach: instead of interrupting, by content, SEO, social media, blogs, and email marketing campaigns that they decide to consume (Dakouan et al., 2019)

One of the central arguments in the article is that although inbound has increased in popularity and investment over time, it is not that inbound is against outbound. Rather, they may be complementary. The authors suggest a "grey zone" in which outbound tactics enhance or reinforce inbound content such as buying paid ads to promote educational blog posts to generate traffic on lead-capture pages. This mixed strategy is argued to be ideal for ensuring that brands simultaneously maximize the reach while maintaining the engagement quality. The article also provides a comparative table of the two poles of outbound (print ads, direct mail, cold calls) and

inbound (SEO, blogging, social media, podcasts), with hybrid or borderline tactics falling into the grey zone.

Dakouan further argue that inbound is the only way for brands to get Top of Mind Preference instead of Top of Mind Awareness. The difference, they state, is that inbound efforts are aimed at making a brand the one consumers would like to be their favorite one and not just a recognized one. This preference is fostered through constant value-based interaction versus one-off visibility blasts. They caution, though, that inbound's big challenge is being found in competitive landscapes: if the content of a brand is not discoverable, potential sales may be lost in the time it takes for inbound to gain traction.

While insightful, the article is - for the most part - theoretical and descriptive; it does not bring forward original empirical data or case studies targeting specific industries. It implies that future studies should try to measure the influence of inbound vs outbound channels through actual measures such as website analytics, conversion rate of leads and cost of customer acquisition. This limitation itself provides an opportunity for our study to fill this quantitative vacuum particularly in Pakistani fashion e-commerce sector. By empirically measuring and comprehending inbound and outbound effectiveness in relation to lead generation, conversion, and retention, Our research helps fill the gaps as it examines how marketing professionals perceive the relative effectiveness of inbound and outbound marketing practices for resource-constrained brands living in highly-warring social media environments.

In summary, Dakouan put the discussion a stage forward by arguing that inbound and outbound strategies are not mutually exclusive and that hybrid frameworks may be the best in terms of business yields. Their conceptual mapping of marketing tactics and the concept of Top of Mind Preference can offer a lens to compare. However, their call for empirical verification is in direct line with our research objective, which is to empirically consider how marketing professionals think about the relative levels of different marketing practices using inbound and outbound marketing techniques and data collected from respondents in surveys, in emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan.

2.3   Inbound marketing in e-commerce

Erdmann and Ponzo learned about the role of inbound marketing in grocery e-commerce in Europe and the USA. Using information from 29 large retailers and Amazon, they analysed the impact of search engine optimization (SEO), content and paid search on online sales. Their

findings showed that inbound marketing activities such as SEO and content creation were found to be positively associated with digital sales and that companies tend to allocate resources efficiently when focusing on search driven inbound strategies (Erdmann & Ponzoa, 2021).

One of the strengths of this study is that it has a large dataset which includes multiple years and different countries. This aided the authors in comparability of patterns between markets and retailer types. For example, optimizing inbound strategies in pure online stores was different than that of traditional retailers which also sell offline. The results also showed that inbound marketing is more effective in mature markets (such as the United States and the United Kingdom) than in smaller countries in Europe.

However, there are some limits to the study. It was specific to the grocery e-commerce which is different from fashion. Grocery is bought often and items have lower margin but fashion is harder to buy as there is a greater amount of design, branding and social media. Also, the research focused predominantly on search and content marketing without considering other strategies such as influencer marketing or TikTok campaigns, which have great importance in the case of fashion eCommerce.

These are the gaps in which our study fits. Fashion e-commerce in Pakistan is expanding rapidly, but there are a lot of small brands today who heavily rely on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok for visibility. Unlike grocery retailers, these brands often do not have a huge marketing budget to spend on and therefore pay attention to methods that are perceived to be cost-effective. By considering how marketing professionals view the importance of inbound marketing for customer attraction and retention, this research is an extension of the work of Erdmann and Ponzo into a different industry and an emerging market context. This makes the study timely and relevant.

Diaz-Meneses, Amador-Marrero and Guedes examined the operation of inbound marketing in the case of wine cellars' e-commerce websites in the Canary Islands. They reviewed 59 websites and graded factors such as SEO quality, content, social media presence, personalization and technology maturity. Their aim was to see which of these inbound elements explain the higher domain authority which is an important sign of online visibility (Díaz-Meneses et al., 2023).

The study showed that not all inbound activities have the same effect. Personalization (content adapted to users) and flexible distribution (smooth online shopping experience) were the most important ones to build stronger websites. In contrast, mere presence of many social media accounts or good, good SEO did not matter much from one company to another. This demonstrates that it is more important to have quality and relevant inbound marketing than it is to have a large amount of it.

A good point of this study is that they are using real website data and develop a method to measure inbound marketing maturity. This makes them useful in comparison between companies. However, there are also limits to the study. It only considered wine businesses within a single region, and so findings cannot, for instance, necessarily be applied to other industries, such as fashion.

For our study, this research is useful because it brings up which inbound factors are seen as most effective. We modify their approach to explore fashion e-com companies in Pakistan. Similar to the case with wine sellers, fashion brands are seen to benefit from individualization and smooth digital processes, rather than from using lots of platforms separately. This therefore supports the perspective that Pakistani fashion e-commerce brands should target tailored content, user-friendly websites, and customer experience for their assessment of lead generation and customer acquisition.

2.4   Trends & challenges in fahion e-commerce

The paper "Optimising the Fashion E-Commerce Journey: A Data-Driven Approach to Customer Retention" examines how data and predictive models are employed by fashion e-commerce platforms to minimise customer churn and enhance retention (Fadhila et al., 2024). The study is based in Indonesia, however it reflects on trends relevant to many growing markets.

One of the major trends that the paper emphasizes is that of data-driven personalization. The authors use RFM (Recency, Frequency, Monetary) model along with several machine learning algorithms to predict the customers that are likely to discontinue purchasing. They determine that personalization to tailor offers and content based on customer behavior is among the best strategies to ensure customers are coming back.

Another trend is the importance of mobile commerce and clickstream analytics. Fadhila note that close to 90% of users access fashion e-commerce platforms through mobile devices.

Clickstream data (how users move through pages clicks, views, adds to cart) is useful to brands who want to understand user behavior and can behave accordingly in terms of content or navigation.

The paper also mentions churn prediction as such a capability: brands use algorithms such as Random Forest to anticipate which customers could leave them and then take action by tailoring promotions or employ re-engagement strategies for them. This is a change from reactive to proactive retention in fashion e-Commerce.

For our study, these trends are useful as they focus on inbound tactics that go above and beyond generic content or social media posts. In Pakistan, brands in the fashion e-commerce are also using personalization, mobile optimization, and data analytics, which are seen to be useful to support customer retention and acquisition beyond the first lead generation. The gap is that most studies concentrate on retention, this one investigates how marketing professionals view the role of personalization and user data usage in supporting lead generation and generation of customer amongst emerging fashion e-commerce brands.

In their article "Impact of Digital Commerce on Fashion Industry to Gain Customer Loyalty", (Sahai et al., 2019) discuss how practices of digital commerce affect the long-term loyalty of customers in the fashion industry. The authors propose that with a rise in fashion brands going online, it becomes more difficult for consumer loyalty as there are many alternatives available at a click of a button. Their study involves surveying people who shop at a fashion store to identify which of the digital strategies are making customers stick to a brand.

The paper highlights a number of key factors leading to loyalty in fashion e-commerce including brand image, trendy ways that are communicated, differentiation of website, website responsiveness, emotional connection, and quality of service. They find that among those, responsiveness (fast communication, support) and emotional connection (feeling of closeness or personal relationship with the brand) have good positive effects on customer loyalty. Good website design and differentiation are also important, but to a lesser extent.

A strength that this article has is that it also does not just focus on sales, it focuses specifically on fashion and loyalty. It helps link digital commerce practices (which overlaps with inbound marketing) to the important goal of customer retention and loyalty, a step beyond the acquisition.

However, due to the small size of the sample and the fact that it was bounded to a region in India, there is some limitation in generalization.

For our study, this is informed by prior research showing that such inbound-related practices as responsive communication, emotional connection and well-structured digital content are perceived to play an important role in engaging customers and strengthening brand relationships. However, there is a clear dearth in that the current research tends not to focus on the perception of inbound marketing's role in generating leads and acquisition of customers, especially in the context of fashion e-commerce in developing markets such as Pakistan. Unlike past work which is customer retention or loyalty based, the present study also extends the existing literature by examining the perception of marketing practitioners in terms of how the following inbound marketing strategies SEO, content marketing, social media engagement, email marketing aids lead generation and customer acquisition by the emerging fashion e-commerce brands located in Pakistan.

2.5   Research gaps

Although the market for fashion e-commerce in Pakistan is evolving, existing researches have not defined in a clear manner how the inbound marketing strategies have been perceived in terms of the contribution towards attracting and converting customers. Most of the studies do not limit themselves to specific inbound marketing tactics like SEO, content marketing, social media engagement, and email marketing but measure the effectiveness of digital marketing overall or even of an individual (Siddiqui et al., 2025) As a result, there is little empirical evidence on the direct contribution of these inbound strategies to generating leads and acquiring customers. This gap leaves a question of what inbound practices have the strongest outcomes for emerging fashion e-commerce brands.

