



DIGITAL DYNAMICS AND ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION IN PAKISTAN'S ORGANIC FOOD MARKET: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CONSUMER TRUST AND THE MODERATING ROLE OF CONSUMER KNOWLEDGE

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Consumer knowledge, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), organic food, Pakistan, PLS-SEM, trust	Background: Digital platforms are having a growing influence on consumer buying decisions, especially in developing countries like Pakistan. Trust is crucial when making the shift of digital interaction to purchase intention in the online organic food context, as consumer doubts about product quality, safety, authenticity and certification can create a problem. Objective: The aim of the study was to examine the effect of social media marketing, website quality, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and perceived value on online purchase intention of Pakistani customers of organic foods. Method: The approach was positivist with descriptive survey design, cross sectional using quantitative method, based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and The theory of planned behaviour (TPB). Data were acquired using an online questionnaire from 545 Pakistani customers having experience of, or plan to purchase, organic food online. The proposed hypotheses were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling. Results: Social media marketing (SMM), website quality (WQ), and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) significantly and positively influenced both trust and online purchase intention (PI). WQ was the strongest direct predictor of PI, whereas e-WOM had the strongest effect on trust. Trust significantly mediated the relationships of SMM, WQ, and e-WOM with PI. Consumer knowledge significantly strengthened the effects of social media marketing, WQ, and e-WOM on trust. But, in the full model, perceived value (PV) did not significantly predict trust nor PI and was not supported as a moderation and mediation variable.
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Introduction

With the prevalence of eCommerce in today's digital age, comprehending the concept of purchase intent has become essential for businesses aiming to prosper in the fast-evolving digital marketing world ([Sunnyoto et al., 2025](#)). Consumer intention to purchase indicates a conscious decision made by consumers to purchase a product or service because their expectation aligns with their perceptions of product quality, and it is deemed as a good predictor of actual purchase ([Saleem et al., 2022](#)).

Marketing has always been a key component to the success of a firm and with the introduction of digital technology, it has made shopping more competitive as customers are not restricted to geographical location. Online shopping is crucial to ensure the deeper penetration of the digital economy as Pakistan is grappling with ongoing problems in digitalization of the economy ([Saleem et al., 2022](#)). Social media or other online tools help to promote products and services, thereby building the Purchase intention (PI) of consumers, while presenting a blend of consumer interest and the likelihood of purchase ([Tandon et al., 2020](#)). This digital revolution has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in developing nations which have seen consumers move away from traditional retail to online shopping ([Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021](#)).

Digital platforms play a crucial role in directly connecting with consumers, raising awareness of the brand, and influencing the decision to purchase ([Aji et al., 2020](#)). In online businesses, there are still some issues regarding service quality including slow response and lack of information, which is so important for customers to be loyal and purchase its products again ([Moslehpour et al., 2021](#)). Marketing strategies need to be adjusted to the digital world in which the purchasing behavior of consumers is influenced by online interactions and trust in e-commerce ([Jain et al., 2026](#)).

Social media marketing (SMM) has a great contribution in influencing PI by increasing brand visibility and consumer involvement ([Agnihotri et al., 2021](#)). Similarly, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is a strong instrument in online marketing and consumers depend on other people's reviews and recommendations when making decisions for purchases ([Albayrak et al., 2021](#)). Positive e-WOM plays an important role in influencing consumer trust and consumer purchasing decision ([Hidayat et al., 2021](#)), and building trust in e-commerce platform, sellers, and products are important factors for success in the internet sales industry. Likewise trust is significant in the purchase decision in online: Trust positively affects PI and the consumers need reliable information and assurance about the products before making an online purchase ([Tam et al., 2024](#)).

