

Stimulating Online Purchase Intentions Through Digitalization: Intermediation of Perceptions and Electronic Word of Mouth in Fashion E-commerce

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Abstract

The present study adopts a holistic approach to studying the effect of digital marketing on online purchase intentions in the fashion industry in Pakistan. It highlights the intermediating role of electronic word of mouth between digital marketing-driven purchase intentions. We adopted to understand this phenomenon followed by quantitative research design and incorporated quantitative design. For data collection, we targeted 302 urban online consumers from Karachi based on convenience sampling. Our research framework included casual constructs such as social media marketing, content marketing, perceived ease of use, and perceived usefulness, and we examined their impact on online purchase intentions. We analyzed primary data with a partial least square structural equation modeling technique. The findings provided meaningful insights that infer that digital marketing strategies may be used as a tool to trigger online purchase intentions, particularly in the fashion industry in Pakistan. Furthermore, electronic word of mouth serves the bridging role between digital strategies and purchase intentions, reflecting on sales and marketing policy dedicated to nourishing the online shopping behavior in the fashion industry in Pakistan.s. Overall, we propose that digital marketing strategies enhance online purchase intentions in the fashion industry by sharpening perceptions and boosting the impact of electronic word of mouth.

Keywords: Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing, Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Usefulness, Electronic Word of Mouth, Online Purchase Intention.

Introduction

The contemporary digital marketing mechanism plays a fundamental role in dictating human actions through social media. It facilitates a variety of products and services, leading to better earnings for online businesses Sosanuy et al. (2021b). There is a need to capture the attention of potential buyers and align their needs with the features of the product a business offers. Thus, capturing the buyer's Purchase Intention is essential, which refers to an individual's purposeful plans or the possibility of doing a specific action linked to purchasing (Nasir & Yurder, 2015; Sitthipon et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2018). It is also important because customers are more

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involved in online activities compared to the past. Further, their screen time on online websites has increased sharply. Both these changes must be taken into consideration, and appropriate action must be taken by online businesses to deal with this situation (Donni et al., 2018). E-commerce businesses engage both new and repeat customers on their platforms, which necessitates a thorough understanding of how digital marketing impacts purchase decisions. To compete in a competitive market, inventive businesses must develop a communication strategy that harnesses technology improvements. Recently, customer purchasing patterns have shifted due to increased apprehensions over the procurement of goods and services, coupled with a fall in spending power (Bootsumran et al., 2021). The tendency to buy in the future and the excitement to buy are important indications of consumer purchasing intentions. A customer's intent to purchase reflects the likelihood of obtaining a product or service, which is impacted by motivating factors. This research defines buying intention as Pakistani customers' readiness to engage in e-commerce, as influenced by technical improvements. Companies use digital marketing tactics to improve Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM) and Online Purchase Intention (OPI) (Abou Ali et al., 2020; Siripipatthanakul et al., 2021a). Firstly, social media marketing (hereafter named SMM) greatly increases online buy intents in the field of digital marketing. SMM, which is built on Web 2.0 ideas and technologies, is a set of internet-based apps that make it easier to create and distribute user-generated content, increasing engagement and influencing purchase behavior (Kaplan, 2015). It has been extensively researched in a variety of situations, including public relations, engagement networking, promotion, sales, and branding (Laksamana, 2018). Secondly, using content marketing (hereafter called CM) significantly increases online purchase intent in the digital marketing sector. CM is a dynamic approach shaped by technology breakthroughs and the growth of the internet (Poradova, 2020).

Problem Statement

In today's digital era, the rapid growth and digitalization of the internet provide significant prospects for e-commerce, driven by a rising number of active users. Consumers are increasingly using digital gadgets not just for shopping but also for information and after-sales services. The widespread availability of websites and mobile applications has made internet buying more convenient than ever before. Despite these developments, deciphering individuals' online purchase intents remains a hard problem (Camilleri, 2021; Chiu et al., 2012; Gao et al., 2018; Phan, 2021; Saprikis & Avlogiaris, 2021). This study investigates potential consumers' concerns about security or trust difficulties with online transactions, which may limit their involvement in e-commerce owing to previous negative experiences. Although extensive research exists on customer online purchase intentions, only a few studies have investigated the effect of the mediating role of E-WOM in the influence of digital marketing activities such as CM and e-promotion on purchasing intentions among online consumers in various countries (Purwianti & Jeslyn, 2021). However, there is a significant research shortage in Pakistan, notably in the fashion e-commerce business. This study seeks to fill that vacuum by providing critical data for organizations looking to boost customer confidence and increase online shopping intentions in Pakistan's apparel industry.

Research Question

The present study attempted to address the research questions that arise from the highlighted gaps:

1. What are the impacts of SMM, CM, PEU, and PU on e-WOM among online consumers in Pakistan's fashion industry?
2. What is the role of E-WOM in purchasing intention among online consumers in Pakistan's fashion industry?

3. How do SMM, CM, PEU, and PU Influence Electronic Purchase Intention among Online Consumers in the Fashion Industry in Pakistan?