Furthermore, small and emerging fashion e-commerce brands, many of whom use low-cost inbound marketing approaches heavily, are underrepresented in current research. Prior research has seldom asked about what particular inbound approaches are seen as most helpful for these smaller businesses or how inbound activities are naturally seen as aiding in the generation of leads and acquisition of customers. This research covers these gaps by analyzing empirically the effectiveness of key inbound marketing strategies in lead generation as well as customer acquisition among emerging fashion e commerce brands in Pakistan.

2.6   Conceptual framework

Based on the research gaps identified and existing theoretical relationships, inbound marketing strategies, namely SEO, content marketing, social media engagement, and email marketing, and lead generation, as well as lead generation and customer acquisition, are perceived in the framework below.

Figure *4*

Conceptual model illustrating the perceived relationships between inbound marketing strategies, lead generation, and customer acquisition
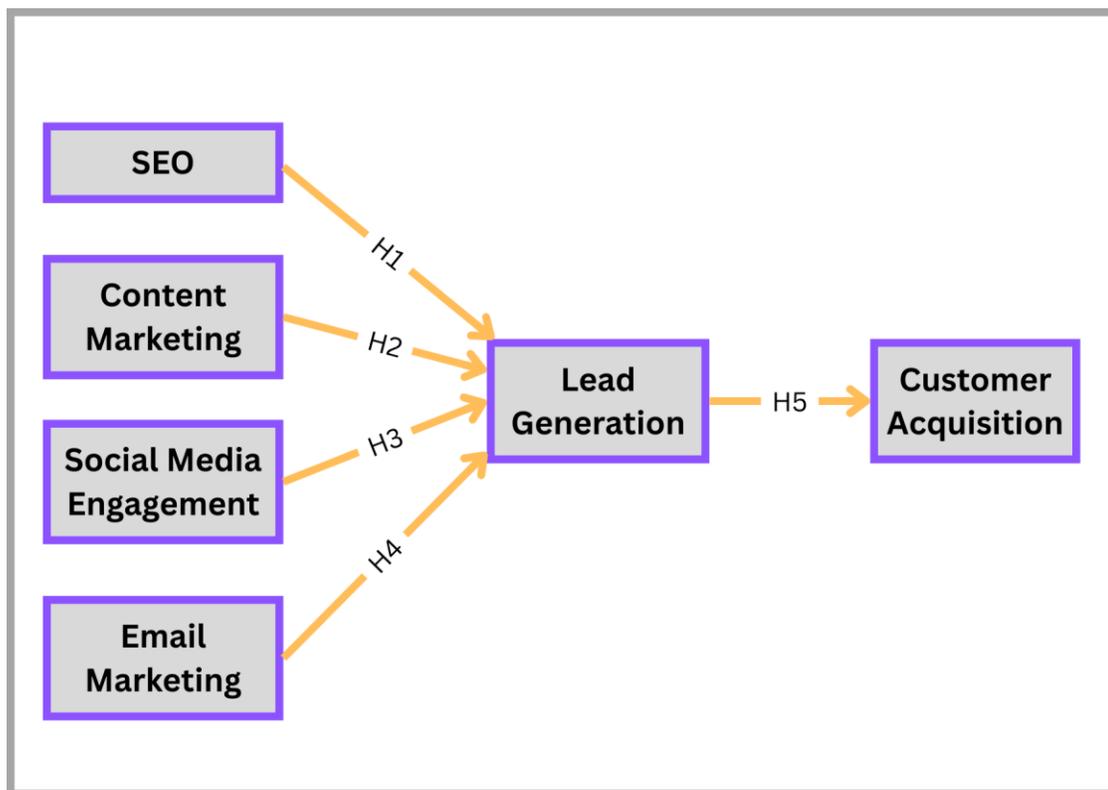
(Source: Author's own work)

2.6.1 Clarification of lead generation as a mediating variable

In this study, Lead Generation is referred to as a mediating variable. It is the perceived result of inbound marketing strategies such as SEO, content marketing, social media engagement and email marketing and also perceived to be associated with Customer Acquisition. This mediating structure is based on the perception of inbound marketing supporting customer acquisition indirectly through relationship with lead generation.

Figure 5

Conceptual model illustrating the mediating role of lead generation between inbound marketing strategies and customer acquisition
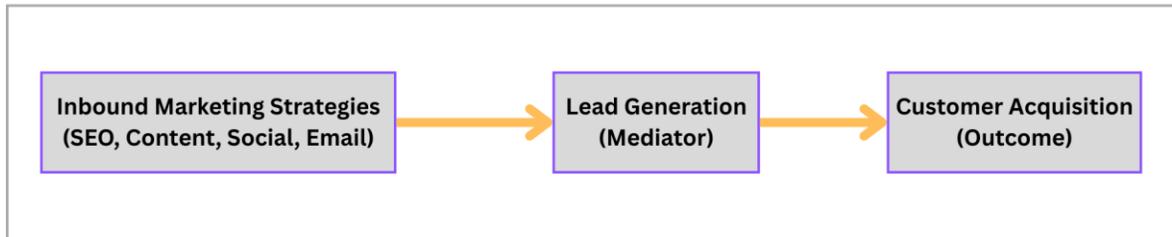
(Source: Author's own work)

2.8   Summary

This chapter noticed literature on the topics of inbound and outbound marketing and fashion e-commerce trends and its digital marketing practices in Pakistan. The review focused on the fact that numerous studies have talked about the influence of digital strategies on the consumer view and purchasing behavior that there is a lack of attention given regarding the inbound marketing tactics against the new era of Pakistani fashion e-Commerce brands. In particular, there is a lack of empirical work on how certain inbound strategies like SEO, content marketing, social media engagement and email marketing are perceived to assist with lead generation, customer acquisition, and customer retention. These identified gaps warrant the current study's objective of assessing the perceived effectiveness of inbound marketing practices in the emerging fashion e-commerce segment of the Pakistani economy.

3.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this chapter is to describe the research methods involved in investigating the perceived effectiveness of inbound marketing strategies to generate the leads and support the acquisition of customers in the Pakistanis fashion e-Commerce sector. It relates the research design, sampling approach, data collection method(s), measuring constructs and analysis methods used to achieve the study aims. By outlining these methodological actions, this chapter ensures that the research procedure is systematic and clear and consistent with the overall purpose of the study.

This research seeks to assess the opinion of how inbound marketing practices like search engine optimization (SEO), content marketing, social media engagement and email marketing are perceived to lead to lead generation and customer acquisition by emerging fashion e-Commerce brands in Pakistan. Since in the study the focus is on assessing the perception, identification of usage pattern, and relationship between different inbound marketing activities and the perceived result in performance, the quantitative approach is presumed as the most suitable and effective research strategy.

The quantitative method is more open to gathering measurable and comparable data by using structured questionnaires. This helps the researcher to analyze the relationship between variables statistically and come to generalizations. According to (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), quantitative research is suitable when the aim is to test theories, or investigate relationships between measurable constructs using statistical analysis. This approach will ensure objectivity and deliver evidence-based insights that can help guide future marketing practices in Pakistan's emerging digital economy.

3.1   Research approach and design

This study takes a quantitative research approach to find out the perception of inbound marketing strategies that were associated to generate lead and acquire customer in the case of emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan. A quantitative approach is suitable in that it allows for the structured measurement of variables, statistical testing of relationships and generalizable insights based on numerical data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Descriptive cross sectional survey research design is used in the research. A descriptive design is appropriate to profile existing inbound marketing practices and evaluate expectations of

respondents about how effectively they work. The cross-sectional element is collection of data at one point in time, and it is useful for looking at associations between variables without having to follow through the long term. Cross-sectional studies are very commonly employed in the study of marketing and behavioural research because these studies enable the researcher to analyse the naturally occurring differences in a defined sample (Kesmodel, 2018).

This design choice is further supported by methodological literature, which highlights that survey-based, cross-sectional quantitative designs are effective for studying attitudes, behaviours and marketing outcomes to organisational settings (Bryman, 2016). By using this design, this study will identify the most commonly used inbound strategies, the degree to which they are perceived to be effective and if there are differences in perceptions based on the brand characteristics such as size, online experience or digital maturity.

Overall, the quantitative and cross-sectional design ensures that the study is systematic, measurable, and appropriate for producing practical insights to the phenomena relevant to the Pakistan fashion e-commerce industry.

3.2 Research questions and hypotheses link

The research questions and hypotheses that were formulated for this study are the basis of the quantitative approach employed. They examine the identification of what the inbound marketing strategies SEO, Content marketing, Social media engagement, and email marketing are being the most used for emerging fashion e-Commerce brands in Pakistan and how various inbound marketing strategies affect lead generation and customer acquisition. The hypotheses describe the expected relationships according to respondents based on their perception of the interplay between inbound marketing activities and the generation of leads and the perceived role of lead generation in supporting customer acquisition so that the methodological design is matched to the study's interest in perceived inbound marketing effectiveness.