The traditional farming along with use of hazardous pesticides in Pakistan made consumers aware of the harmful effect of their food on the environment and health, thus more and more people are interested in the organic foods which also contribute to the GDP and employment in the country ([Basha et al., 2019](#)). Consumer trust in quality and certification of organic products is crucial to their acceptance of the category, and the trend toward increased organic food consumption has continued to pick up momentum throughout the COVID-19 pandemic due to health concerns. Given the scarcity of research in Pakistan on the consumption of organic foods, this study explores the interplay between SMM, WQ, e-WOM, and Perceived Value PV on the intention to purchase

organic food online, with the intervening role of trust and the moderating influence of consumers' knowledge between them.

Digital Dynamics and Consumer Decision-Making

Based on the literature, there are three factors that affects the intention to buy products online: technological, relational and consumer-related factors. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) puts the perceived usefulness and ease of use of technology as the key determinants of technology acceptance ([Bazine, 2025](#)), and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) introduces attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control as key factors to behavioral intention ([Huang et al., 2026](#)). In online purchasing, the various types of digital marketing, including SMM, WQ and e-WOM can help to improve consumer engagement, information availability and product evaluation. Likewise, PV can make the PI more powerful by making consumers perceive greater benefits for the purchased product in comparison with the costs ([Chae et al., 2020](#)). But these relationships can be especially trust dependent because consumers are uncertain and at risk when making their online purchases ([Hidayat et al., 2021](#)). Consumer knowledge can also affect these relations by how people process information online and rate unfamiliar and credence products like organic food ([He et al., 2025](#)). Though these findings, there is very little literature that combines these aspects in a single context, especially in the organic food market in Pakistan. This study thus aims to investigate the influence of digital dynamics in online PI via trust with the consideration of consumer knowledge as a possible moderating variable.

Research Gap

Although several studies were conducted in Pakistan ([Saleem et al., 2022](#)) and around the world ([Aprianto et al., 2021](#)) the research that has investigated the combined effect of four variables (SMM, WQ, PV and e-WOM) on consumers' PI while considering two moderating variables (consumer knowledge and trust) is limited. Individual studies have explored these different factors in isolation; however, a comprehensive analysis of the combined and synergistic impact of these factors on the decision-making process of consumers in a new digital economy like Pakistan is lacking. This study fills in that gap.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are to investigate the direct impact of SMM, WQ, e-WOM and PV on PI; to examine the moderating effect of consumer knowledge on the relationship between the digital dynamics and trust; and to investigate the mediating effect of trust in the relationship between the digital dynamics and PI.

This study is one of the first studies to simultaneously consider the influence of SMM, WQ, e-WOM and PV on PI among Pakistani consumers of organic food. The results will enable companies to make informed changes to their digital marketing strategies, build trust with consumers and boost sales, sales revenue, and competitiveness in the digital world.

Methodology

Consumer behavior marketing studies have been carried out using a positivist research philosophy (Bambore et al., 2017; Madzvamuse, 2026) which is also followed in this study, while the deductive research approach is followed in which the hypotheses built on TAM and TPB are tested empirically as suggested by (Bambore et al., 2017). Given the nature of the study, which was positivist in orientation and the desire to use efficient, cost effective methods for dealing with large data sets, a quantitative methodology was chosen.

Study Design

Cross sectional survey design was the design used to collect data at one time. The questionnaire was based on the scales used in the previous literature, and the items were rated on a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) for the measures of PI, Trust, Consumer Knowledge, SMM, WQ, e-WOM and PV.

Individual online consumers of organic food in Pakistan was the unit of analysis. The researchers adopted non-probability sampling methods: convenience sampling and snowball sampling following the usual practice in online questionnaires studies (Saunders et al., 2019). Data screening resulted in 545 usable responses that were analysed. The respondents were mostly young (25-30 year old – 76.7%) and highly educated (64.0% – master's degree).

Data Analysis

Analysis of data used was Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) which was carried out in two stages, namely measurement model assessment (outer loading, reliability, and validity) and assessment of structural model (path coefficient, coefficient of determination, effect size, and predictive relevance). As per the criterion proposed by (Hair et al., 2014), the items with outer loading which were lower than 0.40 were deleted and those in the range of 0.40 – 0.70 were retained when their removal did not improve composite reliability (CR) or average variance extracted (AVE).