Significance of the Study

This study provides two noteworthy contributions: First, it explains how SMM, CM, PEU, and PU may be used strategically to increase online purchase intentions. Secondly, it examines the role of e-WOM in mediating the relationship among SMM, CM, PEU, PU, and consumers' online purchasing intentions for fashion brands. This information may help marketing managers promote online product evaluations and multimedia feedback, which leads to more successful marketing tactics. The study provides three main contributions: To begin, it recommends that marketing managers prioritize online product reviews from previous customers to attract new buyers. Second, it investigates the impact of SMM, CM, PEU, PU, and customer reviews on the online purchase intentions of fashion brand customers, allowing for more effective product evaluation. Finally, it provides valuable insights into SMM, CM, and e-WOM tactics that Pakistani businesses may use to gain a competitive edge. Pakistan's largest city is aimed primarily at internet buyers in this key metropolitan region.

In this draft, the upcoming sections are systematically presented. Section 2 presents a literature review containing a theoretical background, description of variables, and hypothesis development. Further, section 3 discusses the methodology, including research design, approach, sampling, data collection, research instruments, and operationalization of variables. Further, section 4 describes the data analysis, which is further divided into descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis.

Literature Review

Theoretical Background

The technology acceptance model (TAM) underlines the importance of this relationship between SMM and CM. The perceived simplicity or complexity of a system has a substantial impact on an individual's desire to make an online purchase (Light & Fernbach, 2024; Vijayasarathy, 2004). Furthermore, Salisbury et al. (2001) discovered three significant conclusions regarding management computer usage: For starters, people's aspirations to use computers closely predict their actual usage. Second, perceived usefulness considerably determines their inclination to use a computer. The PEU has a considerable effect on these intentions as a secondary factor. The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Fishbein and Ajzen (1977) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis (1989a) provided a theoretical framework for analyzing beliefs and predicting future action. The TAM model incorporates the TRA to demonstrate the adoption of information technology. According to the TAM, perceptions about PEU and PU influence an individual's intention and behavior to use technology, with attitudes toward use having a direct impact on actual usage. Adams et al. (1992) found that PEU had a direct effect on PU and technology use.

Furthermore, people may use technology if they believe it is useful, handy, and socially meaningful, even if they love using it (Saga & Zmud, 1993). Vijayasarathy (2004) also identified several characteristics within the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) that may shed light on technology adoption in the workplace, where utilization frequently required user compliance, or else it was mandatory. In an ideal scenario, SMM and CM are effective potential dominating predictors.

Online Purchase Intention

The intention to purchase online refers to a consumer's willingness to engage in online purchases, as well as their perception of website quality and product information. Before making a purchase, buyers usually conduct extensive research. This intention is critical for

assessing a seller's market reputation and projecting actual purchase behavior. Product attributes, information quality, price, and features are among the primary determining variables. A consumer's eagerness to buy indicates a strong purchasing intention, which typically leads to a transaction (Aripradono & Ardiansyah, 2023). Purchase intention involves a customer's likelihood of future repurchase and willingness to recommend the platform to acquaintances for future purchases (Siripipatthanakul et al., 2021b). Customer purchase choices are made at three key stages: before, during, and after the transaction. Every phase is critical for understanding the buyer's goals and attention (Sosanuy et al., 2021a).

Social Media Marketing SMM

Yong et al. (2019) described SMM as a method that enables individuals to promote their products or services using online social networks, therefore reaching a larger audience. Organizations benefit from SMM in a variety of ways, including increased brand visibility (Al-Sheikh & Hasanat, 2020), information dissemination within the company, customer social support (Wright, 2019), electronic word-of-mouth communication (Li & Wu, 2018), and increased sales (Coursaris et al., 2016). SMM may be defined as a business strategy aiming at increasing brand awareness using a variety of online venues, including blogs, websites, and social media.

The Relationship Between SMM and PEU

Past studies found SMM is well recognized for its ability to increase user engagement and contact with companies. Research shows that good SMM tactics may improve the PEU of the platforms used. Yue et al. (2024) note that the interactive features of social media platforms can improve user experiences by making navigation and information retrieval easier. This link is founded on the TAM, which states that external elements, such as social media interfaces, can influence PEU (Davis, 1989b). Hence, based on the above empirical studies, our study developed a hypothesis,

H1: There is a positive relationship between SMM and PEU.

The Relationship Between SMM and PU

Previous studies have shown that SMM has a favorable effect on PU. The immediacy and accessibility of information on social media platforms improve consumers' impressions of its usefulness. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) argue that the immediacy of feedback and the broad reach of social media increases the perceived value of shared knowledge, hence increasing PU. Furthermore, empirical research from Zhu and Chen (2015) shows that consumers view SMM campaigns as advantageous since they provide timely and relevant information. Hence, based on the above empirical studies, the present study developed a hypothesis,

H2: There is a positive relationship between SMM and PU.

Content Marketing CM

CM requires creating and disseminating useful, relevant material to engage customers. It is an ongoing conversation that keeps businesses connected to their audiences (Lu et al., 2021; Wang & McCarthy, 2021). As a core digital marketing approach, CM also aims to increase company participation and develop customer trust (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). CM is an important technique that involves creating and disseminating various sorts of content, such as videos, blogs, white papers, and website articles, via websites and social media channels. The goal is to generate content that effectively engages and connects with the target audience (Bala & Verma, 2018; Weerasinghe, 2019). CM is a deliberate strategy for creating and distributing valuable, relevant information in order to attract and engage a certain audience.