To answer these questions, information will be gathered via a structured online survey using a five-point Likert scale to get opinions of inbound marketing practices and performance outcomes. Some statistical techniques such as descriptive analysis, correlation and multiple regression will be applied to test the hypotheses and to express the strength and significance of the suggested relationships. This analytical approach enables a systematic and evidence-based assessment of the contribution of inbound marketing activities to lead generation and customer acquisition of emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan.

3.3   Data collection methods

The data for this study has been collected by a structured on-line questionnaire developed to obtain quantitative information from respondents as working in Pakistani Fashion e-Commerce sector. The questionnaire was given to marketing managers, digital marketing executives, and business founders of the newly emerging fashion e-commerce brands. These persons were directly involved in implementing and evaluating marketing strategies and hence, they were appropriate participants to provide relevant and reliable insights.

The questionnaire was made up of close-ended questions that were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale (from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). This format asked respondents how well they thought the various types of inbound marketing, such as content marketing, SEO, email marketing, and social media engagement, were at generating leads and attracting customers. The Likert scale structure enabled standardised data collection which was appropriate for statistical analysis. The full questionnaire and justifications for the items are given in Annex I (Appendix).

Using a survey-based approach was congruent with the quantitative nature of this study. It allowed for the gathering of measurable and similar data from a relatively wide sample ensuring objectivity and uniformity. Moreover, the process was made efficient, cost-effective, and accessible to the participants across Pakistan using online distribution via platforms like Google Forms. This method enabled the research to be completed within a short time and ensured that data was scalable, reliable and suitable for statistical analysis to test the proposed hypotheses.

3.4   Sampling and participants

The emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan who operate mostly through online trading platforms and are actively involved in digital marketing activities were considered to be the target population for this study. These brands were a growing segment of the fashion industry in Pakistan that depends on online visibility and customer engagement to run a successful business.

A sample of 40 to 60 people was considered by selecting people with convenient sampling strategy who were involved in the marketing field such as Head of marketing, specialized in digital marketing and founders directly involved in the design or management of online marketing strategies. Convenience sampling was used because the target group could not be accessed

through official information databases and most of the respondents could only be reached through various online networks such as LinkedIn, Instagram, industry groups, and social media communities. This made convenience sampling the most practical and time efficient for the study. However, the generality of this method may be limited, which was noted in the discussion section.

Subjects were sourced from LinkedIn, online business directories, and relevant groups on fashion retail and e-commerce on social media. In this way, we were able to collect data efficiently from people who first-hand have experience with inbound marketing activities in their organizations.

The inclusion criteria that the brand must:

1. Sells products mostly via online stores or e-Commerce websites.
2. Has an active social media account (such as Instagram, Facebook, or TikTok)
3. Has implemented at least one form of inbound marketing strategy such as SEO, content marketing, Email or social media engagement.

The final sample size was considered satisfactory for exploratory quantitative analysis with the participants considered. This sample displayed a reasonable level of representativeness of both small and medium-sized fashion e-commerce businesses in Pakistan and made it possible to make meaningful statistical interpretations within the time and resources of the study.

3.5   Research instrument and variables

This research employed the structured online questionnaire as the main tool for research to gather quantitative data. The questionnaire has been designed to measure the perception and experience of participants in the effectiveness of the various inbound marketing strategies to generate leads and acquire customers such as SEO, content marketing, social media engagement and email marketing.

The instrument had close-ended questions rated on a five-point Likert scale (from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). This scale enabled respondents to rate their degree of agreement of statements relating to inbound marketing practices, outcomes of lead generation, and effectiveness of customer acquisition. The use of standardized scales increased the reliability, comparability and measurability of responses across participants.

The questionnaire was divided into three major sections:

1. Demographic Information: capturing such information as size of company, respondent's role, years in operation, digital marketing experience.
2. Inbound Marketing Practices: determining the amount of inbound marketing practices used and what the perceived success of these inbound marketing practices is (SEO, Content Marketing, Social Media, Email Campaigns).
3. Lead Generation and Customer Acquisition Results: evaluating the impact of these inbound activities on business visibility, qualified leads and customer conversion.

Table 2

Key variables and measurement scales used in the study

Type	Variable	Description	Measurement Scale
Independent	SEO	Search engine optimization practices used by the brand	Likert 1–5
Independent	Content Marketing	Use of blogs, videos, and other content to attract and engage users	Likert 1–5
Independent	Social Media Engagement	Interaction and promotion through social platforms	Likert 1–5
Independent	Email Marketing	Use of newsletters and automated campaigns to nurture leads	Likert 1–5
Dependent	Lead Generation	Perceived success in attracting potential customers online	Likert 1–5
Dependent	Customer Acquisition	Perceived success in converting leads into paying customers	Likert 1–5

(Source: Author's own work)

The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms, ensuring accessibility and efficient data collection. Prior to distribution, the instrument underwent a pilot test with a small group of marketing professionals to ensure the clarity, validity, and reliability of the questions.

3.5.1 Pilot test

Before beginning the final survey, a pilot test was carried out with 11 respondents that were established to represent the target population of owners of emerging fashion e-commerce brands and marketing professionals working in the Fashion industry in Pakistan. The aim of the pilot was to test the clarity, flow and comprehensibility of the questionnaire. Participants were

asked to provide comments on any unclear wording, confusing terms or problems with the order of questions and response options. No problems were reported, an indicator that the questionnaire was easy to understand and complete. In addition, the Cronbach's Alpha values for all constructs were greater than the acceptable value of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency. Since no major problems were found and measurement scales showed their reliability, the questionnaire was kept without any modification and was used for the main data collection

3.6   Data analysis procedures

The data obtained from the structured online questionnaire was analysed with the use of quantitative statistical techniques in addressing the research questions and testing the study's hypothesis. Responses of a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree - 5 = Strongly Agree) were transformed into numbers and analyzed with statistical software such as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) or Excel in order to test the proposed hypotheses and to investigate associations between the inbound marketing strategies, lead generation and customer acquisition.

There were the following key steps in the analysis:

1. **Data cleaning and coding:** All completed questionnaires were checked for completeness and quality of response. Invalid or partly filled answers were eliminated. In addition, two responses were excluded because the participant responded "Strongly Agree" to all three Likert scale items, which is a sign of straight-lining, and a lack of engagement. Each of the items then was coded numerically to make the data set ready for statistical analysis.
2. **Descriptive statistics:** Measures including frequency, percentage, means and standard deviations were calculated to summarise the demographic characteristics and describe the perceptions of recipients of inbound marketing practices.
3. **Reliability testing:** Internal consistency for each construct (SEO, content marketing, social media engagement, email marketing, lead generation, and customer acquisition) was measured using Cronbach's Alpha with the value of alpha >= 0.70 taken as an acceptable reliability measure.
4. **Correlation analysis:** The correlation coefficients (Pearson) were computed to test the association of inbound marketing strategies and outcome variables, which revealed the strength and direction of the relationship between the constructs.

5. **Regression analysis:** Simple linear regression models were utilized to test individual hypotheses (H1-H5) in an attempt to examine the direct involved effect of each inbound marketing activity on Lead Generation as well as the direct involved effect of Lead Generation on Customer Acquisition. In addition, a multiple regression model was performed to understand the change in Lead Generation with combined influence of SEO, content marketing, social media engagement and email marketing to allow comparison of which inbound strategy was the best predictor.

6. **Interpretation of findings:** The findings were interpreted in reference to research questions, hypotheses and theoretical framework for in light of overall perceived effectiveness of inbound marketing strategies in Pakistan fashion e-commerce sector.

7. What is more, recent studies of analysis of quantitative data underline the significance of departing from structured statistical technique and software solutions to ensure rigor and replicability ("A Study on the Educational Use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences," 2019). This justifies the chosen approach and raises the requirement for systematic processing and analysis of data with a quantitative focus.

3.7   Hypothesis testing approach

The hypothesis in this study has been analysed by using regression model to provide a comprehensive understanding of how inbound marketing strategies are perceived to be associated with the lead generation and customer acquisition. Each hypothesis corresponded to a certain regression model, thus structuring the analysis to make it testable and in line with the research questions.

Simple linear regression was used to test the direct impacts of each inbound marketing activity on Lead Generation:

- **H1** will be tested using a linear regression model predicting Lead Generation from SEO.
- **H2** will be tested using a linear regression model predicting Lead Generation from Content Marketing.
- **H3** will be tested using a linear regression model predicting Lead Generation from Social Media Engagement.
- **H4** will be tested using a linear regression model predicting Lead Generation from Email Marketing.

- **H5** will be tested using a linear regression model predicting Customer Acquisition from Lead Generation.

3.8   Validity and reliability

To assure that the research instrument achieves the goal of obtaining accurate and trustworthy result, in this study reliability and validity of questionnaire were examined.