Reliability and Validity

Reliability was examined by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability and convergent validity was examined by AVE, which were based on the model of (Hair et al., 2011). Standard PLS-SEM reporting rules were followed in evaluating the discriminant validity by applying the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio and cross-loadings.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses to explore proposed relationships between SMM, WQ, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), PV, trust, consumer knowledge, and intention to purchase online for organic food among Pakistani consumers were developed. For the purpose of studying these relationships, four direct-effect hypotheses were analyzed, which were: whether SMM, WQ, e-WOM, and PV positively influence PI (H1-H4). The following four hypotheses tested the implications of these digital

dynamics for consumer trust (H5–H8), and the last one examined whether consumer trust positively affects consumer PIs (H9). Furthermore, consumer knowledge was examined as a moderating variable to investigate if there is any impact on the strength of the relations between SMM, WQ, e-WOM, PV and trust (H10–H13). Based on the literature review, the SMM, WQ, e-WOM and PV are proposed to have indirect effects on PI through the intervening role of trust, which is assessed by a mediating variable (H14–H17).

Ethical Consideration

Participants were free to agree or not, consent was taken and anonymity and confidentiality were respected during all aspects of the data collection and analysis process as is common in the practice of ethical research.

Figure 1: show the research framework followed to analyse purchase intention using Trust and Consumer knowledge.