The Relationship Between CM and PEU

A prior study found significant and positive relationships between material Marketing (CM) tactics that prioritize the production and distribution of valuable, relevant material in order to attract and engage a specific audience (Muazu et al., 2024). This strategy can improve PEOU by offering clear, organized, and user-centric material that simplifies the consumption process. According to Holliman & Rowley (2014), well-organized CM activities reduce user effort in finding relevant information, increasing PEOU. Hence, based on the above empirical studies, the present study developed a hypothesis,

H3: There is a positive relationship between CM and PEU.

The Relationship Between CM and PU

Prior studies have found a significant and positive relationship between CM and PU, which is similarly strong. High-quality, useful material that directly meets user demands has a big impact on how they perceive the usability of the platform. According to Pulizzi (2012), CM promotes user happiness and PU by providing relevant insights and solutions, which is consistent with the TAM, which states that PU is a critical component in technology adoption. Hence, based on the above empirical studies, our study developed a hypothesis,

H4: CM has a positive significant influence on PU.

The Relationship Between PEU and e-WOM

Previous studies have found significant and positive relationships between PEU and noticeable effects on electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM). Individuals who consider a platform as user-friendly are more likely to share their positive experiences with others. Venkatesh and Davis (2000) argue that simplicity of use reduces cognitive strain on consumers, supporting more positive electronic word-of-mouth activities. Hence, based on the above empirical studies, the present study developed a hypothesis,

H5: PEU has a positive significant influence on E-WOM.

The Relationship Between PU and E-WOM

Prior studies have shown that PU is a strong predictor of E-WOM. Individuals who see considerable value in a platform are more inclined to share their positive experiences and endorsements. According to Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), when users see a platform as advantageous, they are forced to participate in electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) to aid others, emphasizing the importance of PU in E-WOM behaviors. Hence, based on the above empirical studies, the present study developed a hypothesis,

H6: PU has a positive significant influence on E-WOM.

The Relationship Between PEU and OPI

Prior research indicates that PEU directly influences electronic purchase intentions, as users are more inclined to make purchases from platforms they deem user-friendly. Davis (1989b) emphasizes that an intuitive and user-friendly interface diminishes purchase barriers, thereby augmenting e-purchase intentions. This relationship highlights the significance of user experience in enhancing online sales. Hence, based on the above empirical studies, the present study developed a hypothesis,

H7: PEU has a positive significant influence on OPI.

The Relationship Between PU and OPI

Prior research has established significant and positive correlations between PU and electronic purchase intention, and these findings are thoroughly documented. Individuals who recognize significant utility in a platform are more inclined to cultivate a positive disposition towards

making purchases from it. Gefen et al. (2003) affirm that PU significantly impacts online purchasing decisions, as users correlate greater utility with enhanced trust and satisfaction. Hence, based on the above empirical studies, the present study developed a hypothesis,
H8: PU has a positive significant influence on OPI.

The Relationship Between E-WOM and OPI

Prior research has identified E-WOM as a significant determinant of e-purchase intention. Favorable evaluations and endorsements from colleagues substantially influence users' purchasing choices. Cheung & Thadani (2012) asserts that E-WOM serves as a mechanism of social proof, enhancing users' confidence in their purchasing decisions and consequently elevating e-purchase intentions. Hence, based on the above empirical studies, the present study developed a hypothesis,

H9: E-WOM has a positive significant influence on OPI.

Electronic Word of Mouth (Mediator)

E-WOM refers to an online conversation between customers and others, which includes interactions with product or service suppliers, unbiased experts, and personal friends and family. These encounters might be characterized as beneficial or bad (Bootsunran et al., 2021). E-WOM refers to the shift from traditional face-to-face contact to digital conversations provided by the internet. E-WOM is vital in encouraging customers to share their experiences and knowledge online (Sosanuy et al., 2021b). Conversely, consumers may use digital marketing to share their experiences with previously acquired items or services. Organizations currently use a variety of marketing tactics, including Facebook ads, LinkedIn ads, email campaigns, mobile marketing, search engine optimization, SMM, and CM (Wang & Kim, 2017). Before the Internet, WOM was mostly transmitted in person. This study framed the following hypothesis;