Reliability: this refers to the consistency of the instrument whether it would provide the same results under consistent conditions. In this study, reliability was measured by using the Cronbach's alpha which gives the measure of how much these items are related to each other in each scale. The acceptable level of internal consistency for Cronbach's alpha is a value greater than 0.70, which means acceptable internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Validity is an indication of whether the questionnaire indeed measures what it is intended to measure. This research was made to be valid through three main approaches:

1. Content Validity: The survey items were developed according to the theoretical literature and previous research, and the survey items were reviewed by academic advisors to ensure that they represented the constructs of inbound marketing strategies, lead generation, and customer acquisition.
2. Construct Validity: Construct validity was examined in the logical grouping of the items according to their constructs (SEO, content marketing, social media engagement, and email marketing). Where needed, factor analysis was to be conducted to verify items with the intended constructs.
3. Face Validity: The questionnaire was reviewed by marketing professionals as well as academic advisors to ensure that the items looked clear and appropriate, and relevant to the research context.

By addressing the reliability and validity issues with these approaches, the study enhanced the credibility of the measurement instrument employed and ensured that the data obtained from this study could be used effectively to conduct further statistical analysis and hypothesis testing.

3.9   Ethical considerations

This research was standard academic ethical research that adhered to ethical practices to ensure honesty, transparency and respect for all the participants. Before initiating the survey, participants were clearly told about the objective of the research, voluntarily participation and that they had the right to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. The study followed basic ethical principles of research such as respect for participants, voluntary participation, and confidentiality. According to (Hasan et al., 2021), in an ethical research, participants autonomy must be protected, and that their data will be dealt with in a just manner without harming them due to participation. In line with this, the respondents in this study were told that they could withdraw at any time and that their brand names could remain anonymous.

The online questionnaire contained a consent statement that the participants had to agree to before moving on. All responses have been kept anonymous and no personal or sensitive business information has been collected at any stage of the survey. The questionnaire was limited to perceptions of inbound marketing practices, making it impossible to trace or identify respondents based on their name and information about their companies.

Data were kept secure and only used for academic purposes. The results were presented in aggregate form to make sure that no individual or company can be identified. No data sharing was done with outside parties. By ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and data protection, this research ensured that it was conducted in an ethical manner and that the privacy and rights of all participants were respected and safeguarded.

3.10   Summary

This chapter presented research methodology that was adopted for the purpose of investigating the perceived effectiveness of inbound marketing towards generating leads and acquiring customers in the case of emerging fashion e-comm brands in Pakistan. A quantitative research design was chosen to allow measurable research of inbound strategies like SEO, contents and social media engagement. Data were collected via a structured online questionnaire with the help of a Likert scale (1-5), with marketing professionals and owners of online fashion brands as targets. The sampling method to be used is the convenience sampling with anticipated 40-60 participants who would meet inclusion criteria like active operation of the given organization on social media.

The chapter also described the variables, methods of data analysis, and procedures taken to ensure reliability, validity, and ethical compliance (e.g., voluntary participation; the option needed to keep the identities of brands anonymous). These methodological choices formed a clear and ethical model for data collection and analysis and allow findings in the next chapters to be both credible and relevant to the aims of the study.

It is important to note that this study takes a cross-sectional research design and is based on self-reported data collected using a structured questionnaire. As a result, the findings represent the perceptions of inbound marketing practices by respondents, and not objective measures of performance. The statistical analyses undertaken in this study reveal associations and predictive tendencies between variables but do not determine these to be causal effects. Therefore, the results must be taken as indicative of perceived relationships rather than cause-and-effect relationships.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter shows the results of the empirical analysis that was done to see how well inbound marketing strategies worked for new fashion e-Commerce brands in Pakistan. It starts by checking the data and making sure it is reliable to make sure that the data collected is of good quality and consistent with itself. Then, descriptive statistics are given to sum up the demographics of the respondents and the overall use of inbound marketing methods.

The results are arranged in accordance with the research questions and hypotheses of the study. First, the chapter looks at the most popular inbound marketing strategies (RQ1). Next, there is a multiple regression analysis that looks at how effective inbound marketing activities are overall at generating leads and getting new customers (RQ2). Subsequent correlation analysis and a series of straightforward linear regressions are used to evaluate the five hypotheses (H1-H5) concerning the perceived relationships between SEO (search engine optimization), content marketing, social media engagement, email marketing, and lead generation in relation to customer acquisition. At the end of the chapter, there is a summary of the most important findings.

4.1 Data screening and preparation

We checked the dataset for accuracy, completeness, and suitability for quantitative testing before doing the statistical analysis. The final dataset had no missing data because the questionnaire required everyone to answer all questions about the independent and dependent variables. But during the first screening, two responses were removed because the participants chose the same answer (like "Strongly Agree") for all of the Likert-scale questions. This showed that they were not taking the survey seriously or were not valid. After taking out these cases, a final sample of 52 valid responses was used for the analysis.

All variables were assigned numerical codes in accordance with the questionnaire's structure. The Likert-scale items were coded from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning "Strongly Disagree" and 5 meaning "Strongly Agree." Demographic variables were given the right numerical or categorical codes, like 1–5 for years of operation and 1–4 for sales volume.

4.2 Reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)

We used Cronbach's Alpha values to check the internal consistency of the measurement scales used in this study for each construct. Reliability analysis makes sure that all the items in

each construct measure the same basic idea. For research in the social sciences, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or higher is acceptable. This means that the data is consistent within itself.

The reliability analysis shows that all six constructs went above the suggested level, which shows that they are very reliable. The most reliable was SEO ($\alpha = 0.94$), then Customer Acquisition ($\alpha = 0.91$), and finally Social Media Engagement ($\alpha = 0.89$). Content Marketing ($\alpha = 0.86$), Email Marketing ($\alpha = 0.86$), and Lead Generation ($\alpha = 0.89$) also showed that they were very consistent with each other. These results show that the measurement tool is reliable and can be used for more research.

Table 3

Reliability Statistics for All Constructs

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
SEO	5	0.94
Content Marketing	5	0.86
Social Media Engagement	5	0.89
Email Marketing	5	0.86
Lead Generation	4	0.89
Customer Acquisition	4	0.91

(Source: Author's own work)

4.3   Descriptive Statistics

This part shows the descriptive statistics of the study's dataset, which includes a summary of the demographic information of the respondents and the main research constructs' central tendencies. Descriptive statistics give a clear picture of the sample profile and give us our first look at how and how well emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan are using inbound marketing strategies.

4.3.1   Demographic Profile of Respondents

This part shows the descriptive statistics for the demographic characteristics of the 52 people who were in the final sample. These descriptive results give an idea of the kinds of fashion e-commerce businesses that were studied and help to set the stage for the later analyses. To give you an idea of what emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan are like, we have

included summaries of the respondents' roles, years in business, number of employees, monthly online sales volume, and online platforms used.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variable

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Role	52	1	8	4.37	2.267
Experience	52	1	4	1.98	1.075
Number_emply	52	1	4	1.52	0.828
Sales_volume	52	1	5	2.29	1.446
Valid N (listwise)	52				

(Source: Author's own work)

(A)   Role in company

Table 4.3 presents how many people answered the survey based on their job role. Digital Marketing Specialists (36.5%) were the most common type of respondent, followed by Founders (21.2%) and Marketing Managers (11.5%). There were fewer Social Media Managers (9.6%), E-commerce Managers (3.8%), Brand Managers (1.9%), and Other roles (15.4%). This shows that most of the people in the sample are directly involved in marketing activities.

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Role

Role

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Founder	11	21.2	21.2	21.2
	Marketing Manager	6	11.5	11.5	32.7
	Social Media Manager	5	9.6	9.6	42.3
	Digital Marketing Specialist	19	36.5	36.5	78.8

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
E-commerce Manager	2	3.8	3.8	82.7
Brand Manager	1	1.9	1.9	84.6
Other	8	15.4	15.4	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Author's own work)

(B)   Years of Experience

Table 4.4 shows how many people answered the question based on how long their fashion e-commerce brand has been around. Almost half of the brands (44.2%) have only been around for less than a year, which shows that the market is growing quickly. Another 26.9% have been in business for 1 to 3 years, while smaller percentages have been in business for 3 to 5 years (15.4%) or more than 5 years (13.5%). This means that most of the brands that are taking part are relatively new to Pakistan's fashion e-commerce market.

Table 6

Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Years of Experience

Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 1 year	23	44.2	44.2	44.2
	1–3 years	14	26.9	26.9	71.2
	3–5 years	8	15.4	15.4	86.5
	More than 5 years	7	13.5	13.5	100.0
	Total	52	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Author's own work)

(C)   Number of Employees

Table 4.5 shows how many people work for the fashion e-commerce businesses that took part. Most brands (65.4%) have 1-5 employees, which means that most of the people who answered are from small or micro businesses. Another 21.2% have 6 to 15 employees, and only 9.6% have 16 to 30 employees or more than 30 employees (3.8%). This distribution shows that

most of the sample is made up of new and resource-limited fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan.

Table 7

Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Number of Employees

Number of Employees

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1–5 employees	34	65.4	65.4	65.4
	6–15 employees	11	21.2	21.2	86.5
	16–30 employees	5	9.6	9.6	96.2
	More than 30 employees	2	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	52	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Author's own work)

(D)   Monthly Online Sales Volume

Table 4.6 shows how the respondents' monthly online sales were spread out. The biggest group of brands (42.3%) said they made less than $1,000 a month, and 23.1% said they made $1,000 to $3,000. A smaller percentage (11.5%) made between $3,000 and $7,000, and an even smaller percentage (9.6%) made more than $7,000. Also, 13.5% of those who answered chose not to share their sales numbers. In general, the results show that most of the fashion e-commerce brands that took part have low revenue levels, which is typical for new businesses in the field.