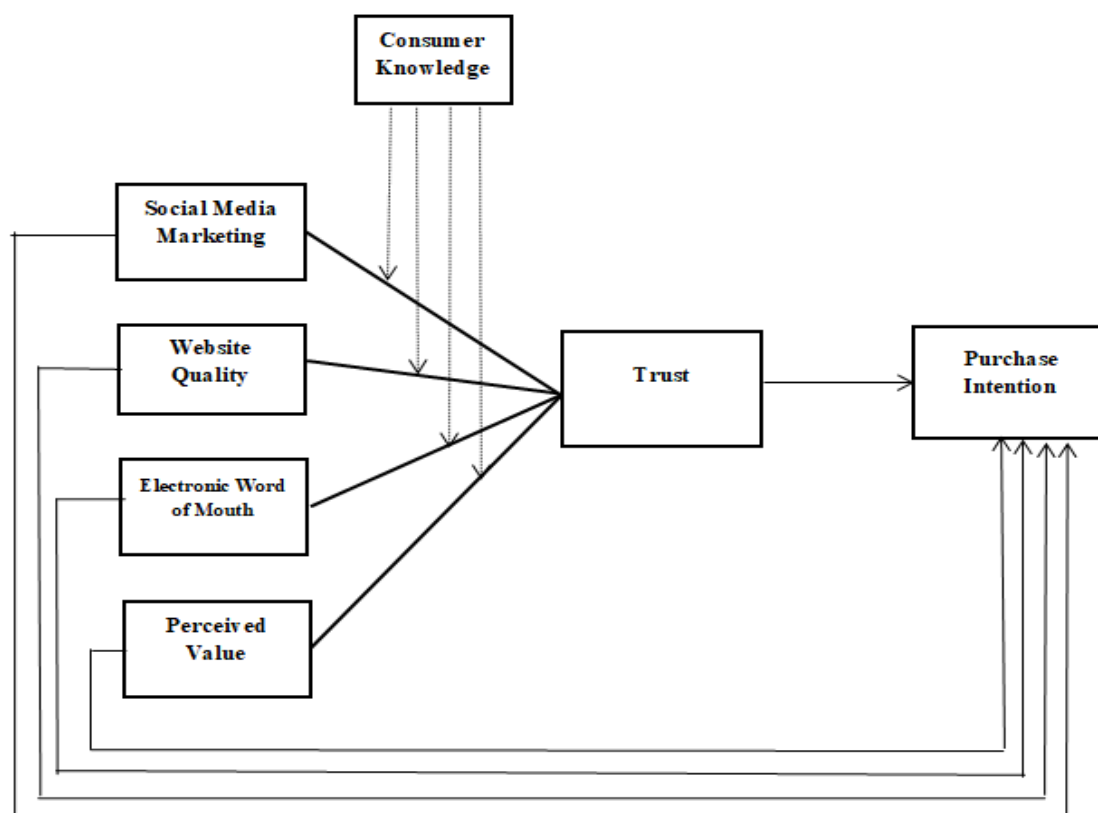


Figure 1 Research framework

Results

The findings of the study are presented in this section, with emphasis on the descriptive statistics, key study variables, and hypothesis outcomes.

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics (mean scores) for the seven study Variables, which were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) are presented in Table 1. The mean scores for all seven Variables are in the 3 to 4 "neutral" to "agree" range of the five-point scale, with the neutral rating located at the bottom of the scale and the "agree" rating at the top. PV had the highest mean (3.71), followed by Trust and SMM with the mean of 3.67 each respectively, while Consumer Knowledge had the lowest mean (3.49). The narrow range within Variables (lowest and highest mean 0.22 points) indicates that the Pakistani online organic-food consumers have moderately positive and fairly homogeneous perceptions regarding online dynamics, their own product knowledge, their trust in online sellers, and their intention to buy online. The results show that digital dynamics were generally regarded positively in this sample, which gives a reasonable empirical support to test the hypothesized relationships in the structural model.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Mean Score	Scale Range	Highlights
Purchase Intention	3.59	1-5	Neutral to Agree
Trust	3.67	1-5	Neutral to Agree
Consumer Knowledge	3.49	1-5	Neutral to Agree
Social Media Marketing	3.67	1-5	Neutral to Agree
WQ	3.62	1-5	Neutral to Agree
Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)	3.56	1-5	Neutral to Agree
Perceived Value	3.71	1-5	Neutral to Agree

Measurement Model

The outer loadings, reliability and validity statistics of the retained measurement items is summarized in Table 2. The Measurement model results showed the developed instrument to be reliable and valid in measuring the intended Variables. Of the six items, one (PI3) had an outer loading less than 0.40, which is recommended by (Hair et al., 2014); the other five items loaded between 0.68 and 0.87, which is considered to be strong loading. Items loaded more strongly (0.86-0.89) indicate a clear and consistent Variable.

Table 2: Outer Loadings of Retained Measurement Items

Variable	Items Retained	Outer Loading Range	Items Removed
Purchase Intention	PI1, PI2, PI4, PI5, PI6, PI7 (6 items)	0.68 - 0.87	PI3 (low loading)
Trust	TRU1-TRU5 (5 items)	0.86 - 0.89	None

Table 3 shows all retained Variables of Reliability and Validity; Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability exceeded 0.70, confirming internal consistency reliability, while AVE values exceeded

0.50, confirming convergent validity (i.e., each Variable's items share sufficient common variance with their underlying latent variable). Discriminant validity the extent to which each Variable is empirically distinct from the others was supported by both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratios remaining within acceptable limits. Finally, VIF values below 5 indicate that multicollinearity among the inner-model predictors (SMM, WQ, e-WOM, and PV) is not a concern, meaning the structural path estimates in Section 4.3 can be interpreted with confidence.

Table 3: Reliability and Validity Summary

Reliability / Validity Criterion		Threshold	Result Across Variables
Cronbach's Alpha		> 0.70	All Variables above threshold
Composite Reliability (CR)		> 0.70	All Variables above threshold
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)		> 0.50	All Variables above threshold
Fornell-Larcker Criterion		Square root of AVE > inter-Variable correlations	Discriminant validity supported
Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT)	Ratio	< 0.85 / 0.90	Within acceptable limits
Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)		< 5	No problematic multicollinearity

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Table 4 shows the results of the analyses in the structural model, including the correlation coefficients, standardized path coefficients, significance levels and hypothesis decisions for all seventeen hypotheses.

