

Understanding Customer Fatigue in Digital Marketing: A Stimulus–Organism–Response Perspective on Social Media Fatigue and Behavioral Consequences

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Abstract

Social media has become an important tool in digital marketing to build customer engagement and maintain long-term relationships. However, excessive interaction, information overload, and psychological pressure can lead to social media fatigue, which may reduce user engagement and affect online behavior. Based on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework, this study examines the effects of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), privacy concern, and information overload on social media fatigue, as well as its impact on discontinuance of usage, interaction engagement decrement, and fake news sharing. Data were collected from 155 active social media users and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS–SEM). The findings show that FoMO, privacy concern, and information overload significantly increase social media fatigue. In turn, social media fatigue increases discontinuance of usage, reduces interaction engagement, and encourages the sharing of unverified information. This study highlights social media fatigue as an important psychological mechanism in explaining user behavior in digital marketing contexts.

Keywords: social media fatigue; digital marketing; customer engagement; stimulus–organism–response; behavioral outcomes

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a central pillar of digital marketing management due to its role as a strategic marketing touchpoint that mediates continuous interactions between customers and digital platforms. In this context, social media functions not only as a communication medium but also as a critical channel for building customer engagement, managing long-term relationships, and creating customer value in a sustainable manner (Kotler et al., 2019; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). As a result, the effectiveness of digital marketing increasingly depends on the quality of customer experiences during interactions with social media platforms.

The intensification of social media use driven by increasing feature complexity, heightened interaction demands, and dense information flows, has introduced new challenges in managing digital marketing relationships. Social media environments characterized by persistent pressure may reduce the quality of customer experience and give rise to psychological exhaustion known as social media fatigue (SMF). Social media fatigue is defined as a state of cognitive and emotional exhaustion resulting from excessive exposure to social interactions and information, which diminishes customers' comfort and motivation to continue engaging with digital platforms (Bright et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016). From a marketing perspective, this phenomenon reflects customer engagement fatigue, which can undermine the effectiveness of social media–based marketing strategies.

Prior research indicates that social media fatigue is influenced not only by usage intensity but also by psychological pressures embedded in digital environments. Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) represents a psychological drive to remain constantly connected in order to avoid being left out of digital social dynamics, thereby intensifying customer engagement pressure (Przybylski et al., 2013). Privacy concern reflects customers' perceived risks and uncertainties regarding the collection and use of personal data, which may erode

feelings of safety and trust in digital interactions (Islam et al., 2020). Meanwhile, information overload describes the failure of digital marketing communication environments to deliver information that customers can process effectively, leading to increased cognitive burden and psychological strain (Cao et al., 2018). Together, these factors represent key stimuli in digital marketing environments that may shape social media fatigue as an internal customer state.

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework provides a relevant theoretical foundation for explaining how pressures in digital marketing environments are translated into customers' psychological states and subsequently generate behavioral responses (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Within this framework, social media fatigue functions as the organism that mediates the relationship between psychological stimuli and customer behavioral responses that are critical to marketing management. When fatigue emerges, customers not only experience internal exhaustion but also exhibit behavioral responses that directly affect the sustainability of digital marketing relationships.

These behavioral responses include discontinuance of usage, which reflects the potential for customer churn on digital platforms (Maier et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016), as well as interaction engagement decrement, indicating a decline in the quality of customer participation in digital interactions and online communities (Baj-Rogowska, 2023; Brodie et al., 2011). In addition, cognitive exhaustion may increase fake news sharing, creating marketing risks associated with declining trust and the amplification of negative electronic word of mouth within digital brand ecosystems (Islam et al., 2020; Omar et al., 2024). These responses highlight that social media fatigue is not merely a user well-being issue but represents a strategic challenge in digital marketing management.

Although social media fatigue has been widely examined, most existing studies continue to position it within information systems or individual psychology perspectives, often focusing on a single stressor or a single behavioral outcome. Comprehensive investigations that integrate multiple psychological stimuli in digital marketing environments, customer fatigue as an internal condition, and diverse behavioral responses relevant to marketing management remain limited. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by adopting the S-O-R framework and integrating Fear of Missing Out, privacy concern, and information overload as digital marketing stimuli; social media fatigue as the internal customer state; and discontinuance of usage, interaction engagement decrement, and fake news sharing as customer behavioral responses. This approach is expected to enrich the digital marketing literature and provide a more strategic understanding of managing customer engagement and relationships within increasingly complex social media ecosystems.

