10th MRIC
8-9th October, 2025
(Multidisciplinary Research International Conference)
University of Wah

EXPLORING EV INFORMATION SHARING ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY INTEGRATING THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR AND USES AND GRATIFICATION THEORY

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Abstract

In the context of rising environmental concerns and the growing need for sustainable transportation solutions, electric vehicles (EVs) have emerged as a cleaner alternative. However, in developing countries like Pakistan, their adoption remains significantly low, partly due to limited public awareness and digital engagement. This study explores the behavioral and motivational factors that influence the sharing of EV-related information on social media platforms. By integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), the research investigates how information seeking and status seeking impact users' attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, intention, and actual sharing behavior. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among 442 active social media users in Pakistan, and data were analyzed using Smart PLS 4.0 through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results reveal that both information seeking and status seeking significantly influence intention and actual behavior, primarily through attitudinal and normative pathways. However, perceived behavioral control showed limited mediating influence. This study contributes to the theoretical integration of TPB and UGT in the digital pro-environmental behavior domain and provides practical insights for policymakers, marketers, and sustainability advocates to enhance EV awareness through targeted social media strategies.

Keywords: Theory of planned behavior, Uses and Gratification Theory, Electric Vehicle Information Sharing, Social Media

Introduction

In the tech-driven era of connectivity, a single post on social media is more than just a trend, it actually has a power to shift the mindsets of the individuals and promote decisions. As the world is facing accelerating greenhouse gas emissions, the need for the sustainable alternative is emerging. In response Electric Vehicles (EVs) standout as a prominent and remarkable solution for a clean and eco-friendly future (IEA, 2023). Nevertheless, its adoption relies not only on the technological advancement but merely great efforts are required in shaping public opinion and increasing the awareness (Liao, Molin, & van Wee, 2017). The information that is disseminated on the social media forms the attitudes and molds the behaviors of the individuals (Zhou et al.,

2020). As users scroll, like, and share the posts, they're not going through the content only but they are actually engaging in the posts to shape their perceptions and opinions. (Cheung & To, 2016). The dynamic role of social media is speeding up the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) — not just through infrastructure or policy, but also through people's discussions, and the powerful act of knowledge sharing. As per International Energy Agency (2023) statistics, Pakistan's transportation sector is enormous, with over 32 million registered vehicles amounting to the tune of approximately Rs. 6 trillion; yet, electric vehicles only account for 0.07% of this number.

Despite the government's ambitious target to electrify 30% of vehicles by 2030, the progress is still slow. (Ministry of Climate Change, 2019). Although a lot of the discussion focuses on physical obstacles like charging stations, repair networks, and technical know-how, there is a barrier that is frequently overlooked i.e., the lack of public awareness caused by inadequate knowledge sharing. (Zhang et al., 2021; Cheung & To, 2016). Social media has the potential to be a potent change agent that assists Pakistan in changing its course toward a cleaner, more sustainable future through enhanced digital communication, favorable word-of-mouth, and rising public awareness. Although intention-based behaviors in environmental contexts have been widely explained by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), however integration of motivational antecedents like status seeking and information seeking from the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) (Katz et al., 1973) have not been incorporated into such models as studies typically apply these ideas in silos rather than integrating both (Zhang, Yu, & Zou, 2021). There is a gap in literature regarding integrating motivational drivers (UGT) with attitudinal, normative, and control factors (TPB).

Particularly in social media situations, (Ajzen, 1991) a large number of behavioral research on environmental technology cease at intention formulation without moving on to actual conduct. One of the main obstacles to comprehending the true effect of digital engagement on EV advertising is this intention-actual behavior mismatch. Most studies do not study actual information-sharing behavior, despite the measurability of this action on social media platforms (Zhang et al., 2021). Despite the fact that social media has revolutionized public communication, little empirical research has looked at how it affects perceived behavioral control and subjective norms about EVs (Zhou et al., 2020). In contrast to digital participation and conversation, the majority of EV adoption studies still concentrate on regulatory technological infrastructure and policy incentives and constraints (Liao, Molin, & van Wee, 2017). Little research is available on the potential of social media as a tool for shaping perceptions, spreading knowledge, and understanding how the motivational and behavioral factors play a critical role in shaping the intention and actual behavior of sharing EV- related knowledge on social media platforms**.**

In developed economies such as the US, Europe, and China, where infrastructure and awareness are more advanced, the majority of TPB- or UGT-based studies on EVs are explored (IEA, 2023).