Direct effects on Purchase Intention (H1-H4)

SMM ($\beta = 0.216, p < 0.007$), WQ ($\beta = 0.333, p < 0.001$), and e-WOM ($\beta = 0.137, p < 0.026$) all showed statistically significant, positive structural paths to PI, supporting H1, H2, and H3. Relative to the three direct predictors, WQ was found to be the strongest, meaning that a well designed and easy to navigate, secure website is the single most important digital touch-point that influences online buying in this sample. PV had a high simple correlation with PI ($r = 0.703, p < 0.005$), but it was not significant when the full structure with the mediation of Digital Dynamics and Trust was estimated, so that H4 was not supported in the mediated model, suggesting that the effect of PV on PI was not strong when other digital dynamics and Trust were included.

Digital dynamics and Trust (H5-H8)

All three variables (SMM, WQ, and e-WOM) significantly and positively influenced Trust, thus supporting the H5, H6, and H7, with e-WOM having the highest beta value of all the predictors in the model, which suggests that peer reviews and recommendations play the dominant role in creating trust among Pakistani consumers when buying organic food products online. PV did not significantly predict Trust, so H8 was not supported meaning that, unlike the other three digital dynamics, favorable value perceptions alone do not translate into greater trust in this market.

Trust to Purchase Intention (H9)

Trust was significantly and positively related to PI, supporting H9 and confirming Trust’s role as a key direct driver of online purchase decisions, independent of the digital dynamics that build it.

Moderation by Consumer Knowledge (H10-H13)

Consumer Knowledge significantly strengthened the effects of SMM, WQ, and e-WOM on Trust (H10, H11, H12 supported), indicating that more knowledgeable consumers extract greater trust benefit from the same digital marketing exposure. However, Consumer Knowledge did not significantly moderate the PV-to-Trust relationship (H13 not supported), reinforcing that PV operates differently from the other three Variables in this model.

Mediation by Trust (H14-H17)

Trust significantly mediated the relationships between SMM, WQ, and e-WOM and PI (H14, H15, H16 supported), confirming that these three digital dynamics influence PI both directly and indirectly through building Trust. Trust did not significantly mediate the PV-to-PI relationship (H17 not supported), consistent with the earlier finding that PV does not operate through the Trust pathway.

Overall Pattern of Hypotheses Tested

Out of the seventeen hypotheses tested, twelve were supported and five were not (H4, H8, H13, H17, and the trust-mediated portion of H4). All five unsupported hypotheses involve PV, indicating a consistent pattern: PV did not exhibit a significant direct path to PI in the full model, did not significantly predict Trust, was not moderated by Consumer Knowledge, and was not mediated by Trust. In contrast, SMM, WQ, and e-WOM were consistently significant across all direct, moderated, and mediated pathways, underscoring that these three digital dynamics and not PV are the primary drivers of both Trust and PI among Pakistani online organic-food consumers.

Table 4: Summary of Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

Hyp.	Path	R	B	p-value	Decision
H1	Social Media Marketing → Purchase Intention	0.756	0.216	< 0.007	Supported
H2	Website Quality → Purchase Intention	0.766	0.333	< 0.001	Supported
H3	e-WOM → Purchase Intention	0.796	0.137	< 0.026	Supported
H4	PV → Purchase Intention	0.703	n.s.	< 0.005 (corr. only)	Not Supported
H5	Social Media Marketing → Trust	0.745	0.280	< 0.001	Supported
H6	Website Quality → Trust	0.768	0.367	< 0.001	Supported
H7	e-WOM → Trust	0.851	0.591	< 0.001	Supported
H8	Perceived Value → Trust	0.703	0.345	0.310	Not Supported