Table 8

Frequency Distribution of Monthly Online Sales Volume

Sales Volume

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below $1,000	22	42.3	42.3	42.3
	$1,000 – $3,000	12	23.1	23.1	65.4
	$3,000 – $7,000	6	11.5	11.5	76.9
	Above $7,000	5	9.6	9.6	86.5

Prefer not to say (optional)	7	13.5	13.5	100.0
Total	52	100.0	100.0	

(Source: Author's own work)

(E)   Online platforms used

A multiple-response analysis was performed in which respondents were allowed to choose multiple platforms. Table 4.7 and Figure 4.1 show that 52 people made a total of 90 platform choices. This shows that most brands are active on more than one digital channel. Websites (75%) were the most popular platform, followed by Facebook (34.6%) and Instagram (30.8%). People used newer or different platforms less often. For example, they used TikTok (13.5%), WhatsApp Business (11.5%), and Daraz (5.8%) less often. These findings indicate that developing fashion e-commerce brands predominantly utilize websites and popular social media platforms to engage customers, whereas the uptake of newer platforms is still quite restricted.

Table 9

Online Platforms Used by Respondents (Multiple Response)

Online Platform	Frequency	Percent of Responses	Percent of Cases
Website	39	43.3%	75.0%
Facebook	18	20.0%	34.6%
Instagram	16	17.8%	30.8%
TikTok	7	7.8%	13.5%
WhatsApp Business	6	6.7%	11.5%
Daraz	3	3.3%	5.8%
Other	1	1.1%	1.9%
Total Responses	**90**	**100%**	**-**
Total Responses	**52**	**-**	**100%**

(Source: Author's own work)

Figure 6

Bar Chart of Online Platforms Used
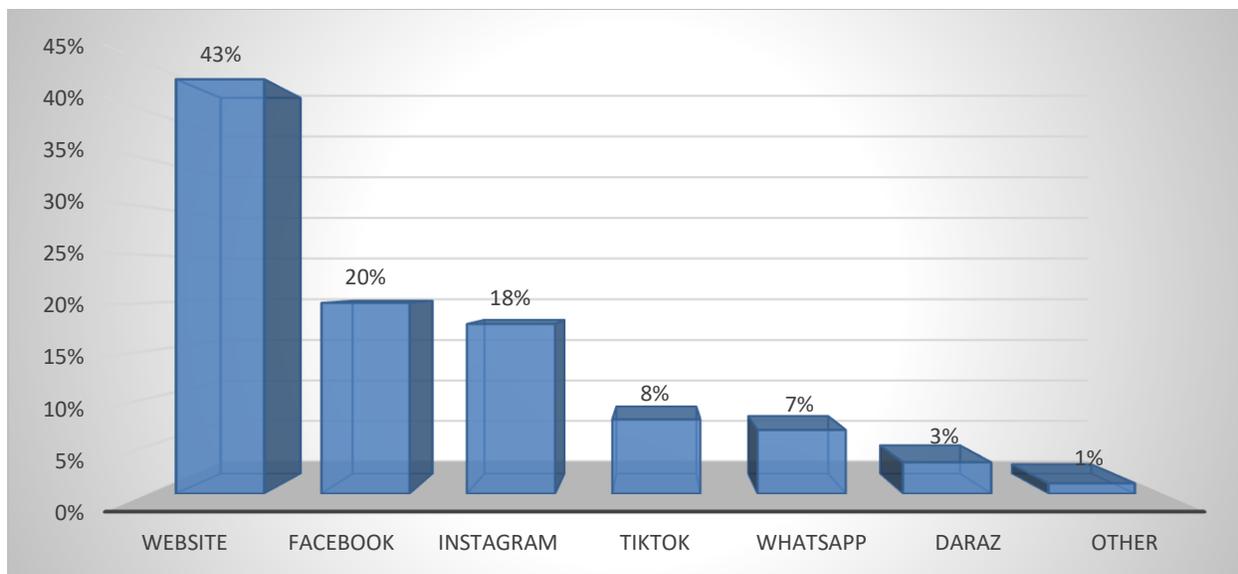
(Source: Author's own work)

4.3.2 Descriptive Statistics of Key Constructs

The descriptive statistics for the six main constructs give a general idea of how participants rated different inbound marketing practices and their results. Table 4.8 shows that SEO had the highest mean score (M = 4.21, SD = 1.01), which means that fashion e-commerce brands strongly adopted it and thought it worked well. People also used and agreed with Content Marketing a lot (M = 4.10, SD = 0.90). Social Media Engagement (M = 3.92, SD = 0.93) and Email Marketing (M = 3.78, SD = 0.98) were a little lower, but they still show that people are using them a lot. Lead Generation (M = 4.10, SD = 0.96) and Customer Acquisition (M = 4.05, SD = 0.98) both had high mean values. This shows that the people who answered the survey thought that inbound marketing worked well. The results show that many businesses use inbound marketing strategies and think they are effective at helping businesses grow.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for Inbound Marketing Constructs

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Descriptive Statistics					

SEO.M	52	1.00	5.00	4.2192	1.01461
Coneten.M	52	1.20	5.00	4.1038	.90184
Social.M	52	1.00	5.00	3.9231	.93150
Email.M	52	1.00	5.00	3.7808	.98240
Leads.M	52	1.00	5.00	4.1058	.96678
Customers.M	52	1.00	5.00	4.0481	.98648
Valid N (listwise)	52				

(Source: Author's own work)

4.4   Results for Research Question 1 (RQ1)

"Which inbound marketing strategies are most commonly used by emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan?"

4.4.1   Usage Levels Based on Mean Scores

To address RQ1, descriptive statistics were examined for the four inbound marketing constructs: SEO, Content Marketing, Social Media Engagement, and Email Marketing. The average scores show how much each strategy is used by fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan.The results show that SEO (M = 4.22) is the most popular way to market to people who are already interested in your business. Content Marketing (M = 4.10) is a close second. Social Media Engagement is also a popular strategy (M = 3.92), while Email Marketing is the least popular (M = 3.78).

These results indicate that Pakistani fashion e-commerce brands regard SEO as a primary strategy for improving online visibility and attracting customers, whereas content-driven initiatives are considered essential for audience engagement. Social media and email marketing are used, but not as much as the other inbound methods.

4.4.2   Bar Chart of Inbound Marketing Usage

Figure 4.2 shows how the four inbound marketing strategies were used in comparison by showing the percentage of people who adopted each one. SEO has the highest adoption rate at 84.38 percent, and Content Marketing is not far behind at 82.08 percent. A lot of people also use social media engagement, with an adoption rate of 78.46 percent. Email marketing is used less,

but still a lot, with an adoption rate of 75.61 percent. In general, these results show that most of the people who answered use more than one inbound marketing channel. SEO and content marketing are seen as the most important strategies for new fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan.

Figure 7

Usage of Inbound Marketing Strategies among Fashion E-commerce Brands
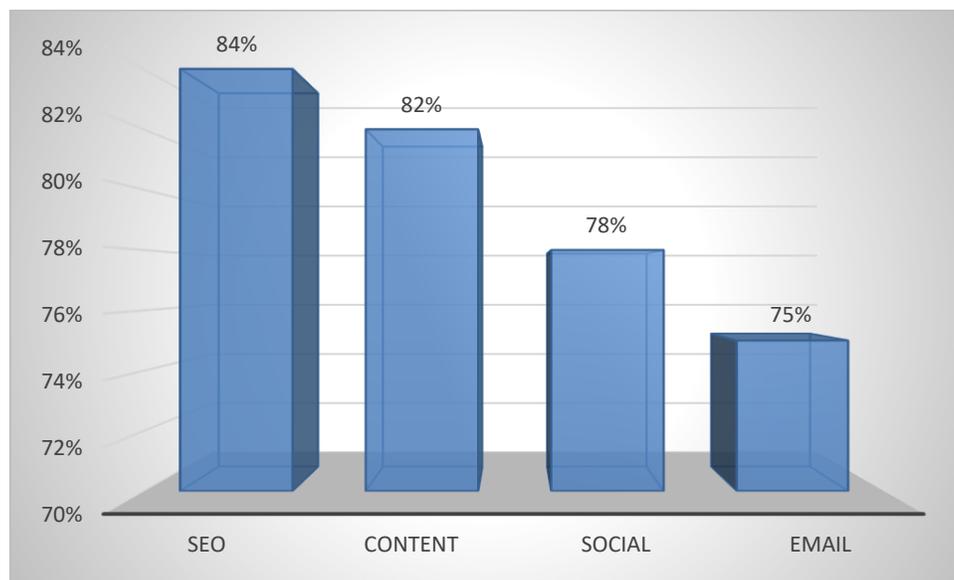
(Source: Author's own work)

4.4.3 Interpretation of RQ1 Findings

The results show that SEO and content-driven methods are the most important parts of inbound marketing for new fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan. Respondents think that these strategies help with search visibility, bring in organic traffic, and show their value through useful content. Another important factor is how much people interact with fashion on social media, which is clear from how many fashion fans are on sites like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Email marketing, on the other hand, is still not used as much as it could be. This could be because people aren't building their email lists as quickly, there aren't as many automation tools, or they depend more on visually appealing social media channels.