However, there is lack of literature on Pakistan's localized behavioral research where EVs accounting for only 0.07% of all registered vehicles, (Saleem, Ali, & Shehzad, 2024). The gap in existing literature **lack of culturally and economically contextualized** research on digital EV in emerging markets specifically Pakistan. Present study fulfils the gap as it in the context of Pakistan.

EV adoption rates in Pakistan are still very low, accounting for only 0.07% of the 32 million registered vehicles in the country, despite growing international and domestic initiatives to promote EVs (IEA, 2023; Saleem, Ali, & Shehzad, 2024). This slow adoption is not solely due to infrastructural or policy limitations; a more subtle yet crucial barrier is the lack of public awareness resulting from inadequate information dissemination. Social media, with its capacity to go viral, can play a transformative role in molding public opinions and perceptions while spreading EV-related knowledge (Cheung & To, 2016; Zhou, Lu, & Wang, 2020). However, in Pakistan, there is a scarce of empirical research examining the reasons behind consumers' decisions to post such information online.

In order to identify the more profound motivating factors that propel digital involvement, this study looks into how social media users disseminate information regarding EVs. Gaining an understanding of these drivers is essential for raising public awareness and encouraging EV adoption more broadly. This study goes beyond analyzing what people share to investigate and why they choose to share it, guided by two strong theoretical frameworks: the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973). This study combines these perspectives to argue that motivations such as information seeking and status seeking play an important role in encouraging users to actively share EV-related content online. More specifically, this study seeks to identify the main factors influencing EV information sharing behavior studying the sequential mediating relationships between information seeking, status seeking, attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavior control, intention and actual behavior to share EV information on social media platform.

Materials and Methods

Present study adopts a positivist research paradigm by integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973) to develop hypotheses about individual behaviors—specifically, electric vehicle (EV) information sharing on social media. The study employs a deductive approach that is theoretically grounded and aims to evaluate assumptions obtained from TPB and UGT (Creswell, 2009). A web-based survey strategy is used as the primary method for data collection, utilizing a structured questionnaire, following quantitative approach. The present study carried out with cross sectional research design where

the data collected in a single period of time i.e. over the month of April 2025 & May 2025 from social media users in Pakistan. (Kumar, 2019).

Gender, age, occupation, monthly household income, social media usage frequency and EV awareness and intention to purchase are employed as demographic variables for this study. The study includes seven latent constructs. Information seeking is the active pursuit of EV-related knowledge on social media to satisfy cognitive needs and stay informed. Its scale was adapted from the work of Park et al., (2009). Status seeking refers to the desire to boost social image by engaging with EV content on social media to appear informed and prestigious. Its scale was adapted from the work of Park et al. (2009). Attitude is an individual's positive or negative evaluation of sharing EV-related information on social media based on perceived outcomes and desirability. Its scale was adapted from the work of Chen et al. (2018) Subjective norm is an individual's perception of social pressure from others to share or not share EV-related information on social media. Its scale was adapted from the work of Cheung & To (2016). Perceived behavioral control is an individual's belief in their ability, resources, and confidence to share EV-related information, considering both self-efficacy and external constraints. Its scale was adapted from the work of Zhao et al. (2016) Behavioral intention is the individual's motivation and willingness to share EV-related information on social media in the near future. Its scale was adapted from the work of Zhao et al. (2016). Actual behavior is the visible act of sharing, posting, liking, or commenting on EV-related content on social media, reflecting the execution of behavioral intention. Its scale was adapted from the work of Zhao et al. (2016) All constructs were measured evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree)

The population of present study are active social media users residing in Pakistan aged above 18 and aware of/understands EV information and interested in sharing the same on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (now X), or YouTube. The sample was drawn from population using purposive sampling technique, a non-probability sampling method (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Data of the present study is analyzed using **Smart PLS 4.0**, applying **Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)**

Results and Discussion

For testing the present study model PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2019) is employed where two step method (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988) i-e measurement model and structural model is deployed. Measurement model measures the reliability and validity (Hair et al., 2019) of the model while structural model tests the acceptance and rejection of the hypothesis. The measurement model (also known as the outer model) is evaluated through the algorithm function, which estimates indicator reliability, internal consistency, and convergent validity based on the latent variable scores.