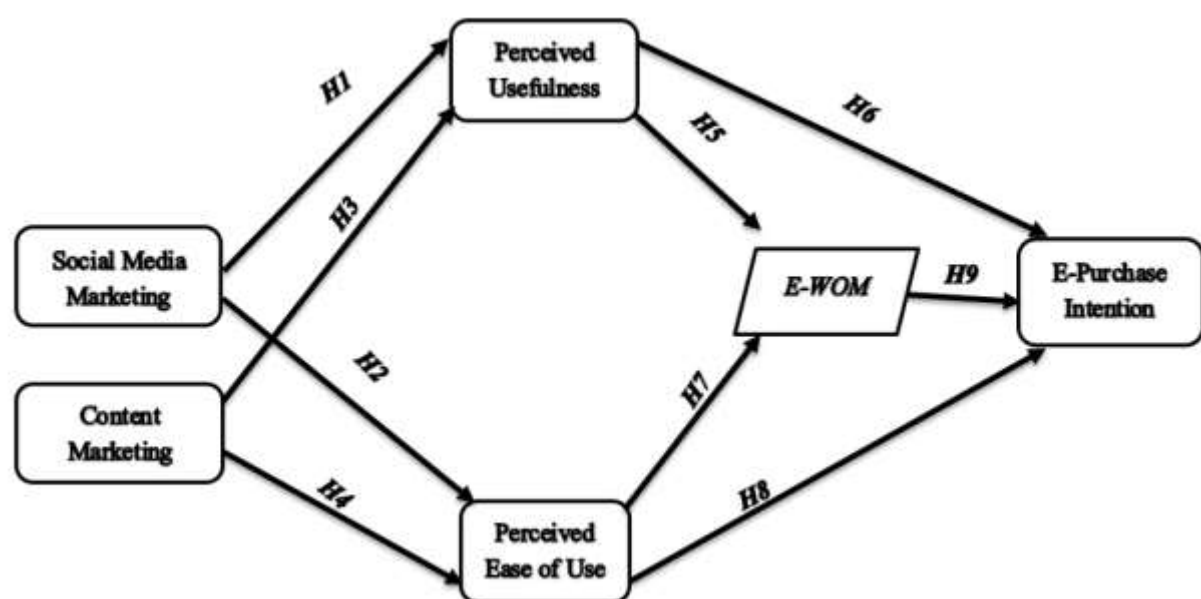
H10: E-WOM intermediates SMM, PU, and OPI paths.

H11: E-WOM intermediates SMM, PEU, and OPI paths.

H12: E-WOM has strong mediation within CM, PU, and OPI paths.

H13: E-WOM has significant mediation within CM, PEU, and OPI paths.

Figure 1: Theoretical framework



Methodology

Research Design

We utilized a quantitative technique to examine the intermediation of E-WOM in the link between digital marketing aspects and e-purchase intentions in Pakistan's apparel industry. Under quantitative design, we employed a cross-sectional method to capture the phenomena. In essence, this survey adopts an explanatory technique to determine the impact of various factors. Causal or explanatory research looks at the cause-and-effect linkages between variables, studying their interactions and underlying dynamics.

Research Approach

This study used a deductive technique to analyze the interrelationships between variables. The procedure began with assumptions based on existing ideas, which were then tested through empirical study. This approach methodically assesses hypotheses by starting with a hypothesis and comparing it against actual facts, therefore either verifying or denying the initial theoretical assumptions (Snieder & Lerner, 2009).

Sampling Technique

We adopt a non-probability sampling technique to collect the data from respondents mainly due to the absence of a complete sampling frame. It has been largely adopted in similar primary studies in the business domain (Gulzar et al., 2024; Shaukat et al., 2024; Sarwar et al., 2023). Non-probability sampling occurs when it is hard to identify all individuals in a population, resulting in uneven selection probabilities for each. This technique was vital in our research because participants were unidentifiable among the target demographic, and we lacked a prepared list to guide the sampling procedure. Although the results may be challenged in terms of generalizability, they still provide a sufficient explanation of the matter under discussion.

Data Collection Method

We adopt a self-administered survey to collect data through the adopted version of the questionnaire and validate the theoretical model following Sarwar et al. (2024). This system had various advantages, particularly for managing bigger samples where data collecting may be problematic. Questionnaires have been shown to be an effective tool for efficiently collecting data (Saunders et al., 2003). A well-designed survey instrument may save time and money, making the questionnaire an ideal choice for this study. The design allowed for quick and simple replies from participants, accelerating the study process. Furthermore, it allowed academics to efficiently code and analyze data (Gray, 2021). Prior research on consumer purchase intentions and e-commerce provided the basis for the questionnaire's measuring components. We used an online Survey to gather information from urban customers and experienced internet shoppers in Pakistan. This strategy was chosen because it is both feasible and successful, allowing for the inclusion of a large sample that correctly represents the population while simplifying the results (May & Williams, 2002). This approach was suitable for the study in Karachi because of its low cost, time efficiency, and low skill requirements (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Further, We used SmartPLS for data analysis.

Research Instrument

This study's questionnaire was divided into four pieces and aimed to gather important information about consumers' online shopping intentions. Section A collected demographic data, including race, age, education, experience, job type, and employment status. Section B looked at four independent variables: SMM, CM, PEU, and PU. Section C focused on the mediator, E-WOM, whereas Section D examined the dependent variable, OPI. The instrument clearly mentioned that the questionnaire can be returned to the researcher if the respondent

feels uncomfortable answering or is hesitant to do so. Further, respondents were ensured of the secrecy of the information they provided. Moreover, we sought prior confirmation to participate in the survey before approaching the respondents. All these steps were thoughtfully taken to comply with research ethics.

Operationalization and Measurement

This section describes the research variables and the sources of the instruments used in the investigation. The processes were adapted from published approaches, resulting in adequate reliability as examined by Cronbach's alpha. These strategies have been validated by several investigations. All characteristics were assessed using a five-point Likert scale with a response anchor between levels of agreement and disagreement. The information contained in Table 3.1 also confirms the adoption of robustness scale selection. The instance care was adopted at the selection of these scales from reliable sources. We consider a source reliable if the scale has passed reliability and validity tests. Further, we also checked the reliability and validity, which confirmed the quality of the scale through double-checking.