Overall, the results show that the sector is doing well with inbound marketing. SEO and content marketing are the most popular strategies, followed by social media activities and moderate use of email.

4.5 Correlation Analysis

We used Pearson correlation analysis to look at the connections between lead generation, customer acquisition, and inbound marketing strategies. The findings indicate that all four inbound marketing strategies exhibit a significant positive correlation with Lead Generation ($p < .01$).

The correlation analysis shows that SEO has the strongest positive link to perceived Lead Generation ($r = .861$). Social Media Engagement has a strong relationship with Lead Generation ($r = .813$). Content Marketing has a slightly lower but still strong relationship ($r = .772$). Email Marketing, on the other hand, has a moderate positive link to perceived Lead Generation ($r = .437$). Lead Generation exhibited a robust positive correlation with Customer Acquisition ($r = .898$, $p < .001$), signifying that brands indicating elevated levels of qualified leads concurrently report enhanced levels of customer acquisition.

The correlation results indicate that increased utilization of inbound marketing strategies correlates with enhanced lead generation and customer acquisition. But correlations alone can't prove cause-and-effect relationships, so we'll use regression analysis in the next sections to formally test the hypotheses.

Table 11

Pearson Correlation Matrix for Study Variables

Correlations

		SEO.M	Coneten. M	Social. M	Email.M	Leads. M	Customers. M
SEO.M	Pearson Correlation	1	.867**	.826**	.404**	.861**	.811**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.003	.000	.000
	N	52	52	52	52	52	52

Coneten.M	Pearson Correlation	.867**	1	.823**	.424**	.772**	.783**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.002	.000	.000
	N	52	52	52	52	52	52
Social.M	Pearson Correlation	.826**	.823**	1	.522**	.813**	.793**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	52	52	52	52	52	52
Email.M	Pearson Correlation	.404**	.424**	.522**	1	.437**	.385**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.002	.000		.001	.005
	N	52	52	52	52	52	52
Leads.M	Pearson Correlation	.861**	.772**	.813**	.437**	1	.898**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.001		.000
	N	52	52	52	52	52	52
Customers. M	Pearson Correlation	.811**	.783**	.793**	.385**	.898**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.005	.000	
	N	52	52	52	52	52	52

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(Source: Author's own work)

4.6   Multiple Regression Analysis for Research Question 2 (RQ2)

 "How effective are inbound marketing strategies for lead generation and customer acquisition?"

This section shows the results of a multiple regression analysis that looked at the combined effects of SEO, content marketing, social media engagement, email marketing, and lead generation on each other. The analysis also looks at how people think Lead Generation and Customer Acquisition are related. There are separate tables for the Model Summary, ANOVA, and Coefficients to make sure everything is clear and follows academic reporting standards.

4.6.1 Regression Model Fit (Model Summary)

The regression model that looked at how people thought inbound marketing strategies and Lead Generation were related showed a strong overall fit. The Model Summary showed that the predictors together explained a large part of the difference in perceived Lead Generation.

Table 12

Multiple Regression Model Summary

<div align="center">Model Summary</div>

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
					Change Statistics				
1	.881ᵃ	.776	.756	.47708	.776	40.608	4	47	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Email.M, SEO.M, Social.M, Coneten.M

(Source: Author's own work)

Key Results:

- R = .881
- R² = .776
- Adjusted R² = .756

This means that the combined effects of SEO, Content Marketing, Social Media Engagement, and Email Marketing can explain 77.6% of the differences in Lead Generation. The high R² value shows that activities related to inbound marketing are very important for predicting the perceived leads will be generated.

4.6.2 ANOVA Results

The ANOVA test demonstrated that the regression model was statistically significant, $F(4,47) = 40.608$, $p < .001$, signifying that the model yields a substantial prediction of Lead Generation.

Table 13

ANOVA for Multiple Regression Model

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	36.971	4	9.243	40.608	.000^b
	Residual	10.698	47	.228		
	Total	47.668	51			

a. Dependent Variable: Leads.M

b. Predictors: (Constant), Email.M, SEO.M, Social.M, Coneten.M

(Source: Author's own work)

4.6.3 Identification of Strongest Predictor

The correlation analysis showed that several inbound marketing strategies were fairly strongly related to each other. This indicating the potential presence of multicollinearity in the multiple regression model. To assess this issue, multicollinearity diagnostics were conducted using tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values.

Table 4.12 presents the collinearity statistics for the regression model. All tolerance values exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.20, and all VIF values remain below 5, indicating that multicollinearity is present but not severe enough to invalidate the regression results.

Table 14

Multicollinearity Diagnostics for Multiple Regression Model (Tolerance and VIF)

Predictor Variable	Tolerance	VIF
SEO	0.208	4.807
Content Marketing	0.213	4.704
Social Media Engagement	0.241	4.145
Email Marketing	0.725	1.380

(Source: Author's own work)

The presence of shared variance among inbound marketing strategies helps explain why some predictors were statistically significant in simple regression analyses but lost statistical significance when analysed simultaneously in the multiple regression model. When predictors are highly correlated, they compete to explain overlapping variance in the dependent variable, which can reduce the individual significance of some variables. Therefore, the results should be interpreted as indicating the relative contribution of each inbound marketing strategy rather than independent effects.

4.6.4 Identification of Strongest Predictor

Among the four inbound marketing strategies, two predictors demonstrated statistically significant perceived associations:

- SEO was the strongest predictor

  (β = .627, t = 4.141, p < .001)

- Social Media Engagement also had a significant positive effect

  (β = .308, t = 2.188, p = .034)

These findings indicate that brands using SEO and social media engagement also report higher levels of perceived lead generation.

4.6.5 Identification of Non-Significant Predictor

When all inbound marketing strategies were entered into the model together:

- Content Marketing (β = –.042, p = .779)
- Email Marketing (β = .041, p = .620)

did not show statistically significant associations with perceived lead generation.

This suggests that their perceived association becomes weaker when SEO and social media engagement are considered simultaneously.

Table 15

Coefficients for Multiple Regression Predicting Lead Generation

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.366	.342		1.068	.291
	SEO.M	.598	.144	.627	4.141	.000
	Coneten.M	-.045	.161	-.042	-.282	.779
	Social.M	.319	.146	.308	2.188	.034
	Email.M	.040	.080	.041	.499	.620

a. Dependent Variable: Leads.M

(Source: Author's own work)

4.6.6 Interpretation

The results show that SEO has the strongest perceived link to lead generation among new fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan. This shows how important search visibility is in competitive digital spaces. Social media engagement is also positively associated with lead generation, suggesting that interactive and platform-driven strategies are valued by marketing professionals.

In contrast, content marketing and email marketing, while widely used, do not show statistically significant associations with lead generation when stronger inbound strategies are considered simultaneously, indicating that their perceived contribution may be comparatively weaker in this context.

These findings should be interpreted in light of the shared variance among inbound marketing strategies, as overlapping relationships between predictors may reduce individual statistical significance when analysed together.

4.6.7 Link to Customer Acquisition

A separate simple regression showed that Lead Generation had a very strong positive effect on Customer Acquisition ($\beta = .898$, $p < .001$).

This means inbound marketing indirectly boosts customer acquisition by first improving lead generation.

4.6.8   Conclusion for RQ2

Inbound marketing strategies are perceived to be strongly associated with both:

1. Lead Generation, with SEO and Social Media Engagement showing the strongest perceived associations
2. Customer Acquisition, indirectly supported through improved leads

Accordingly, RQ2 is supported, indicating that inbound marketing strategies are perceived to be important in relation to lead generation and customer acquisition outcomes among emerging fashion e-commerce brands.

4.7   Hypothesis Testing Using Simple Linear Regression

This section shows the results of hypothesis testing with simple linear regression to look at how each inbound marketing strategy directly affects Lead Generation (H1–H4) and how Lead Generation affects Customer Acquisition (H5). We tested each hypothesis separately to find out how strong, weak, and important the relationships were. The regression analyses furnish statistical evidence regarding the validation of the proposed hypotheses, yielding profound insights into the impact of inbound marketing activities on lead generation and customer acquisition for growing fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan.

4.7.1   H1: SEO → Lead Generation

A simple linear regression was performed to ascertain if SEO forecasts Lead Generation. The model was statistically significant, accounting for 74.2% of the variance in Lead Generation (R^2 = .742, Adjusted R^2 = .737). The regression results show that SEO is a strong and important predictor of Lead Generation (β = .861, t = 11.99, p < .001).

These results support H1, showing that using SEO techniques more often is strongly and positively linked to lead generation for new fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan.

Table 16

Model Summary for SEO Predicting Lead Generation

Model Summary

		R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					
Model	R				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.861ᵃ	.742	.737	.49589	.742	143.849	1	50	.000	

a. Predictors: (Constant), SEO.M

(Source: Author's own work)

Table 17

Coefficients for SEO Predicting Lead Generation

Coefficientsᵃ

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.642	.297		2.165	.035
	SEO.M	.821	.068	.861	11.994	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Leads.M

(Source: Author's own work)

4.7.2 H2: Content Marketing → Lead Generation

We did a simple linear regression analysis to see if Content Marketing could predict Lead Generation. The overall model was statistically significant and accounted for 59.6% of the variance in Lead Generation (R^2 = .596, Adjusted R^2 = .588). Content Marketing became a powerful and important predictor of Lead Generation (β = .772, t = 8.589, p < .001).