This study addresses the growing concern of customer fatigue in social media–based digital marketing environments. Specifically, the study aims to examine how Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), privacy concern, and information overload contribute to social media fatigue and how social media fatigue subsequently influences discontinuance of usage, interaction engagement decrement, and fake news sharing behavior. Accordingly, the main research question is: How do psychological pressures embedded in social media environments shape customer behavioral responses through the mechanism of social media fatigue?

The study contributes to the digital marketing literature in several ways. First, it extends the application of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework by integrating multiple psychological stimuli and multiple behavioral consequences within a single comprehensive model. Second, it positions social media fatigue as a central psychological mechanism linking digital marketing stressors to customer behavioral outcomes, thereby broadening the understanding of customer engagement challenges in social media environments. Third, the findings provide practical insights for digital marketers and platform managers regarding strategies to reduce customer fatigue, maintain engagement quality, and mitigate risks associated with customer disengagement and misinformation sharing.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Fear of Missing Out and Social Media Fatigue

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) reflects a psychological condition in which individuals experience anxiety due to the perception of being left behind in others' social activities within digital environments (Przybylski et al., 2013). In the context of digital marketing, FoMO encourages customers to maintain a high level of connectivity with social media platforms, which serve as primary channels for interaction and brand-related information.

Empirical studies indicate that FoMO intensifies psychological pressure as customers feel compelled to continuously monitor digital content and social interactions (Dhir et al., 2018; Elhai et al., 2016). This pressure increases customers' cognitive and emotional burden, particularly when social expectations cannot be sustainably fulfilled. Recent studies further confirm that FoMO functions as an internal psychological stressor that significantly increases social media fatigue (Dharejo et al., 2024). Within the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, FoMO operates as a psychological stimulus that triggers an internal state of customer exhaustion during social media interactions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₁: Fear of Missing Out has a positive effect on social media fatigue.

Privacy Concern and Social Media Fatigue

Privacy concern describes customers' perceptions of risk associated with the collection, use, and dissemination of personal data in digital environments (Islam et al., 2020; Smith et al., 1996). In social media-based digital marketing, such concerns have become increasingly salient due to the growing reliance on data-driven personalization and algorithmic decision-making. Previous research suggests that high levels of privacy concern intensify psychological pressure, as customers must actively manage data visibility and potential risks of information misuse (Dhir et al., 2018; Islam et al., 2020). This heightened vigilance increases cognitive and emotional exhaustion, particularly in repetitive and intensive marketing interactions. From an S-O-R perspective, privacy concern functions as a stimulus that generates psychological strain in the form of social media fatigue. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H₂: Privacy concern has a positive effect on social media fatigue.

Information Overload and Social Media Fatigue

Information overload occurs when the volume of information received by customers exceeds their cognitive capacity to process it effectively (Cao et al., 2018). In the context of social media as a marketing channel, customers are simultaneously exposed to promotional content, social interactions, and brand-related information. Empirical evidence indicates that information overload increases cognitive fatigue and reduces customer comfort in interacting with social media platforms (Malik et al., 2020; Whelan et al., 2020). Persistent exposure to excessive information has been consistently associated with higher levels of social media fatigue, particularly among active social media users. Therefore, based on the S-O-R framework, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₃: Information overload has a positive effect on social media fatigue.

Social Media Fatigue and Discontinuance of Usage

Discontinuance of usage reflects customers' tendencies to reduce or cease the use of digital platforms as a response to negative experiences (Maier et al., 2015). In digital marketing contexts, such behavior represents the risk of customer disengagement and platform churn. Prior studies demonstrate that social media fatigue significantly increases customers' intentions to reduce usage intensity or discontinue the use of social media platforms altogether (Dhir et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2016). Psychological exhaustion diminishes perceived value and comfort in digital marketing interactions, thereby encouraging discontinuance behavior. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₄: Social media fatigue has a positive effect on discontinuance of usage.