Table 1: Source and Measures of Study Variables

Parts	Constructs	Item-count	Reliability	Reference
A	Demographic Information	7	--	Self-Constructed
B	CM	4	0.709	Napawut et al., 2022
	SMM	5	0.700	Kim and Ko (2012a)
	PEU	3	0.769	(Bilal Eneizan1 & Rawash1, 2020)
	PU	4	0.770	(Bilal Eneizan1 & Rawash1, 2020)
	E-WOM	5	0.807	(Aravindan et al., 2023)
	OPI	5	0.847	(Laksamana, 2018)

Techniques of Data Analysis

Following Hair (2007), the obtained data was initially examined using SPSS (V-21). Additionally, PLS Structural Equation Modeling was used to evaluate both the outer and inner models (Hair Jr et al., 2016; Wong, 2013). PLS-SEM is a powerful tool for analyzing complex relations. It mainly contains two phases. Firstly, it investigates the reliability and validity and validity analysis. Subsequently, it initiates path analysis wherein a hypotheses test is performed.

Data Analysis

Response Rate, Data Screening and Preliminary Analysis

Prior to data analysis, we performed an initial screening test. Table 4.1 exhibits the distribution and response rates of an online survey done to Karachi's online consumers using Google Forms. Of the 350 surveys distributed, 322 were completed and submitted. Out of them, 302 were deemed appropriate for analysis. Twenty individuals were removed because they provided unethical replies or completed tasks at random without regard to content. Eighteen surveys were not submitted. The survey's legitimate response rate was 89%, which is higher than our previous survey (Sarwar & Khan, 2022).

Table 2: Description of Response Rate

Description	Response
Total distributed count (a)	350
Received back (b)	322
Healthy questionnaires (c)	302
Exclusion after receipt (d)	20
No-returned (a-b)	18
General Response Rate (percentage)	93%
Validated Response Rate (percentage)	89%

Descriptive Statistics

The purpose of descriptive statistics in data analysis is to understand the variables under study and the context of the study. It also helps in making the comparison of the study. Table 2 displays the outcome of descriptive statistics, which contains the central values of constructs, ranging from 3.42 to 3.53, with a variation range starting from 0.690 to 0.868. The table contains six columns wherein the construct is presented with their short names. Further, each construct contains its respective mean value added by minimum and maximum values. Further, the last column shows standard deviation values.

Table 3: Construct Description

Constructs	N	Min.	Max.	Average	Std. Deviation
SMM	302	1.00	5.00	3.4748	0.69097
CM	302	1.00	5.00	3.5306	0.69324
PEU	302	1.00	5.00	3.5243	0.86861
PU	302	1.00	5.00	3.4288	0.77324
EWOM	302	1.00	5.00	3.4563	0.74415
OPI	302	1.00	5.00	3.4536	0.81720

Path Analysis

Sarstedt et al. (2016) proposed that using composite modeling constructs is an effective technique for assessing capacity. PLS-SEM has two main components: first, the PLS algorithm investigates the reliability and validity of measurement model analysis; next, the structural model is analyzed using bootstrapping to determine the correlations between variables. Hence, PLS-SEM contains two further components: the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model (inner model).

Outer Model Analysis

We employed inner model analysis to ensure the reliability and validity of its components. The structural model was then analyzed to evaluate the hypothesized connections using PLS-SEM. Mainly, the Inner model includes further tests such as internal consistency, the reliability of individual items, and both discriminant and convergent validity to substantiate the structural model (Hair et al., 2013).

Individual Items Reliability

In Smart PLS, an individual item's reliability is determined through cross-loadings. The threshold value is set at 0.7, and the values above this threshold imply the reliability of the item. Table 4.3 shows that three items, especially SMM1, SMM5, and OPI5, were deleted because their loading values were less than 0.7, but 23 items with loading values ranging from 0.700 to 0.882 were maintained. Overall, the scale fits in terms of reliability.

Convergent Validity

We employed convergent validity based on the average variance extracted technique (AVE). Convergent validity means items are efficiently connected to measure the scale. For Instance, table 4.3 contains four items to measure the construct (CM1, CM2, CM3, CM4), and the resultant value of AVE is 0.534, which means these four constructs are better positions to measure the construct CM. Further, all respected values in our estimates meet the threshold criteria, which means that the scale is fit for convergent validity.