H9	Trust → Purchase Intention	0.716	0.182	< 0.004	Supported
H10	Consumer Knowledge moderates Social Media Marketing → Trust	~	0.375	< 0.001	Supported
H11	Consumer Knowledge moderates Website Quality → Trust	~	0.234	< 0.005	Supported
H12	Consumer Knowledge moderates e-WOM → Trust	~	0.269	< 0.001	Supported
H13	Consumer Knowledge moderates Perceived Value → Trust	~	0.054	0.212	Not Supported
H14	Trust mediates Social Media Marketing → Purchase Intention	~	0.051	0.009	Supported
H15	Trust mediates Website Quality → Purchase Intention	~	0.067	0.013	Supported
H16	Trust mediates e-WOM → Purchase Intention		0.108	0.003	Supported
H17	Trust mediates PV → Purchase Intention		0.002	0.691	Not Supported

Discussion

This section discusses the findings derived from the structural model and study's seventeen hypotheses to interpret each result.

Descriptive Statistics of the Study Variables

The means scores of the seven study variables, ranging from PI (3.59) to PV (3.71), all fell in a narrow band of 0.22 points on five-point scale from neutral to agree (Table 1). This trend is reflective of the fact that even the consumers of Pakistan are still traversing the developing world of the internet and there is a need for continuous efforts to develop the digital skills of the users as the digital transformation expands (Saleem et al., 2022). Remarkably, the mean for PV (3.71) is higher than all other variables in the model, although the positive perception of the value of the product does not result in a statistically significant structural path to Trust and PI in the full model described in the structural results portion. Similarly, the relatively high means for SMM and WQ echo the literature emphasis on social media and digital platforms as key touchpoints to engage consumers directly and stimulate their PIs (Aji et al., 2020) and thus, their high and consistent performance throughout the structural model.

Measurement Model: Reliability and Validity, and Item Retention

Tables 2 and 3 provide a psychometric basis for the tests of the hypotheses. Based on the loadings of the items in this study, the dependent variable and the mediating variable were measured with high level of item-to-construct correspondence: the six items of PI loaded between 0.68 and 0.87 and the five items of Trust loaded between 0.86 and 0.89; removal of the latter (PI3) below the recommended outer-loading threshold reflects the standard measurement-model purification

practice. This is a key issue with the hypothesis tests discussed below, since the results of these tests could not be relied upon if the Trust/purpose Intention measure is weak or unreliable.

The Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were above 0.70 for each construct, and the average variance extracted (AVE) was above 0.50 for all constructs, thus satisfying internal consistency reliability and convergent validity requirements. The validity of the discriminant was confirmed as the variables SMM, WQ, e-WOM, PV, Trust and Consumer Knowledge were empirical separate constructs and not overlapping measures of the same underlying attitude, which was supported by the joint support of the Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios within acceptable limits. This is important to consider when interpreting the structural results as this prevents any construct overlap between the divergent pattern later observed for PV (non-significant paths to Trust) and the convergent patterns for SMM, WQ, and e-WOM (significant paths to Trust). The variance inflation factor (VIF) values less than 5 are also used to indicate that multicollinearity is not likely to be an alternative explanation for the poor structural performance of PV, and hence the hypothesis-testing results presented in the subsequent section are more likely to be valid.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

As shown in Table 4, the correlation and standardized path coefficients provide a clearer understanding of how the study variables are related to one another. The results also help explain the strength and direction of these relationships and provide a basis for assessing the proposed hypotheses.

Social Media Marketing and Purchase Intention (H1)

Social networks have become extremely important marketing tools that offer brands special possibilities to connect with their target audience, and the data confirm the hypothesis that SMM positively impacts buyers' intention to purchase. The correlation coefficient is $r = 0.756$ with a p -value of 0.007 which shows that both variables are positively related and the correlation coefficient is high, while the standardized regression weight ($\beta = 0.216$, $p < 0.007$) shows that both variables are correlated and statistically significant, which supports H1. In Pakistan, consumers seem to respond to content that is interactive and engaging on social networks, and targeted social media ads have been proven to greatly increase consumers' willingness to purchase ([Mandagi et al., 2021](#)). This result corroborates the previous study, which emphasized the central role of social media in influencing consumers' decision to buy online ([Bilgin, 2018](#); [Mandagi et al., 2021](#); [Siddik et al., 2022](#)), which is also consistent with a previous study that found that the social media is now becoming an integral part of Pakistani consumers' daily routine ([Babatunde et al., 2021](#)).