Social Media Fatigue and Interaction Engagement Decrement

Interaction engagement decrement refers to a decline in the quality of customer engagement in interactive activities, discussions, and participation on social media platforms (Baj-Rogowska, 2023). From a digital marketing perspective, this condition signals a weakening of customer relationships with brand communities. Previous studies suggest that social media fatigue leads customers to withdraw from social interactions and reduce active participation on digital platforms (Bright et al., 2015; Whelan et al., 2020). Social media fatigue lowers customers' motivation to contribute to relational and interactive marketing activities. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₅: Social media fatigue has a positive effect on interaction engagement decrement.

Social Media Fatigue and Fake News Sharing

Fake news sharing refers to individuals' tendencies to disseminate unverified information due to limitations in cognitive and evaluative capacity (Islam et al., 2020). In digital marketing contexts, such behavior poses a threat to trust and the credibility of brand ecosystems. Research indicates that cognitive exhaustion resulting from social media fatigue reduces users' ability to critically evaluate information, thereby increasing the likelihood of sharing misleading or unverified content (Islam et al., 2020; Omar et al., 2024). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₆: Social media fatigue has a positive effect on fake news sharing.

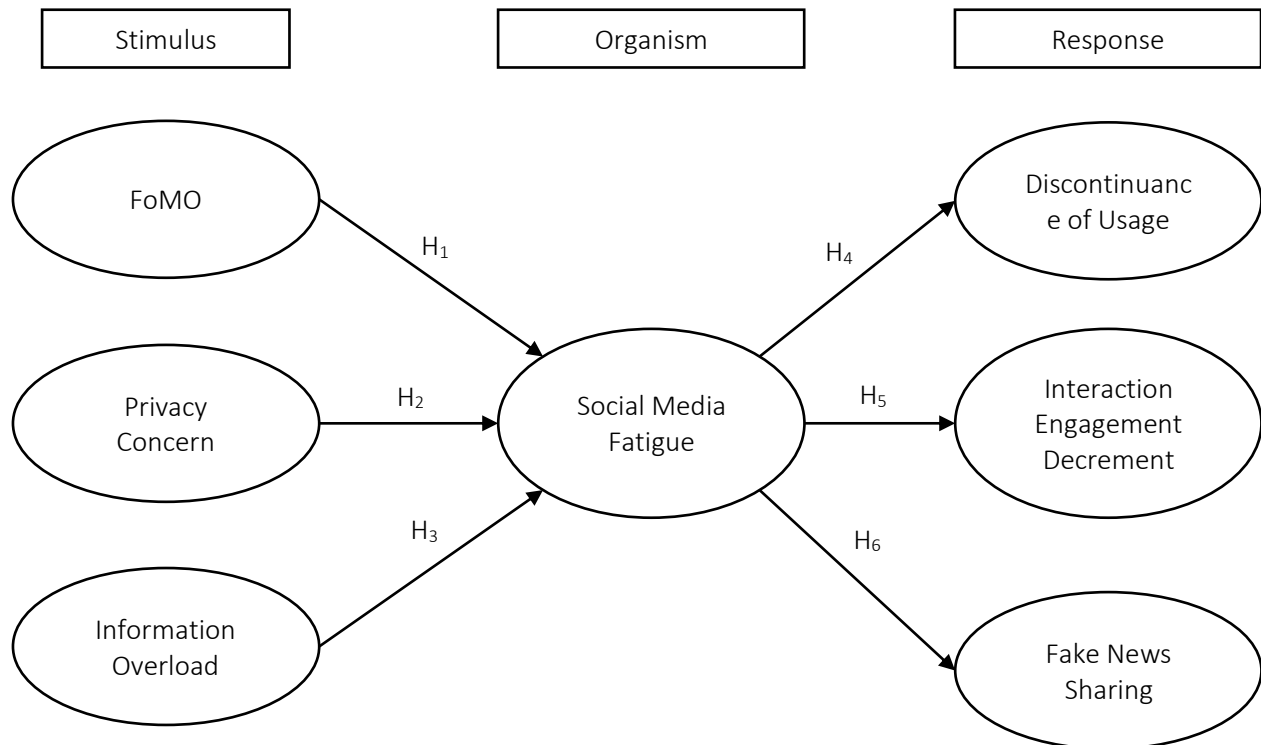


Figure 1 Research Model

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative approach with a survey design to examine the causal relationships among constructs within the context of digital marketing management. The quantitative approach is considered appropriate for testing a conceptual model grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) theory, which emphasizes the structural relationships between psychological stimuli, customers' internal states, and behavioral responses (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). The research adopts a cross-sectional design, in which data were collected at a single point in time to capture social media users' perceptions and behavioral responses as they naturally occur.