These results show that emerging fashion e-commerce brands that use more content marketing are more likely to think they are generating leads. So, H2 is supported, which means that in this case, there is a strong and positive link between Content Marketing and Lead Generation.

Table 18

Model Summary for H2 (Content Marketing → Lead Generation)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.772ᵃ	.596	.588	.62060	.596	73.767	1	50	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Coneten.M

(Source: Author's own work)

Table 19

Coefficients for H2 (Content Marketing → Lead Generation)

Coefficientsᵃ

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.709	.405		1.753	.086
	Coneten.M	.828	.096	.772	8.589	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Leads.M

(Source: Author's own work)

4.7.3 H3: Social Media Engagement → Lead Generation

A straightforward linear regression analysis was performed to investigate if Social Media Engagement forecasts Lead Generation. The regression model was statistically significant, elucidating 66.0% of the variance in Lead Generation (R^2 = .660, Adjusted R^2 = .654). Social Media Engagement was determined to be a robust and significant predictor of Lead Generation (β = .813, t = 9.860, p < .001).

These results show that more activity and engagement on social media is linked to more leads for new fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan. So, H3 is supported, which means that there is a strong and positive link between Social Media Engagement and Lead Generation.

Table 20

Model Summary for H3 (Social Media → Lead Generation)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.813ᵃ	.660	.654	.56902	.660	97.221	1	50	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social.M

(Source: Author's own work)

Table 21

Coefficients for H3 (Social Media → Lead Generation)

Coefficientsᵃ

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.797	.345		2.312	.025
	Social.M	.843	.086	.813	9.860	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Leads.M

(Source: Author's own work)

4.7.4   H4: Email Marketing → Lead Generation

A straightforward linear regression analysis was performed to ascertain if Email Marketing forecasts Lead Generation. The model was statistically significant and accounted for 19.1% of the variance in Lead Generation (R^2 = .191, Adjusted R^2 = .175). Email Marketing was a significant but not very strong predictor of Lead Generation (β = .437, t = 3.433, p = .001).

These results show that email marketing can help generate leads, but not as much as SEO, content marketing, and social media engagement. H4 is still supported, though, which means that

Email Marketing and Lead Generation are positively and significantly related for new fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan.

Table 22

Model Summary for H4 (Email Marketing → Lead Generation)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.437ª	.191	.175	.87835	.191	11.786	1	50	.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), Email.M

(Source: Author's own work)

Table 23

Coefficients for H4 (Email Marketing → Lead Generation)

Coefficientsª

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.481	.489		5.076	.000
	Email.M	.430	.125	.437	3.433	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Leads.M

(Source: Author's own work)

4.7.5   H5: Lead Generation → Customer Acquisition

To determine whether Lead Generation predicts Customer Acquisition, a basic linear regression analysis was performed. With R^2 =.806 and Adjusted R^2 =.802, the overall model was highly significant, accounting for 80.6% of the variance in Customer Acquisition. A strong and statistically significant predictor of customer acquisition was found to be lead generation (β =.898, t = 14.423, p <.001).

These results show a strong and positive correlation between higher lead generation levels and perceived customer acquisition outcomes. Stated differently, companies that report higher levels of qualified leads also report higher levels of customer acquisition. As a result, H5 is supported, suggesting that among Pakistan's up-and-coming fashion e-commerce companies, lead generation and customer acquisition are strongly and favorably to be related.

Table 24

Model Summary for H5 (Lead Generation → Customer Acquisition)

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
					Change Statistics				
1	.898ª	.806	.802	.43857	.806	208.030	1	50	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Leads.M

(Source: Author's own work)

Table 25

Coefficients for H5 (Lead Generation → Customer Acquisition)

Coefficientsª

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		

1	(Constant)	.286	.268		1.070	.290
	Leads.M	.916	.064	.898	14.423	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Customers.M

(Source: Author's own work)

4.8 Summary of findings

This study looked at perceived association between inbound marketing strategies and lead generation and customer acquisition among growing fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan. According to respondents, the descriptive results highlighted that SEO and content marketing are the most widely used inbound tactic, followed by social media engagement and email marketing.

According to correlation analysis, showed strong and positive associations among all inbound marketing constructs, with particularly high correlations between inbound marketing activities, perceived lead generation and customer acquisition.

The results of the simple linear regression analyses show that all four inbound marketing strategies examined, namely SEO, content marketing, social media engagement, and email marketing, all these show significant positive associations with perceived lead generation. However, the multiple regression analysis reveals that when these strategies are analysed at a time, only SEO and social media engagement remain positively associated with perceived lead generation, it gives suggesting that these two strategies have a comparatively stronger impact as compare to content and email marketing.

In addition, lead generation is found to have a strong and positive association with perceived customer acquisition. Taken together, these findings suggest that inbound marketing strategies are widely used by empowering fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan and are generally perceived as important for supporting lead generation and customer acquisition. Among the strategies examined, SEO appears to have the strongest perceived association with lead generation.

Table 26

Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Predictor	Significance in Multiple Regression	Conclusion
SEO	Significant ($p < .001$)	Strongest associated predictor
Social Media Engagement	Significant ($p = .034$)	Secondary associated predictor
Content Marketing	Not significant ($p = .779$)	Influence weak when combined
Email Marketing	Not significant ($p = .620$)	Least influence in combined model

(Source: Author's own work)

5. DISCUSSION

This section is interpreted from the results of the study and linked the finding from the statistical research to the research questions or existing literature and in the context of emerging brands of fashion e-commerce in Pakistan. The goal is to provide an explanation of why the results occurred and what they mean in practical and theoretical terms.

5.1 Discussion of research question 1 (RQ1)

RQ1: Which inbound marketing strategies are most commonly used by emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan?

Descriptive statistics showed that SEO (M=4.22) and Content Marketing (M=4.10) are the most common strategies to be used. Social Media Engagement has also been widely used (M = 3.92) while Email Marketing is slightly underutilized (M = 3.78).

These results indicate that in order to reach potential customers, fashion e-commerce brands are counting heavily on organic visibility, search rankings and content-driven engagement. The high usage of SEO corresponds with the industry trends where the search engine plays a major role in the product discovery process. Similarly, the focus on content marketing is reflective of how the importance of storytelling and value-driven communication is expanding in fashion retail. The comparatively lesser usage of email marketing may stem from difficulties in list building, low email usage among younger demographics, or the need for a shift towards social and mobile first communication. This is consistent with the outcomes of other studies, which have shown that social media and SEO are the most relevant forms of digital marketing in emerging markets, where consumers use visual platforms and search engines to make their choices.

5.2 Discussion of research question 2 (RQ2)

RQ2: How effective are inbound marketing strategies for lead generation and customer acquisition?

Effectiveness of lead generation

With respect to lead generation, by the multiple regression analysis it has been revealed that the inbound marketing strategies as a whole explain a substantial proportion of variance regarding the perceived lead generation as the total variance is 77.6 percent. This finding

suggests that marketing professionals evaluate inbound marketing as an important set of practices linked to outcomes of lead generation. However, the perceived contribution of individual strategies varies to a large extent. As a result, SEO turned out to be the biggest predictor of perceived lead generation, suggesting that the respondents have a strong correlation between search engine optimization and the generation of potential customers. This finding aligns with the widely recognised role SEO plays in getting brands online visibility as well as linking brands with users displaying high search intent. Social media engagement also indicated a significant positive using to perceived lead generation, reflecting the importance of interactive content, influencer collaborations, and being active on social media in engagement, and audience stimulation and interest.

In contrast, the links between content marketing, and with email marketing, and perceived lead generation were not statistically significant when all inbound strategies were analysed at once. This would lead to the assumption that in spite of the fact that these strategies are in common use, their perceived independent contribution is reduced in the presence of more dominating strategies such as SEO and social media engagement. This pattern could represent an inconsistency in the quality of the content, lack of consistency in the execution or lack of personalized content in the email campaigns. Overall, these evidence are consistent with existing literature, which emphasizes SEO and social media engagement as inbound strategies with the strongest lead generation correlation in competitive and visually oriented markets like fashion.

Effectiveness in terms of customer acquisition

In order to taking Customer Acquisition as the dependent variable, the independent variable was shown to be a strong predictor of Lead Generation (β = .898, p < .001) using simple regression analysis. This finding implies that inbound marketing does not have a direct impact on customer acquisition. Instead, inbound strategies help improve acquisition indirectly by first improving lead generation. This seems to be consistent with customer journey theory in which lead nurturing is an important step in between digital engagement and actual purchasing behavior.

5.3   Theoretical implications

The research contributes to the literature of digital marketing as follows:

1. It becomes the empirical validation of the importance of SEO and social media as the effective pillars for inbound marketing effectiveness in emerging markets.

2. It identifies lead generation as a mediating variable, which stands between the strategies inbound and customer acquisition.