The outer loadings of the study are greater than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014) i-e satisfactory, indicating model of the present study establishes indicator reliability. As the table 1 reflects, the values of Composite reliability are greater than 0.7(Hair et al.,2006), hence establishing the internal consistent reliability.

Table 1: Indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability and Convergent validity

Variables/Constructs	Items	Outer Loading	CR	AVE
Information Seeking	IS1	0.903	0.933	0.873
	IS2	0.957		
	IS3	0.942		
Status Seeking	SS1	0.894	0.868	0.789
	SS2	0.885		
	SS3	0.886		
Attitude towards EV Information sharing behavior	ATS1	0.801	0.804	0.705
	ATS2	0.871		
	ATS3	0.846		
Subjective Norm	SN1	0.813	0.834	0.748
	SN2	0.886		
	SN3	0.893		
Perceived Behavioral Control	PBC1	0.902	0.920	0.859
	PBC2	0.938		
	PBC3	0.940		
Intention to share EV information	ITS1	0.810	0.878	0.769
	ITS2	0.925		
	ITS3	0.891		
Actual behavior of sharing EV information	ABS1	0.931	0.889	0.812
	ABS2	0.881		
	ABS3	0.891		

Table 1 shows that average variance extracted values of the present study model for all the constructs are greater than 0.5 (Hair et al.,2006), thus convergent validity is established.

Table 2: HTMT

	ABS	ATS	IS	ITS	PBC	SS	SN
ABS							
ATS	0.659						

IS	0.597	0.552					
ITS	0.983	0.731	0.573				
PBC	0.338	0.285	0.288	0.343			
SS	0.644	0.600	0.932	0.622	0.327		
SN	0.752	0.541	0.685	0.651	0.327	0.735	

As shown in the table 2, all values of Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) are less than 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015) referring that all constructs are distinct from each other, ultimately ascertaining the discriminant validity.