Population and Sampling Technique

The population of this study comprises active social media users in Banyumas Regency who utilize social media platforms as part of their daily digital activities. The focus on active users is justified as this group is directly exposed to digital marketing stimuli, social interactions, and dense information flows that may trigger social media fatigue. This study employs purposive sampling as the sampling technique. This method was selected because the research aims to obtain respondents with specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives rather than to achieve statistical generalization. The sampling criteria include: (1) individuals aged 18–34 years, (2) active users of social media, and (3) individuals with regular experience interacting with social media content and features.

Sample Size

A total of 170 questionnaires were distributed through both online and offline methods. Following the data-cleaning process, which included checks for response completeness and consistency, 155 valid questionnaires were retained for data analysis, resulting in an effective response rate of 91.18%. This sample size is considered adequate for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), given the commonly applied rule of thumb that the minimum sample size should be at least ten times the maximum number of indicators used to measure a single construct, a criterion that is satisfied in this study (Hair et al., 2019).

Data Collection Method

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed both online and offline. The online survey was disseminated through social media platforms, messaging groups, and academic networks, while the offline survey was administered in campus environments and public spaces. All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), to capture the intensity of respondents' perceptions regarding each research construct.

Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with the assistance of statistical software. PLS-SEM was selected due to its strengths in testing complex structural models, its ability to handle moderate sample sizes, and its flexibility in accommodating data that do not strictly meet normal distribution assumptions (Sarstedt et al., 2025). Moreover, PLS-SEM is considered appropriate for studies that emphasize theory development and predictive analysis of relationships among constructs in digital marketing research. Model evaluation was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved the assessment of the measurement model to examine the validity and reliability of the constructs. The second stage focused on the evaluation of the structural model to test the proposed research hypotheses. This two-step approach enables a comprehensive and simultaneous examination of causal relationships among variables.

Questionnaire design and measurement

The questionnaire used in this study consisted of two main parts. The first part collected respondents' basic demographic information, including gender, age, and educational background. The second part focused on measuring the research variables and comprised seven constructs: Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), privacy concern, information overload, social media fatigue, discontinuance of usage, interaction engagement decrement, and fake news sharing.

All measurement items were adopted from well-established prior studies and slightly adapted to fit the context of social media usage. Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) was measured using three items adapted from (Przybylski et al., 2013). Privacy concern was assessed using four items adapted from (Chen, 2018). Information overload was measured using four items adapted from (Cao et al., 2018). Social media fatigue was measured using five items adapted from (Lee et al., 2016). Discontinuance of usage was measured using three items adapted from (Maier et al., 2015) and (Ravindran et al., 2014). Interaction engagement decrement was assessed using five items adapted from (Baj-Rogowska, 2023). Finally, fake news sharing was measured using six items adapted from (Islam et al., 2020) and (Omar et al., 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile

Descriptive analysis of the demographic data was conducted to provide an overview of the respondents' characteristics. The study involved 155 respondents, all of whom were active social media users. The demographic characteristics presented include gender, age, level of education, and employment status. A detailed description of the respondents' profiles is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic Profile

Demographics	Category	Total	%
Gender	Male	72	46.45%
	Female	83	53.55%
Age	(18th–22th)	54	34.84%
	(23th–26th)	57	36.77%
	(27th–34th)	44	28.39%
Level of education	Student	46	29.68%
	Undergraduate (Bachelor's)	71	45.81%
	Master's	38	24.52%
Employment status	Employee	96	61.94%
	Entrepreneur/Freelance	59	38.06%

