

Social Sciences Spectrum

A Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, HEC recognized [Y-category](#) Research Journal

E-ISSN: [3006-0427](#) P-ISSN: [3006-0419](#)

Volume 04, Issue 02, 2025

Web link: <https://sss.org.pk/index.php/sss>



Check for updates

Digital Marketing Strategies and Consumer Purchase Intention: Mediating Role of Trust and Moderating Effects of Unethical Practices

Waqas Iqbal

Research Scholar, College of Management Sciences,
Karachi Institute of Economics and Technology,
Karachi, Pakistan

Correspondence: waqas19081997@gmail.com

Syed Sharique Ansar

Research Scholar, College of Management Sciences,
Karachi Institute of Economics and Technology, Karachi,
Pakistan

Email: sharique77866@gmail.com

Article Information [YY-MM-DD]

Received 2025-03-21

Accepted 2025-05-25

Citation (APA):

Iqbal, W., Ansar, S, S & Zaidi, S, N, H. (2025). Digital marketing strategies and consumer purchase intention: Mediating role of trust and moderating effects of unethical practices. *Social Sciences Spectrum*, 4(2), 457-477. <https://doi.org/10.71085/sss.04.02.284>

Abstract

In today's world of advancements organizations influence consumer behavior by using different digital marketing strategies. Consumer purchase intention crafted by trust and build through using different tools of marketing. In this study the impact of Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) on Consumer Purchase Intention followed by the mediating effect of Consumer Trust and moderating effect of unethical practices, has been studied. Data has been collected from 385 respondents using quantitative approach with the help google forms, analysis was conducted on Smart PLS 4.0 to validate the relationships between the constructs using PLS-SEM and Bootstrapping method. Results indicates that purchase intention is significantly influenced by Consumer Trust. Furthermore, Influencer Marketing and Search Engine Optimization has a positive impact on trust. However, Social Media Marketing does not affect consumer trust. Additionally, there is no significant moderation observed of unethical practices between consumer trust and purchase intention. The importance of trust has been highlighted by this study, providing insights to design such marketing strategies which fosters consumer trust ultimately leading towards consumer purchase intention.

Keywords: Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Consumer Trust, Unethical Practices, Consumer Purchase Intention.



Content from this work may be used under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share-Alike 4.0 International License](#) that allows others to share the work with an acknowledgment of the work's authorship and initial publication in this journal.

1. Introduction

In this digitalized world where an average user spends approximately 2 hours and 21 minutes on social media if calculated in terms of percentage than almost 14% of their waking hours (Datareportal, 2025). Traditional marketing has been revolutionized by digital marketing and its strategies which almost every brand is using nowadays to market their product and services on different social media platforms for enhanced customer engagement and in order to foster trust among the consumers, resulting in high profits and loyal customer-base (Desembrianita et al., 2024; Bruce et al., 2023). Internet serves as a media of marketing for digital marketing, used for the promotion of goods and services using digital platforms to reach the consumers. Consumers are now habitual of online shopping resulting in the global population of E-commerce users over 33%, having 28 million E-commerce stores (Commerce, 2025). Statistics also suggest that E-commerce consumers will increase up to approximately 3.9 billion by 2029 (Statista, 2024). E-commerce has become a necessity for consumers as it provides convenience rather than physically visiting markets for purchasing and in this situation digital marketing plays a crucial role in persuading consumers to purchase their products or services (Yunus et al., 2022).

Digital marketing has revolutionized business interactions completely. Organizations are now equipped with advanced technology to track consumer behavior, consumer engagement and personalizing marketing efforts (Desembrianita et al., 2024; Yunus et al., 2022). Furthermore, digital marketing strengthens consumer trust, positively affecting their purchase intention. Digital marketing if used efficiently will result in higher sales and builds a long-term relationship with consumers. Statistics shows the importance of digital marketing, globally valued at 667 billion dollars, forecasted to reach 786.2 billion dollars by 2026 and a growth of 9% has been projected from 2020 till 2026, almost 10% growth rate in the budget of digital marketing has been observed between 2023 and 2024 (Marino & Marino, 2025). Business operating domestically puts around 5%-10% budget from its revenue in digital marketing, for megacorporation it can go up to 14% (Digitalsolved, 2023).

This research follows a holistic approach by integrating Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing and Search Engine Optimization under one framework and investigates their impact on purchase intention of consumers as all these strategies shown a positive impact on consumer purchase intention as per past literatures (Qalati et al., 2020; Thamrin & Utami, 2023; Caro et al., 2024). Consumer Trust has been used as a mediator to explain how these strategies affects consumer purchase intentions. Additionally, unethical practices have been proposed as moderator which might negatively impacts the relationship between consumer trust and purchase intention on consumers.

Consumer behaviors might be predicted by studying the purchase intention of consumers (Manzoor et al., 2020). Furthermore, purchase effectiveness can be evaluated by purchase intention of consumers (Subasinghe & Weerasisri, 2019).