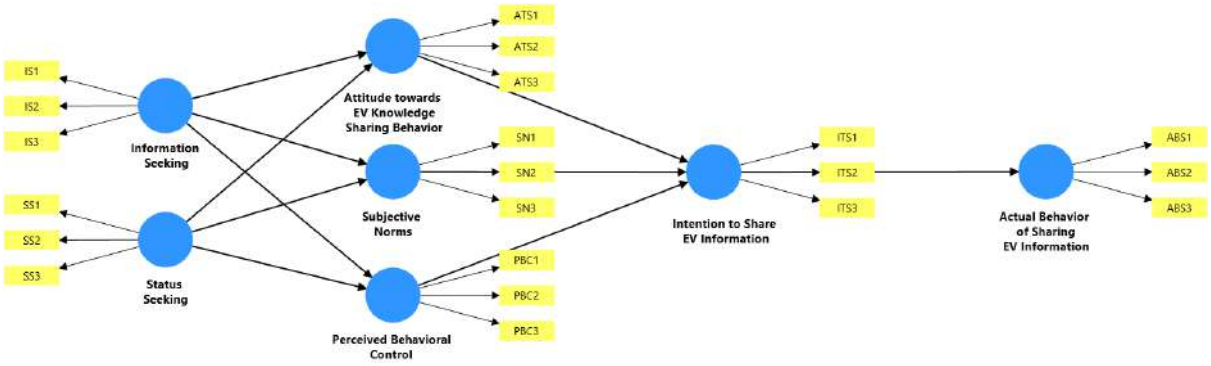

Figure 1: Research model generated from SMART PLS Software

The structural model (also referred to as the inner model) is assessed using the bootstrapping technique with 5,000 resamples in Smart PLS, allowing for the evaluation of path coefficients, t-statistics, and significance levels for hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis 1 predicts that the relationship between Information Seeking and Actual Behavior of Sharing EV Information is sequentially mediated by Attitude toward EV Knowledge Sharing Behavior and Intention to Share EV Information. As Table 3 shows that $\beta = 0.110$ i-e >0.1 (Hair et al.,2014), SE = 0.028, T statistics= 2.703 i-e >1.645 (Hair et al.,2017), p value = 0.007 i-e <0.005, CI [0.026, 0.135] i-e not overlapping zero value (Preacher and Hayes 2008), Hence indicating the acceptance of H1. The acceptance of H1 demonstrates that individuals who seek information about EVs are likely to develop a favorable attitude toward sharing and spreading that information and knowledge, which, in turn, reinforces their intention and results in actual behavior on social media. This finding aligns with the **Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)**, which suggests that users actively consume content to meet cognitive needs (Katz et al., 1973). Informed individuals perceive value in the knowledge they acquire, which positively shapes their attitude and consequently enhances both their intention and actual behavior (Cheung & To, 2016).

As a result, the role of attitude as a behavioral bridge between motivations and actual engagement is supported.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that the relationship between Information Seeking and Actual Behavior of Sharing EV Information is sequentially mediated by Subjective Norm and Intention to Share EV Information. As Table 3 shows that β = 0.120 i-e >0.1 (Hair et al.,2014), SE = 0.025, T statistics= 3.303 i-e >1.645 (Hair et al.,2017), p value = 0.001 (i-e <0.005), CI [0.039, 0.136] i-e not overlapping zero value (Preacher and Hayes 2008), Hence indicating the acceptance of H2. The acceptance of H2 suggests that information-seeking behavior influences EV-sharing behavior through subjective norms as Individuals who actively seek EV-related information are part of social networks where such content is valued and recommended. According to Ajzen's (1991) theory, subjective norms, or perceived social pressure, have a major impact on intention when people believe that their peers appreciate or encourage a particular behavior (of EV information sharing). This result illustrates how digital communities can exert normative influence, thus encouraging users to conform by sharing relevant content (Zhou et al., 2020).

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	SE	*T* value	*p* value	LCI (5%)	UCI (95%)	Acceptance/ Rejection
H1	IS—> ATS—>ITS—>ABS	0.110	0.028	2.703	0.007	0.026	0.135	Accepted
H2	IS—> SN—>ITS—>ABS	0.120	0.025	3.303	0.001	0.039	0.136	Accepted
H3	IS—>PBC—>ITS—>ABS	0.007	0.008	0.803	0.422	-0.006	0.028	Rejected
H4	SS—> ATS—>ITS—>ABS	0.132	0.030	4.053	0.000	0.064	0.182	Accepted
H5	SS—>SN—>ITS—>ABS	0.130	0.029	4.094	0.000	0.066	0.180	Accepted
H6	SS—>PBC—>ITS—>ABS	0.020	0.010	1.943	0.052	-0.004	0.046	Rejected

Hypothesis 3 predicts that the relationship between Information Seeking and Actual Behavior of Sharing EV Information is sequentially mediated by Perceived Behavioral Control and Intention to Share EV information. As Table 3 shows that β = 0.007 i-e <0.1 (Hair et al.,2014), SE = 0.008, T statistics= 0.803 i-e <1.645 (Hair et al.,2017),p value = 0.422 (i-e >0.005), CI [-0.006, 0.028] i-e overlapping zero value (Preacher and Hayes 2008), Hence indicating the rejection of H3. H3 was rejected, showing that information seeking does not significantly affect actual EV information-sharing behavior through perceived behavioral control (PBC). Although users may gain knowledge, they may not always believe they possess the skills or resources necessary to effectively share (Ajzen, 1991). One argument is that technological confidence, platform literacy, or content creation abilities are more important factors in the feeling of control over digital sharing behavior than information. This argument is supported by Liao, Molin, and van Wee (2017) that

structural factors may have a greater influence on control-related attitudes than information seeking.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that the relationship between Status Seeking and Actual Behavior of Sharing EV Information is sequentially mediated by Attitude toward EV Knowledge Sharing Behavior and Intention to Share EV Information. As Table 3 shows that $\beta = 0.132$ i-e >0.1 (Hair et al.,2014),SE = 0.030, T statistics= 4.053 i-e >1.645 (Hair et al.,2017), p value = 0.000 (i-e <0.005), CI [0.064, 0.182] i-e not overlapping zero value (Preacher and Hayes 2008), Hence indicating the acceptance of H4. The acceptance of H4 shows that status-seeking users typically develop favorable opinions about sharing EV information, which in turn affects intention and behavior. Individuals motivated by a desire to enhance their social image and prestige by associating with EV as being innovative, environmentally responsible and align with the modern lifestyle which will develop a positive attitude of sharing such information on social media (Park et al., 2009) with the intention of being beneficial and identity enhancing aspect, ultimately engaging themselves with the relevant conversations and discussions on social media. The results support prior studies that suggests status-enhancing motivations have a major role in determining online participation (Zhang, Yu, & Zou, 2021).