Table 4: Quality Assessment of Instrument

Construct	Items	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
SMM			0.700	0.700	0.602
	SMM-2	0.748			
	SMM-3	0.804			
	SMM-4	0.773			
CM			0.709	0.711	0.534
	CM-1	0.782			
	CM-2	0.729			
	CM-3	0.700			
	CM-4	0.716			
PEU			0.769	0.776	0.684
	PEU-1	0.841			
	PEU-2	0.788			
	PEU-3	0.852			
PU			0.770	0.771	0.592
	PU-1	0.763			
	PU-2	0.764			
	PU-3	0.776			
	PU-4	0.774			
E-WOM			0.814	0.825	0.564
	EWOM-1	0.722			
	EWOM-2	0.769			
	EWOM-3	0.792			
	EWOM-4	0.754			
	EWOM-5	0.716			
OPI			0.747	0.821	0.688
	OPI-1	0.752			
	OPI-3	0.863			
	OPI-4	0.882			
	OPI-5	0.815			

Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Table 4 shows the outcome of discriminant validity wherein the value in the diagonal (bold values) must be greater than the values in relevant rows and columns (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to the stats, all values meet the criteria. Hence, the instrument is validated in terms of discriminant validity. For Instance, the value of OPI is found to be 0.829, which is greater than the respective values in rows (0.449, 0.585) and columns (0.504, 0.520, 0.274).

Table 5: Fornell-Larcker Matrix

	CM	EWOM	OPI	PEU	PU	SMM
CM	0.731					
EWOM	0.537	0.751				
OPI	0.449	0.585	0.829			
PEU	0.578	0.594	0.504	0.827		
PU	0.437	0.553	0.520	0.595	0.769	
SMM	0.488	0.344	0.274	0.420	0.372	0.776

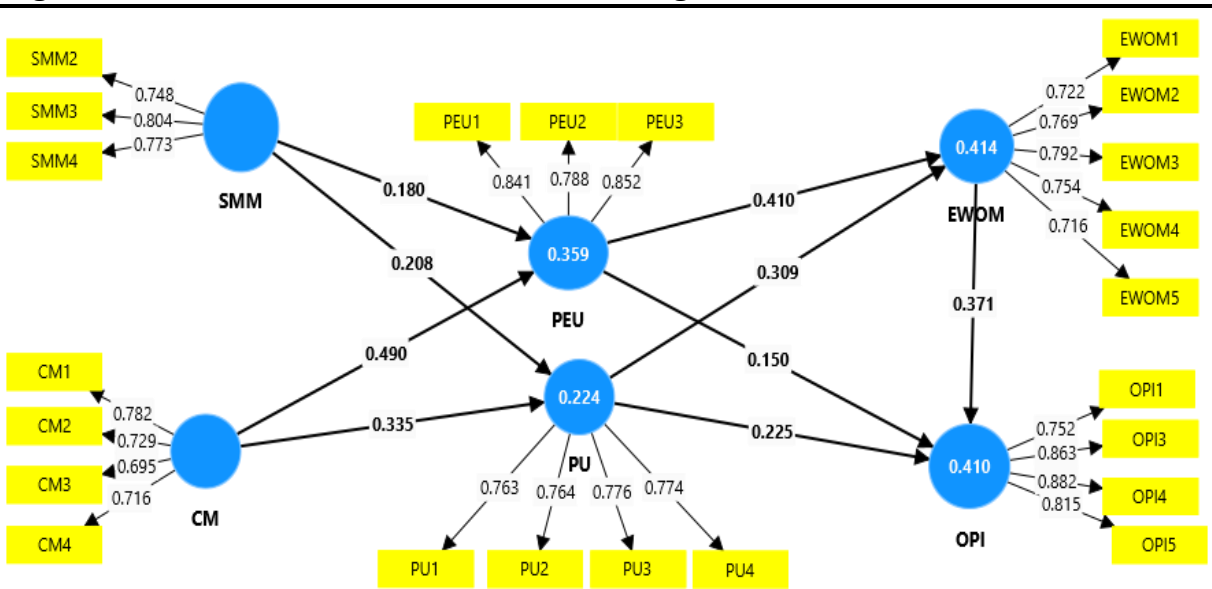
Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Discriminant validity indicates if two constructs are different, they should be different in statistical terms. In other words, there should be no high association between them. Table 4.5 exhibits the outcome of the HTMT ratio, which determines validity if the resultant values fall below the threshold value of 0.85 (Hair et al., 2011; Henseler et al., 2016). According to the stats, all values are under acceptable limits, and we here infer that the instrument is validated in terms of discriminant validity. We provide robust estimates as the validation of scale is passed through two different techniques.

Table 6: Heterotrait-Monotrait Assessment (HTMT)

	CM	EWOM	OPI	PEU	PU	SMM
CM						
EWOM	0.709					
OPI	0.583	0.704				
PEU	0.776	0.749	0.620			
PU	0.586	0.694	0.639	0.765		
SMM	0.707	0.468	0.365	0.573	0.515	

Figure 2: Results of Measurement Model-PLS Algorithm



Hypothesis Testing

According to estimates presented in Table 4.6, the R-squared statistic for E-WOM was 0.414, signifying a moderate correlation. The R-squared value for OPI was 0.410, indicating a moderate correlation (Hair et al., 2010). The R^2 value shows the explanatory power of the model. For Instance, the R^2 value of OPI in 0.410 implies that around 40 percent of the variation was caused by the independent variables.