Website quality and desire to buy from it (H2)

Often, a brand's first touch point with potential customers is a website, and, as noted above, the data corroborates the hypothesis that quality websites positively affect PI. This relationship is statistically significant as shown by the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.766$, $p < 0.001$) and standardized regression weight ($\beta = 0.333$, $p < 0.001$), and supported completely by the result. The

result is consistent with the previous studies that have shown that having usable and easy-to-use websites and making them entertaining increases customers' satisfaction and PI ([Hossain et al., 2021](#)), which shows the positive effects of responsive and secure websites on customer trust and willingness to buy.

Electronic Word of Mouth and Purchase Intention (H3)

Online reviews, social media comments and peers' recommendations have also been found to have a significant impact on customer behaviour which corroborates the hypothesis that e-WOM has a positive effect on PI among Pakistanis. This relationship is statistically significant, as evidenced by the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.796, p < 0.026$) and standardized regression weight ($\beta = 0.137, p < 0.026$), which back up H3. The results are in line with the literature related to e-WOM in general indicating that engaging and credible e-WOM content has a significant impact on consumer confidence and purchase likelihood ([Shukla et al., 2023](#)).

Perceived Value and Purchase Intention (H4)

PV, which refers to the overall judgement of benefits and costs of a product, is a significant factor in consumers' decision-making process and the simple association with PI is positive and strong ($r = 0.703, p < 0.005$), similar to previous research that showed that PV (such as quality, price, and emotional benefits) has a significant relationship with the PI of consumers ([Chae et al., 2020](#); [Curvelo et al., 2019](#); [Sharma et al., 2020](#)). Once the complete structural model was estimated, however, this path was not statistically significant and thus was not supported, suggesting that the influence of PV may be mediated by other paths than direct.

Trust and Social Media Marketing (H5)

SMM isn't just about selling products but also increasing trust between customers and brands and these results confirm the hypothesis that SMM can be used to positively influence consumer trust. This relationship is statistically significant with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.745$, which is less than 0.001 and a standardized regression weight of $\beta = 0.280$, with a p value of less than 0.001, thus supporting H5. This is consistent with previous studies on the positive impact of SMM on trust ([Prahasta et al., 2025](#)), interactive and authentic content in social media builds trust relationships ([Islam et al., 2024](#); [Ünalımsı et al., 2026](#)) and regular, honest communication builds consumers' trust and loyalty ([Sunnyoto et al., 2025](#)).

The overall quality and trustworthiness of websites (H6)

A good functioning website is a fundamental element in building trust and there was strong evidence to support the hypothesis that websites can have a positive impact on consumer trust. H6 is supported as the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.768, p < 0.001$) and standardized regression weight ($\beta = 0.367, p < 0.001$) are statistically significant. This finding corroborates the findings of earlier studies by ([Chae et al., 2020](#); [Qalati et al., 2021](#)), on the positive effect of WQ on trust, and also supports the findings of ([AlAwadhi et al., 2024](#)), who found that ease of use of a website leads to consumer confidence and trust in the website.

eWOM and eTrust in building relationships, trust and credibility (H7)

Online reviews and recommendations from peers are important factors in influencing the perceptions and trust of consumers, and the data confirm the hypothesis that positive e-WOM increases consumer trust. This relationship is statistically significant as suggested by the coefficient of the correlation ($r = 0.851, p < 0.001$) and standardized regression weight ($\beta = 0.591, p < 0.001$) and therefore, H7 is supported. The results are consistent with a previous study that found credible and positive customer reviews improve customers' trust in the brand and its credibility ([Chetioui et al., 2021](#)).