Hypothesis 5 proposed that the relationship between Status Seeking and Actual Behavior of Sharing EV Information is sequentially mediated by Subjective Norms and Intention to Share EV Information. . As Table 3 shows that $\beta = 0.130$ i-e >0.1 (Hair et al.,2014), SE = 0.029, T statistics= 4.094 i-e >1.645 (Hair et al.,2017), p value = 0.000 (i-e <0.005), CI [0.066, 0.180] i-e not overlapping zero value (Preacher and Hayes 2008), Hence indicating the acceptance of H5. The acceptance of H5 indicates that status seekers are highly responsive to social norms. Since status is a socially constructed concept and users value the recognition and prone to follow what is regarded as prestigious or socially rewarding within their networks. This supports the findings of Cheung and To (2016), who argue that social validation significantly influences social media behavior. Furthermore, it emphasizes that social identity and peer recognition are reinforced in digital contexts, hence influencing the actual behavior.

Hypothesis 6 predicts that the relationship between Status Seeking and Actual Behavior of Sharing EV Information is sequentially mediated by Perceived Behavioral Control and Intention to Share EV Information. As Table 3 shows that $\beta = 0.020$ i-e <0.1(Hair et al.,2014), SE = 0.010, T statistics= 1.943 i-e <1.645 (Hair et al.,2017), p value = 0.052 (i-e >0.005), CI [-0.004, 0.046] i-e overlapping zero value (Preacher and Hayes 2008), Hence indicating the rejection of H6. The rejection of H6 shows that status seeking does not substantially increase users' sense of control over providing EV-related information. Even though status-motivated people might want to share content, this desire does not always translate into more confidence or a sense of competence. This

aligns with Ajzen's (1991) perspective that **perceived behavioral control** is more closely related to situational enablers or barriers than to motivational aspirations. Being inline Zhang et al., (2021) suggests that status-motivated users can be lacking technical capabilities or digital confidence ultimately resists EV information sharing on social media platform.

Table 4: Q^2– Predictive Relevance

	Q^2	**Predictive Relevance**
Actual Behavior of_ sharing EV Information	0.303	Strong
Attitude towards EV _Knowledge Sharing Behavior	0.253	Strong
Intention to share _EV Information	0.296	Strong
Perceived Behavioral_ Control	0.077	Moderate
Subjective Norms	0.406	Strong

In Smart PLS, Q^2 (Stone-Geisser's) value is calculated through Blindfolding technique (Geissers, 1975; stone 1974) which articulates the predictive relevance of the model. As reflected from table 5, all the values are greater than zero $Q^2 > 0$ (Hair et al., 2018; Henseler et al., 2009), hence the present study model establishes the predictive relevance. Furthermore Hair et al., (2018) indicated different levels of predictive relevance i-e Q^2 0.02 (weak), 0.15 (moderate), 0.35 (strong). Table 4 shows that ABS (Q^2=0.303), ATS (Q^2=0.253), ITS (Q^2=0.296), SN (Q^2=0.406) holds strong predictive relevance while PBC (Q^2=0.077) possess moderate predictive relevance.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the critical role of social media in raising awareness of Electric Vehicle (EV) through user-driven motivations like information seeking and status seeking. It reveals how attitudes and social norms significantly influence users' intention and actual behavior in sharing EV-related content, by integrating the Theory of Planned Behavior and Uses and Gratifications Theory. The results highlights that in addition to infrastructure, and green environment, influencing attitudes and digital influence are crucial to the transition and EV adoption , and same can be significantly accelerated by promoting the exchange of socially validated, well-informed content, especially in developing nations like Pakistan.

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