Table 7: Explanatory Power Assessment

Construct	R ²	Status
Electronic Word of Mouth	0.414	Moderate
Online Purchase Intention	0.410	Moderate

Direct Relationship in Path Analysis

We employed path analysis to examine the proposed relationship between constructs. The premise of this analysis is to examine the connection between constructs and draw conclusions on the significance, intensity and direction. The hypotheses were supported: SMM, CM, PEU, PU, and EWOM all had a positive and substantial influence on OPI. Figure 4.1 displays the algorithm's findings, including the route coefficient. Figure 4.2 displays the results of bootstrapping, including the beta values and t-values. For example, the first row reflects the first hypothesis and the coefficients and t-value exceed the acceptable range (H1: CM>PEU, B=0.49, t=8.107). Hence, the path is accepted, and we draw the inference that CM significantly derives the perception of ease of use, which serves as the enabler of purchase intention.

Table 7 shows the results of the direct correlations between SMM, CM, PEU, PU, E-WOM, and OPI. The findings are summarized as follows:

Table 8: Direct Path Assessment

Codes	Paths	Coefficients	Std. E	t-value	P-value	Remarks
H1	CM -> PEU	0.490	0.060	8.107	0.000	Supported
H2	CM -> PU	0.335	0.064	5.206	0.000	Supported
H3	EWOM -> OPI	0.371	0.069	5.404	0.000	Supported
H4	PEU -> EWOM	0.410	0.065	6.275	0.000	Supported
H5	PEU -> OPI	0.150	0.074	2.039	0.041	Supported
H6	PU -> EWOM	0.309	0.068	4.567	0.000	Supported
H7	PU -> OPI	0.225	0.076	2.961	0.003	Supported
H8	SMM -> PEU	0.180	0.057	3.167	0.002	Supported
H9	SMM -> PU	0.208	0.065	3.224	0.001	Supported

Indirect Relationships in Structural Model

Hair et al. (2014) explained that a mediation analysis provides how an intervening construct affects the connection between a cause and effect. This study investigated these indirect paths to enhance the understanding based on a bootstrapping approach, which works with the resampling mechanism (Hayes, 2009). Hair et al. (2014) found that bootstrapping is highly effective for PLS-SEM, especially with small sample sizes.

Table 4.8 depicts the indirect relationship between SMM, CM, PEU, PU, and OPI. The comprehensive findings are as follows:

Table 9: Results of Hypothesis Testing: Indirect Relationships

Hypotheses	Relationship	Beta	SE	t-value	P-value	Decision
H10	SMM -> PU-> EWOM	0.064	0.025	2.617	0.009	Accepted
H11	SMM -> PEU-> EWOM	0.074	0.026	2.876	0.004	Accepted
H12	SMM -> PU-> OPI	0.047	0.022	2.170	0.030	Accepted
H13	PEU -> EWOM-> OPI	0.152	0.035	4.307	0.000	Accepted
H14	SMM -> PEU-> OPI	0.027	0.014	1.873	0.061	Rejected
H15	PU -> EWOM-> OPI	0.115	0.035	3.274	0.001	Accepted
H16	CM -> PU -> EWOM -> OPI	0.039	0.016	2.463	0.014	Accepted
H17	CM -> PEU -> EWOM -> OPI	0.075	0.020	3.667	0.000	Accepted
H18	SMM -> PEU -> EWOM -> OPI	0.027	0.012	2.376	0.018	Accepted
H19	SMM -> PU -> EWOM -> OPI	0.024	0.011	2.201	0.028	Accepted
H20	CM -> PU -> EWOM	0.104	0.035	2.994	0.003	Accepted
H21	CM -> PEU -> EWOM	0.201	0.046	4.407	0.000	Accepted
H22	CM -> PU -> OPI	0.075	0.031	2.416	0.016	Accepted
H23	CM -> PEU -> OPI	0.073	0.040	1.817	0.069	Rejected

Assessment of Effect Size (f^2)**Table 10: Effect Size**

Latent	PEU	Effect	PU	Effect	EWOM	Effects	OPI	Effect
SMM	0.039	Small	0.043	Small				
CM	0.285	Medium	0.110	Small				
PEU					0.185	Medium	0.021	Small
PU					0.105	Small	0.050	Small
EWOM							0.137	Small

Table 10 displays the value interpretation, showing the differential effects of several digital marketing methods on PEU, usefulness, electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM), and OPI in Pakistan's apparel sector. CM has a moderate influence on PEU, but SMM has little effect on both PEU and PU. Although PEU and PU have an impact on E-WOM and OPI, their effect sizes are largely minor, with the exception of PEU's medium effect on E-WOM. Further, E-WOM has a moderate but significant impact on OPI. These findings highlight the complex roles that many aspects of digital marketing and user perceptions play in influencing customer behavior in the online fashion sector. As a result, the effect sizes were appropriate for analysis, and the model demonstrated a solid fit for the data.