The respondents' demographic profile indicates that the sample is appropriate for examining social media fatigue and its behavioral outcomes. The relatively balanced gender distribution reduces potential bias, while the dominance of respondents aged 18–26 years represents highly active social media users who are frequently exposed to information overload and intensive online interaction. The presence of respondents aged 27–34 years further captures users with sustained digital exposure related to work and daily activities. Most respondents are students, undergraduate and master's degree holders, indicating sufficient digital literacy to experience cognitive and emotional fatigue. Additionally, the majority being employees and entrepreneurs/freelancers suggests frequent reliance on social media for professional and personal purposes, supporting the relevance of the sample for this study.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability testing in SEM-PLS aims to evaluate whether the indicators accurately represent their respective latent constructs and whether the constructs demonstrate adequate internal consistency (F. Hair Jr et al., 2014). Convergent validity is assessed through outer loading values, with indicators considered valid when their loadings exceed 0.70, indicating that a substantial proportion of indicator variance is explained by the latent construct. The results show that all indicators across the seven constructs—Discontinuance of Usage, Fake News Sharing, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Information Overload, Interaction Engagement Decrement, Privacy Concern, and Social Media Fatigue—achieve loadings above the recommended threshold, demonstrating strong convergent validity and confirming that each indicator appropriately reflects its intended construct. In addition, construct reliability and validity are evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), where Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values above 0.70 indicate satisfactory reliability, while AVE values above 0.50 confirm convergent validity. Overall, the findings suggest that all constructs are measured reliably and validly, indicating that the measurement model possesses adequate psychometric properties and is suitable for subsequent structural model analysis (F. Hair Jr et al., 2014).

Table 2 Construct Reliability and Validity

Variable	Items	Loading Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Discontinuance of Usage	DOU1	0.842	0.859	0.869	0.914	0.779
	DOU2	0.914				
	DOU3	0.891				
Fake News Sharing	FNS1	0.759	0.937	0.939	0.951	0.763
	FNS2	0.880				
	FNS3	0.899				
	FNS4	0.912				
	FNS5	0.913				

Variable	Items	Loading Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
	FNS6	0.868				
Fomo	F1	0.850				
	F2	0.952	0.890	0.896	0.932	0.821
	F3	0.914				
Information Overload	IO1	0.829				
	IO2	0.894	0.904	0.906	0.933	0.778
	IO3	0.921				
	IO4	0.881				
Interaction Engagement Decrement	IED1	0.859				
	IED2	0.846				
	IED3	0.848	0.914	0.915	0.936	0.745
	IED4	0.869				
	IED5	0.893				
Privacy Concern	PC1	0.820	0.913	0.917	0.939	0.794
	PC2	0.938				
Social Media Fatigue	SMF1	0.750				
	SMF2	0.857				
	SMF3	0.868	0.883	0.887	0.914	0.681
	SMF4	0.846				
	SMF5	0.801				

Source: Data processing results, 2025

Findings

The F-Square test in the SEM-PLS approach is used to measure the magnitude of the exogenous influence on the endogenous by looking at how much a variable contributes to increasing the R-Square value of the endogenous construct. The F-Square value provides an indication of whether a construct has a small (≥ 0.02), medium (≥ 0.15), or large (≥ 0.35) effect on other constructs in the structural model (Hair et al., 2022). Thus, this test is important to evaluate the predictive power of the relationship between variables in the research model.

Table 3 F-Square

Variabel	Discontinuance Of Usage	Fake News Sharing	Interaction Engagement Decrement	Social Media Fatigue
Fomo				0.051
Information Overload				0.319
Privacy Concern				0.018
Social Media Fatigue	2.821	2.727	2.778	