3. It provides an understanding of the emerging fashion e-Commerce industry in Pakistan at a localized level. An undeserved pattern of oppression established by the existing economic system that is inadequately reflected in academic literature.

5.4   Managerial implications

The results, obtained through this research, have a number of practical implications for managers of emerging brands in fashion e-commerce regarding to Pakistan. Overall, the results show that inbound marketing strategies are perceived as important tools in the support of lead generation and customer acquisition initiatives for competitive digital environments. Managers can use these insights to make better decisions when deciding on marketing resource priorities

First, the strong perception of correlation with SEO and lead generation suggests the importance to make an investment in the search engine optimization activities. Fashion e-commerce managers may be wise to concentrate on technical SEO, keyword approach and mobile performance in effort to gain online visibility and attract high intention users. Given budget issues facing many emerging brands, focusing on SEO may be a fairly sustainable and scalable approach to inbound marketing.

Second, the results indicate that social media engagement is also seen to have a high degree involvement of lead generation. This reveals the importance of having an active and strategic presence on visually-driven platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and Facebook. Managers may want to invest in interactive content, influencer partnerships and consistent social media interaction to gain brand visibility and provide audience interaction.

In contrast, content marketing and email marketing, even though they are used frequently, were seen to have weaker correlation with lead generation than SEO Social media engagement. This implies that managers may need to rethink the quality and strategic focus of their content marketing efforts, ensuring that content is more targeted, relevant and aligned with audience needs. Similarly, better email personalization and automation may help improve the engagement and retention that may strengthen the perceived contribution made by email marketing in the overall inbound strategy.

Overall, by focusing on inbound marketing strategies that have better associations with lead in terms of generation, fashion e-commerce managers can better judge between marketing efforts and resource constraints, as well as potential competition in the digital realm, to help more effective customer acquisition strategies.

5.5   Limitations

This study has several limitations to consider when interpreting the study findings. First, the relatively small sample size of 52 respondents might restrain the generalisability of the results beyond emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan. Second, giving self-reported data means that the data represent respondent's perceptions, which might be affected by response bias or social desirability bias. In addition, the cross-sectional design of research gathers perceptions at one point in time and thus does not allow for an investigation of change over time and building cause and effect relationships. Finally, given that the study only covers the fashion e-commerce industry in particular, findings might not be directly extends to other industries with different market dynamics and customer behaviour.

5.6   Recommendations for future research

Future research can benefit from the results of this study by overcoming some methodological and contextual limitations. First, research with larger samples and across industries would be useful to magnify the generalisability of results and to compare different market situations. Expanding the scope outside of fashion e-commerce could help gain broader knowledge on the perceived effectiveness of inbound marketing strategies.

Second, the future studies may consider longitudinal research design to look at the question of changes of practices of inbound marketing and perceived outcome over time. Such designs would enable researchers to see changes in the effectiveness of marketing and to better catch dynamic relationships that cannot be measured by using cross sectional research design.

In addition, future research may discuss mediating variables, such as brand trust or customer engagement or moderating variables such as firm size or market maturity in order to build a more nuanced understanding of the way inbound marketing strategies operate in different conditions. Comparative studies dealing with inbound as well as outbound marketing point of view may also provide useful understandings to the perceived effectiveness of these approaches.

Finally, future work may also consider using a combination of perception based survey data and objective measures of performance (eg conversion rates, costs to acquire customers) that give a more holistic measure of the inbound marketing performance. Integrating subjective and objective measures would increase a degree of empirical validity and promote the gap between manager perceptions and what actually is achieved from performance.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the use and effectiveness of inbound marketing strategies among up-and-coming fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan. Based on a quantitative, cross-sectional approach, which is based on self-reported perceptions, the study provides insights into the evaluation of different inbound marketing practices by marketing professionals in a competitive digital environment.

The results show that the inbound marketing strategies that are most frequently used by the brands surveyed are SEO and Content Marketing, followed by Social Media Engagement and Email Marketing. This implies that the fashion E-Commerce businesses in Pakistan are highly dependent on visibility-driven and the content-focused approaches as an element of their inbound marketing activities. However, usage alone is not the full picture of the perceived effectiveness.

When the associations between inbound marketing strategies and the lead generation were analyzed at the same time, the only strategies with statistically significant relationship with perceived lead generation were SEO and Social Media Engagement. This implies that the marketing professionals believe that these two strategies are more closely associated with the outcomes of lead generation rather than Content Marketing and Email Marketing. Although content and email marketing are generally well used, their perceived role in generating leads is weaker when considering more powerful strategies used in conjunction with them, which may reflect some problems with regard to implementation quality and/or targeting and/or personalization.

The study has also shown a strong positive relationship between perceived lead generation and perceived customer acquisition. This hints that the inbound marketing strategies are considered to support customer acquisition mostly as a result of their relationship with lead generation. In this context, obtaining qualified leads seems to be a major mechanism by which inbound marketing is seen to contribute to customer acquisition outcomes.

Overall, the findings indicate the wide adoption of inbound marketing and its perceived importance as an approach for the emerging fashion e-commerce brands in Pakistan in spite of the perceived effectiveness of the individual strategies. SEO and social media engagement are considered to have the highest rankings in terms of association with lead generation, while content marketing and email marketing may need more strategic refinement in terms of strengthening their perceived contribution. The study provides a contribution to academic

literature by extending research on inbound marketing an emerging digital market and offers some practical insights in how marketers can sort to allocate limited marketing resources in a more effective way.

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APPENDIX

Annex I: Full Questionnaire and Item Justifications

This annex presents the complete questionnaire used in the study. All items are grouped by construct (SEO, Content Marketing, Social Media, Email Marketing, Lead Generation, Customer Acquisition), followed by demographic items and justifications. All scale-based questions used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Section A: Demographic Information

Q1. What is your role in the company?

- Founder
- Co-founder
- Marketing Manager
- Social Media Manager
- Digital Marketing Specialist
- E-commerce Manager
- Brand Manager
- Other (please specify)

Q2. How long has your brand been operating?

- Less than 1 year
- 1–3 years
- 3–5 years
- More than 5 years

Q3. Number of employees?

- 1–5 employees
- 6–15 employees
- 16–30 employees
- More than 30 employees

Q4. Monthly average online sales volume?

- Below $1,000
- $1,000 – $3,000
- $3,000 – $7,000
- Above $7,000
- Prefer not to say (optional)

Q5. Which online platforms does your brand use?

- Website
- Instagram
- Facebook
- TikTok
- Daraz
- WhatsApp Business
- Other (please specify)

Section B: SEO Practices

(Construct: SEO – 5 point Likert scale)

Q1. Our brand regularly uses keyword research to optimize website content.

Q2. We update website content based on SEO best practices.

Q3. Our website is optimized for mobile and page speed.

Q4. We track website performance using SEO analytics tools.

Q5. We consistently optimize on-page elements such as meta titles, descriptions, and alt text.

Justification:

These items measure the brand's use of search engine optimization practices, an essential component of inbound marketing.

Section C: Content Marketing

(Construct: Content Marketing – 5 point Likert scale)

Q1. We create and publish content consistently.

Q2. Our content is designed to educate or engage the audience.

Q3. We use blogs, articles, or guides as part of our marketing strategy.

Q4. We plan our content using a structured content calendar.

Q5. We tailor content based on customer needs or preferences.

Justification:

These items evaluate the strategic use of content marketing in attracting and engaging potential customers.

Section D: Social Media Engagement

(Construct: Social Media – 5 point Likert scale)

Q1. We post on social media platforms regularly.

Q2. We respond to customer comments and messages promptly.

Q3. We use social media insights/analytics to improve performance.

Q4. We plan and schedule our social media posts strategically.

Q5. We create content tailored for each social media platform.

Justification:

Measures how actively brands use social media for audience interaction and engagement key elements of inbound marketing.

Section E: Email Marketing Activities

(Construct: Email Marketing – 5 point Likert scale)

Q1. We run regular email marketing campaigns.

Q2. We segment our email lists before sending campaigns.

Q3. We track open and click-through rates.

Q4. We personalize email content based on customer behavior or preferences.

Q5. We design email content that is aligned with our overall marketing strategy.

Justification:

Assesses whether the brand uses structured email marketing techniques to reach and nurture leads.

Section F: Lead Generation Outcomes

(Construct: Lead Generation – 5 point Likert scale)

Q1. Inbound marketing activities help us generate qualified leads.

Q2. We receive consistent leads from online channels.

Q3. Our inbound efforts have improved lead quality.

Q4. Lead generation has improved over the past 12 months.

Justification:

These items measure the perceived effectiveness of inbound marketing activities in generating leads.

Section G: Customer Acquisition

(Construct: Customer Acquisition – 5 point Likert scale)

Q1. Inbound marketing has helped us acquire new customers.

Q2. Inbound marketing has made customer acquisition more cost-effective.

Q3. Online channels have improved our customer acquisition rate.

Q4. Overall, inbound marketing supports customer acquisition for our brand.

Justification:

Measures how inbound marketing contributes to attracting and converting customers.

Section H: Optional Feedback

Q. Would you like to share any additional comments regarding your inbound marketing practices?

(Open-ended response)