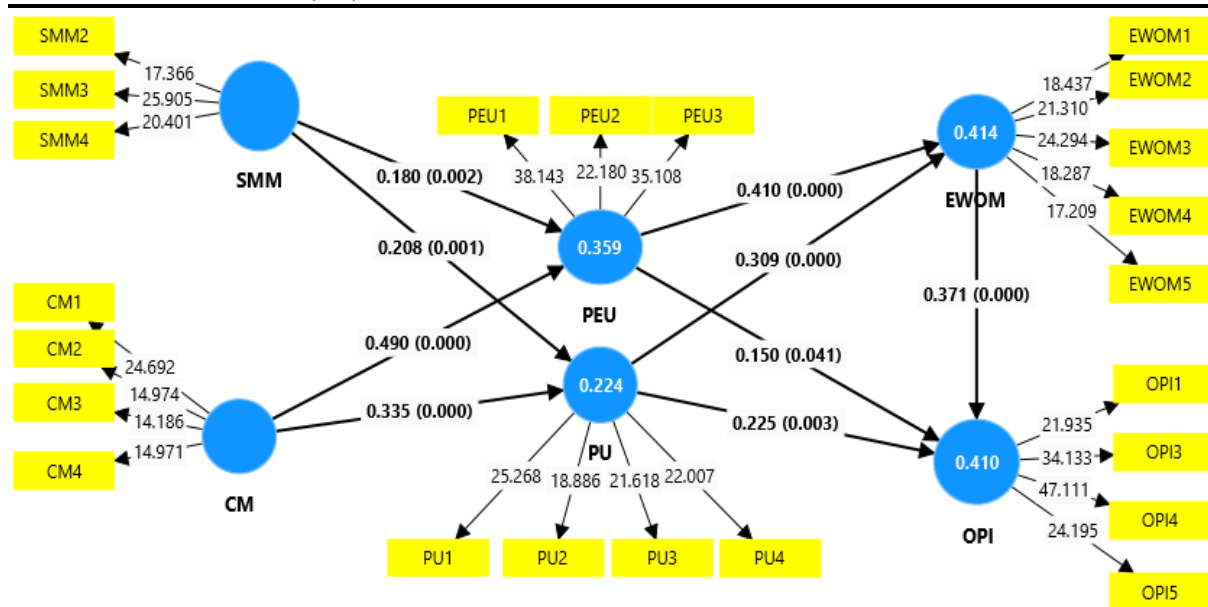
Figure 3: Direct path coefficient of the structural model (bootstrapping)- Analyzing Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Table 11 shows a summary of the predictive relevance of the model in this study, wherein we establish that the model has been validated in terms of predictive relevance. Predictive relevance demonstrates that the model contains both statistical significance and practicability. It implies that it can make accurate with-in-sample predictions.

Table 11: Predictive Relevance (Q^2) Summary

Constructs	Q^2	Predictive Relevance
EWOM	0.260	Yes
OPI	0.182	Yes

Conclusion

This study investigates how SMM, CM, PU, and PEU affect E-WOM and OPI in Pakistan's fashion industry (Poradova, 2020). It also investigates how E-WOM mediates the relationships between these digital marketing aspects and OPIs in the apparel sector. In accordance with the defined objectives, data was acquired from online users in Karachi, Pakistan, with 350 questionnaires distributed and 302 valid replies obtained, producing an 88.8% response rate. The data were analyzed using SPSS and PLS-SEM. Hypotheses were tested for significance using a two-tailed t-value of 1.967. The study proposed that SMM, CM, PEU, and PU had a favorable impact on E-WOM. The results confirmed hypothesis H1, H2, H4, H6, H8, and H9, which aligned with previous study findings. The study found that SMM, CM, PEU, and PU all have a favorable impact on E-WOM, which leads to increased OPI in e-marketing (Camilleri, 2021; Chiu et al., 2012; Gao et al., 2018; Phan, 2021; Saprikis & Avlogiaris, 2021). Hypothesis 3 claims that electronic E-WOM favorably affects online purchasing intention OPI, which is supported by the study's findings and current research. Furthermore, E-WOM was identified as a mediator in the relationship between SMM, CM, PEU, PU, and OPI within Pakistan's fashion sector. The study emphasized the beneficial effect of E-WOM on OPIs, illustrating the

substantial role of e-marketing elements in augmenting E-WOM and, in turn, promoting online purchasing behavior (Anjum & Chai, 2020).

Practical Implications

The current study provides three key contributions: To begin, the findings may help marketing managers present online product feedback from prior customers to prospective online customers. The findings especially explain the influence of SMM, CM, PEU, and PU, as well as online product evaluations from past customers, on the OPI of potential customers in fashion businesses, assisting consumers in analyzing the items of these firms. The current study provides three key contributions: To begin, the findings may help marketing managers present online product feedback from prior customers to prospective online customers. The findings especially explain the influence of SMM, CM, PEU, and PU, as well as online product evaluations from past customers, on the OPI of potential customers in fashion businesses, assisting consumers in analyzing the items of these firms.

Future Recommendations

Several future directions are provided for future efforts in the area, particularly related to OPIs. For Instance, future efforts may be directed to demographic characteristics like age, gender, and income level, and their impact on the interaction between digital marketing and OPIs may be investigated. Furthermore, studying the effects of specific digital marketing strategies such as social media advertising, social media promotions, influencer marketing, e-service quality, and email marketing on electronic E-WOM and OPI can provide valuable insights for marketers looking to improve their online marketing initiatives. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that using a convenience sample strategy may limit the study's representation of the target population, thus affecting the results' generalizability. Furthermore, we conducted a self-administered survey wherein the respondents may overestimate or underestimate their purchase intentions. In the future, a longitudinal survey on the transition from digital marketing to OPIs is of utmost importance.

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