Source: Data processing results, 2025

The collinearity assessment among the latent constructs was evaluated using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), and the results indicate that all VIF values are below the commonly accepted threshold of 5.0, suggesting that multicollinearity is not a serious concern in the model. Specifically, Social Media Fatigue exhibits VIF values of 2.821 for Discontinuance of Usage, 2.727 for Fake News Sharing, and 2.778 for Interaction Engagement Decrement, all of which remain within acceptable limits. These findings indicate that the independent constructs do not excessively overlap in explaining the variance of the endogenous variables and can therefore be included simultaneously in the structural model. Furthermore, the remaining constructs also demonstrate satisfactory collinearity levels, with particularly low VIF values observed for FOMO (0.051), Information Overload (0.319), and Privacy Concern (0.018) in relation to Social Media Fatigue. Such low values reflect

minimal redundancy among the predictors and further support the stability of the estimated path coefficients. Overall, the results confirm that multicollinearity does not threaten the robustness of the structural model, thereby allowing for reliable interpretation of the relationships among the studied constructs. The R-Square test in Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) is used to measure the magnitude of the ability of the independent variables to explain the dependent variable. A high R-Square value indicates that the model has good predictive power. In general, an R-Square value of 0.25 is considered weak, 0.50 moderate, and 0.75 strong (Hair et al., 2011). While R-Square Adjusted takes into account the number of indicators and variables in the model, thus providing a more conservative measure of the predictive power of the model.

Table 4 R-Square

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Discontinuance Of Usage	0.738	0.737
Fake News Sharing	0.732	0.730
Interaction Engagement Decrement	0.735	0.734
Social Media Fatigue	0.763	0.758

Source: Data processing results, 2025

The table presents the coefficient of determination (R Square) and adjusted R Square values for the endogenous constructs in the model. The results indicate that the model explains a substantial proportion of variance in all dependent variables. Specifically, Discontinuance of Usage has an R Square value of 0.738, meaning that 73.8% of its variance is explained by the predictor constructs. Similarly, Fake News Sharing and Interaction Engagement Decrement show R Square values of 0.732 and 0.735, respectively, indicating strong explanatory power of the structural model.

Furthermore, Social Media Fatigue demonstrates the highest explanatory level, with an R Square value of 0.763, suggesting that 76.3% of the variance in this construct is accounted for by its antecedents. The adjusted R Square values are only slightly lower than the R Square values across all constructs, confirming that the model is not overfitted and that the explanatory power remains stable after adjusting for the number of predictors. Overall, these findings suggest that the structural model has strong predictive capability and effectively explains the endogenous constructs.

Hypothesis testing in Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) is carried out to test the influence between latent variables in the research model. This process involves analyzing the path coefficient, t-statistic, and p-value values to determine whether the relationship between variables is statistically significant. A t-statistic value above 1.96 (at a significance level of 5%) indicates that the hypothesis is accepted, meaning that there is a significant influence between the independent variables on the dependent variable. In addition, the direction of the coefficient (positive or negative) indicates the type of relationship that occurs. This hypothesis test is crucial in empirically proving the causal relationship that has been formulated in the conceptual framework of the study. The validity of the results of this test provides a strong basis for drawing conclusions about the influences tested in the SEM-PLS model.