Different strategies of digital marketing are used by organizations including Social Media Marketing (SMM), Influencer Marketing and Search Engine Optimization, most commonly used strategies by organizations.

Social Media Marketing (SMM) is the marketing of products by organizations using social media platforms, serves as a crucial source for brands to create awareness among consumers especially in age group of 16-34 (Sheikh & Sheikh, 2025). Furthermore, as per the statistics average cost spend on social media ads has been forecasted to reach around 276.7 billion dollars in 2025, having an expected growth of approximately 9.37% in contrast to previous year (Sheikh & Sheikh, 2025).

Additionally, organizations can achieve a competitive edge by using Social Media Marketing (SMM) (Alkharabsheh & Zhen, 2021).

Influencer marketing has a significant importance as well in this era where social media usage is increasing rapidly. In 2025, 32.55 billion dollars forecasted to be spend on it (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2025). Moreover, approximately 24 billion dollars was spent on this marketing tactic (Statista, 2025). In this marketing tactic brands aggressively market their products and services by collaborating with influencers who promote their product and services on various social media platforms (Tanvar et al., 2022; Thamrin & Utami, 2023; Chopra et al., 2020).

Firms also rely on Search Engine Optimization (SEO), which is the strategy to enhance the visibility and ranking of the website by using certain and most commonly used keywords searched by consumers on search engines Google, Yahoo etc. Its importance can be identified based on the statistics, almost 82.3 billion dollars was spent on it in 2023 and the expected growth rate for next 7 years till 2030 has been forecasted as 8.3% (Gossett, 2025).

In this advanced world where social media is being used by 63.9% of global population, having 5.24 billion users as of January 2025, having an annual growth rate of 4.1% (Datareportal, 2025). Digital marketing and its strategies plays a crucial role, organizations heavily depend on it to build consumer trust in order to maximize their profits (Nkpurukwe, et al., 2025).

A very crucial aspect to understand is consumer purchase intention by which business can maximize their profits, businesses focus on this important aspect in order to persuade consumers and positively influence their purchase intention. Purchase intention is the process of making decisions by consumers in order to purchase a good or service in an exchange of money, which is important to understand due to the advancements over the past decades (Ziko & Asfour). Numerous studies in past have explored the impact of digital marketing strategies on consumer purchase intention conducted in Asia (Subedi & Bhandari, 2024; Manzoor et al., 2020; Ansari et al., 2019). Furthermore, studies conducted in different countries also explored consumer purchase intention influenced by strategies of digital marketing (Caro et al., 2024; Ziko & Asfour, 2023; Alkharabsheh & Zhen, 2021; Boonmalert et al., 2021; Subasinghe & Weerasisri, 2019).

E-commerce industry is still facing this challenge to covert the engagement of consumers into actual purchase. On top of it this challenge become more complex with the role of unethical practices including deceptive advertisements, fake reviews and influencer endorsements, damaging consumer trust (Leonidou et al., 2012). Due to this, it is important to explore the impact of unethical practices on relationship between consumer trust and purchase intention. Furthermore, rising unethical practices of business in digital marketing raises questions that are crucial to explore: does organizations using unethical practices effects or dilute the relationship between trust and purchase decision? On the other hand, business following ethical practices achieve positive word of mouth, ultimately shaping consumer intention towards purchase (To & Cheung, 2020; Creyer, 1997).

Although numerous researches done on studying the digital marketing strategies impact on consumer purchase intention. Some of them explored the social media marketing, influencer marketing, and SEO with consumer trust and purchase intention in an integrated framework (Reyhanrafif et al., 2024; Desembrianita et al., 2024; Ziko & Asfour, 2023; Habib et al., 2022; Alkharabsheh & Zhen, 2021). Additionally, some of them have explored digital marketing tactics individually and studied their influence of purchase intention of consumers.