Perceived Value and Trust (H8)

PV has been identified as one of the factors influencing customer behaviour in terms of commitment to a relationship, purchasing intention and trust ([Chae et al., 2020](#)) and previous studies have shown that decreased value is associated with decreased customer trust ([Sharma et al., 2020](#)). However, the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.703, p < 0.310$) and the standardized regression weight ($\beta = 0.345, p < 0.310$) suggest that this relationship was not statistically significant; thus, H8 was not supported, which contradicts the general literature that states the more value perceived, the higher the level of trust ([Sharma et al., 2020](#)) and that trust in this market is more associated with relational and social cues than with value calculations alone.

Trust and Purchase Intention (H9)

Trust is one of the most important factors in consumer decision making and is expected to decrease the perceived risk and uncertainties, and the data were observed as strong support of the hypothesis that the increase of the consumers' trust has positive effects on PI. This association is statistically significant as supported by the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.716, p < 0.004$) and standardized regression weight ($\beta = 0.182, p < 0.004$), which is consistent with the previous study finding that there is a positive correlation between trust and PI ([Curvelo et al., 2019](#); [Saleem et al., 2022](#); [Sharma et al., 2020](#)).

Consumers' knowledge of the market (H10–H13)

Consumer knowledge significantly moderated the relationship between SMM and trust ($\beta = 0.375, t = 4.61, p < 0.000$), between WQ and trust ($\beta = 0.234, t = 2.780, p < 0.005$) and between e-WOM and trust ($\beta = 0.269, t = 4.491, p < 0.000$), supporting H10, H11 and H12, respectively. However, the association between PV and the trust was not significantly mediated by the consumers' knowledge ($\beta = 0.054, t = 1.249, p < 0.212$), so that H13 hypothesis was not supported, meaning that the relationship of perception of the exposure through social media/website with the perception of trust was not significantly mediated by knowledge.

Mediating Role of Trust (H14–H17)

Mediation analysis calculated the direct beta with mediation for each hypothesized indirect path: H14 ($\beta = 0.051, p = 0.009$), H15 ($\beta = 0.067, p = 0.013$), H16 ($\beta = 0.108, p = 0.003$), and H17 ($\beta = 0.002$,

$p = 0.691$). Finally, it was found that the relationship between SMM and e-WOM is mediated by trust, which is consistent with the research that has revealed that trust plays a significant role in improving the PI in a digital environment (Munaier et al., 2022; Qadri et al., 2023). However, the mediation effect of PV was not significant (H17 was not supported), which was consistent with previous studies that showed that PV is not always a factor that increases consumer trust, but decreases consumer trust if consumers perceive the value of the products were low (Chae et al., 2020).

Overall Pattern of Findings

The hypotheses were partially supported together by 12 (H1, H2, H3, H5, H6, H7, H9, H10, H11, H12, H14, H15 and H16), and were not supported by five (H4, H8, H13, H17 and non-significant trust-mediated part of H4). In addition to the favorable attitude towards PV reported by the Pakistani consumers (Table 1) and adequate reliability and discriminant validity of the construct (Tables 2–3), the pattern indicated that the hypothesized relationships of PV with Trust, the moderation by Consumer Knowledge and the mediation by the Trust were not supported consistently. SMM, WQ, and e-WOM, in contrast, were remained significant across all direct, moderated, and mediated pathways, supporting the notion that these three factors, not PV, are the key factors driving Trust and PI of Pakistani online organic-food consumers.

Conclusion

The findings of this research indicate that SMM, WQ and e-WOM have significant direct and indirect impacts on the intention of Pakistani consumers towards buying organic food. From these criteria, e-WOM proved to be the most significant predictor of trust, and WQ's direct impact on PI is the most significant, highlighting the significance of credible reviews, secure websites, transparent information and user-friendly websites. Another significant finding was that consumers' knowledge further confirmed the link between SMM, WQ, and trust, which shows that trust increases when consumers have knowledge of how digital marketing information impacts their level of trust.

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