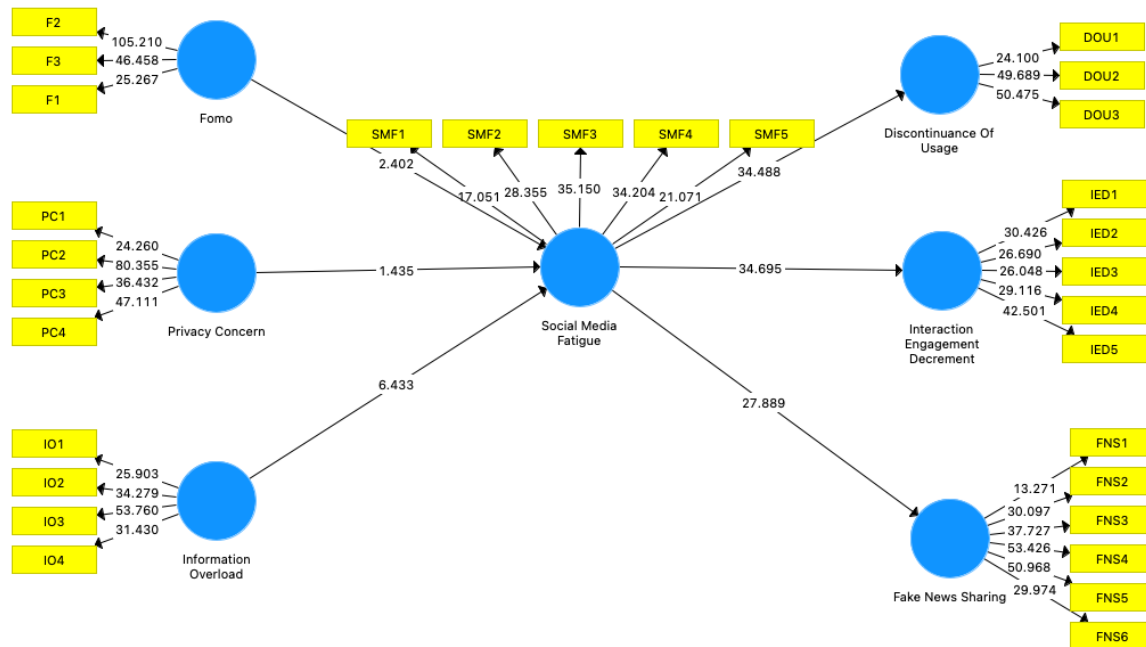


Figure 2 Structural Equation Modeling

Hypotheses Testing

The hypothesis testing results indicate that all proposed relationships in the model are statistically significant. Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) was found to have a significant effect on Social Media Fatigue ($T = 2.402$; $p = 0.017$), indicating that individuals who experience higher levels of FoMO are more likely to feel exhausted from social media use. Likewise, Information Overload significantly influenced Social Media Fatigue ($T = 6.433$; $p = 0.000$), suggesting that excessive exposure to information contributes substantially to users' fatigue. Privacy Concern also showed a significant positive effect on Social Media Fatigue ($T = 6.435$; $p = 0.000$), demonstrating that concerns regarding personal data and privacy increase feelings of fatigue when using social media. Furthermore, Social Media Fatigue was found to significantly affect several behavioral outcomes. Specifically, it had a strong positive effect on Discontinuance of Usage ($T = 34.488$; $p = 0.000$), indicating that fatigued users are more likely to reduce or stop their social media usage. Social Media Fatigue also significantly influenced Fake News Sharing ($T = 27.889$; $p = 0.000$), suggesting that fatigued users may be more prone to sharing unverified information. In addition, Social Media Fatigue significantly affected Interaction Engagement Decrement ($T = 34.695$; $p = 0.000$), confirming that higher levels of fatigue lead to a decline in users' willingness to engage and interact on social media platforms. Overall, these findings provide strong support for all proposed hypotheses and highlight Social Media Fatigue as a critical mechanism linking psychological and informational pressures to various negative user behaviors.

Table 5 Hypotheses Testing Result

Hypothesis	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Conclusion
H ₁ : Fomo to Social Media Fatigue	0.091	2.402	0.017	Accepted
H ₂ : Information Overload to Social Media Fatigue	0.089	6.433	0.000	Accepted
H ₃ : Privacy Concern to Social Media Fatigue	0.088	6.435	0.000	Accepted
H ₄ : Social Media Fatigue to Discontinuance of Usage	0.025	34.488	0.000	Accepted

Hypothesis	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Conclusion
H₅: Social Media Fatigue to Fake News Sharing	0.031	27.889	0.000	Accepted
H₆: Social Media Fatigue to Interaction Engagement Decrement	0.025	34.695	0.000	Accepted

Source: Data processing results, 2025

Discussion

This study seeks to explain the psychological mechanisms that connect pressures within social media environments to various user behavioral responses in the context of digital marketing management. By adopting the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, the findings provide empirical evidence that social media fatigue functions as an internal psychological condition that mediates the relationship between external psychological stimuli and user behavioral outcomes. This result reinforces the relevance of consumer psychology–based approaches in digital marketing research, particularly in explaining how customer experiences within digital environments translate into engagement-related behaviors (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

Within this framework, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO) emerges as a key psychological stimulus that contributes significantly to the development of social media fatigue. The findings support the argument that persistent psychological pressure to remain continuously connected and avoid missing out on digital social activities intensifies users' emotional and cognitive strain (Przybylski et al., 2013). In digital marketing contexts, FoMO amplifies expectations of continuous engagement with social media platforms, which may eventually exceed users' adaptive capacity. This evidence aligns with prior studies indicating that FoMO operates as an internal psychological stressor that accelerates the onset of digital fatigue (Dharejo et al., 2024; Dhir et al., 2018).

In addition to FoMO, privacy concern is confirmed as a significant predictor of social media fatigue. Concerns related to the collection, use, and potential misuse of personal data increase users' vigilance and cognitive burden during social media interactions. From a digital marketing perspective, this condition reflects a structural tension between data-driven personalization strategies and customers' perceived sense of security. Consistent with previous research, heightened privacy concerns intensify psychological pressure and fatigue in social media usage, underscoring the strategic importance of trust and data transparency in sustaining high-quality digital customer experiences (Dhir et al., 2018; Islam et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that information overload significantly contributes to increased social media fatigue. Social media environments characterized by dense information flows and intensive marketing content elevate users' cognitive load and impair their ability to process information effectively. This result supports prior arguments that inadequate management of information volume and relevance diminishes user comfort and increases psychological strain in digital platform interactions (Cao et al., 2018; Whelan et al., 2020). From a marketing standpoint, these findings highlight the importance of content curation and communication intensity management to prevent customer fatigue.

As social media fatigue intensifies, it manifests in several consequential behavioral responses that are critical for digital marketing outcomes. One such response is discontinuance of usage, whereby psychological exhaustion reduces perceived value and comfort in digital interactions, prompting users to decrease or even cease their use of social media platforms. This finding reinforces earlier studies that position fatigue as a primary driver of avoidance behavior in digital systems and underscores its implications for customer churn risk in social media–based marketing strategies (Maier et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2016).

Beyond usage discontinuance, social media fatigue also undermines the quality of customer engagement, as reflected in interaction engagement decrement. Cognitive and emotional exhaustion diminish users' motivation to actively participate in discussions, exchange ideas, and engage in social interactions on digital platforms. This pattern is consistent with previous research showing that digital fatigue encourages withdrawal from social interaction, thereby weakening relational bonds between customers and digital platforms in relational marketing contexts (Baj-Rogowska, 2023; Bright et al., 2015).

In addition to disengagement behaviors, the findings reveal that social media fatigue increases the likelihood of fake news sharing. Cognitive exhaustion constrains users' evaluative capacity when assessing information credibility, making them more prone to sharing content without sufficient verification. This result supports earlier studies emphasizing that fatigue heightens the risk of maladaptive information behaviors, which pose threats to trust, brand credibility, and the overall integrity of digital marketing ecosystems through the amplification of negative electronic word of mouth (Islam et al., 2020; Omar et al., 2024).

Overall, these findings strengthen the explanatory power of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework in understanding social media user behavior within digital marketing contexts. Fear of Missing Out, privacy concern, and information overload function as key stimuli that shape an internal customer condition in the form of social media fatigue, which subsequently triggers multiple behavioral responses. Accordingly, this study highlights social media fatigue as a critical psychological mechanism that warrants strategic attention in managing digital customer experience and sustaining customer engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence that psychological pressures within social media environments play a critical role in shaping user behavior in digital marketing contexts. Drawing on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, the findings demonstrate that Fear of Missing Out, privacy concern, and information overload function as key stimuli that contribute to social media fatigue as an internal customer condition. In turn, social media fatigue translates these pressures into adverse behavioral outcomes, including discontinuance of usage, declining interaction engagement, and increased fake news sharing. These findings highlight the strategic relevance of social media fatigue for customer retention, engagement quality, and trust within digital brand ecosystems.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the digital marketing literature by extending the application of the S-O-R framework to explain how multiple psychological stressors simultaneously influence customer behavioral responses through social media fatigue. By integrating both antecedents and consequences of social media fatigue within a single model, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of user behavior in digital environments.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships over time. Second, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias. Third, the sample was restricted to active social media users within a specific geographical context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research is encouraged to employ longitudinal designs, examine different demographic and cultural contexts, and incorporate additional variables such as digital well-being, platform trust, customer resilience, or algorithmic transparency. From a managerial perspective, digital marketers and platform managers should develop strategies that reduce information overload, enhance privacy protection, and promote healthier digital engagement practices to mitigate social media fatigue and sustain long-term customer relationships.

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