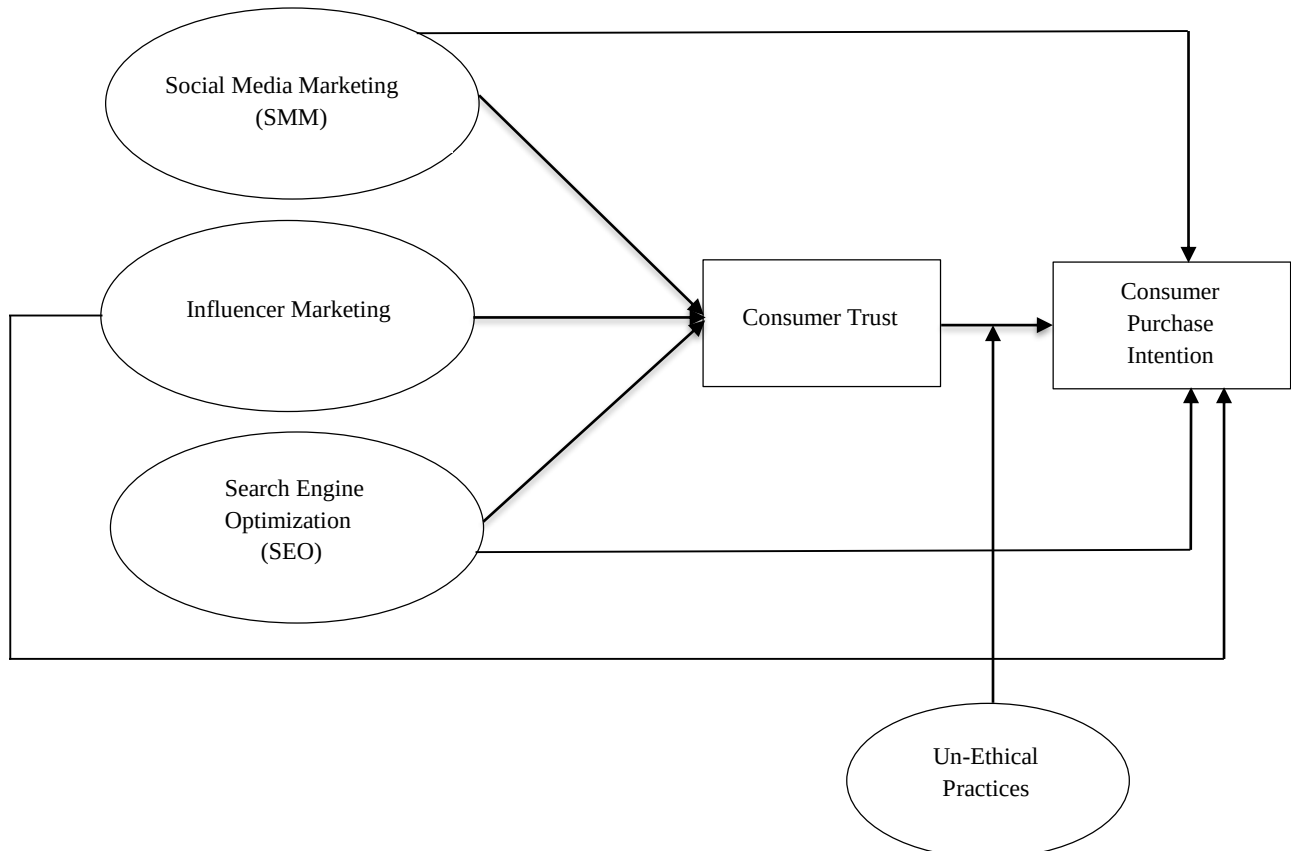
However, research on Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) effecting consumer trust influencing purchase intentions is limited. Moreover, this research does not end on it, explore moderating relationship of unethical practices on relationship between consumer trust, and purchase intention. Past literatures have investigated but not in the domain of digital marketing, the unethical practices affect purchase intention of consumers (Cheung & To, 2020; Abdulnasir, 2015; Creyer, 1997).

This research is new in context of digital marketing on e-commerce industry in Pakistan. Furthermore, moderating relationship between unethical practices on consumer trust and purchase intention is still underexplored. Previous studies are limited on the impact of Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing and Search Engine Optimization on consumer trust and consumer purchase intention under one framework thus leaving a gap. This research fills the gap by using these three independent variables under one framework, with moderating role of unethical practices of organization using ecommerce, having limited studies.

This research provides theoretical and practical offering to digital marketing by exploring the impact of three crucial strategies of digital marketing including Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) on consumer purchase intention under one integrated framework, providing a theoretical understanding. Furthermore, exploring consumer trust as a mediator and unethical practices as a moderator.

However, the research question to be addressed are (1) How consumer trust and purchase intention are impacted by digital marketing strategies? (2) Does consumer trust has a mediating impact? (3) Do unethical practices weakens the relationship between trust and purchase intention?

Conceptual Framework



2. Literature Review

2.1. Underpinning Theory:

Theory of Reason Action (TRA) serves as a ground for this research proposing that behavioral intention is primarily affected by a person's behavior, that is judged by their attitude regarding the behavior and surrounded subjective norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980). To summarize this in simpler manner, if consumer has a positive attitude about purchasing a specific product, followed by the endorsement of important people to him, likeliness for purchasing a product by a consumer will increase.

In the environment of this study, consumer attitudes are shaped by the influence of digital marketing strategies including Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing and Search Engine Optimization, fostering consumer trust. While trust acting as a mediating factor strengthening purchase intention of consumer. Therefore, TRA is an ideal choice providing a strong theoretical foundation, explaining the effect of digital marketing strategies on consumer trust, leading towards purchase intention of consumers in e-commerce context.

2.2. Definition Construct:

7.2.1. Social Media Marketing:

A marketing strategy known as “Social Media Marketing” is defined as to promote the product and services of an organization by using social media channels or building awareness in order to increase website visibility, using platforms of social media and engaging digitally with online communities impacting consumer trust and purchase intention positively (Zhen et al., 2021; Gammoh & Pam, 2015).

7.2.2. Influencer Marketing:

It is a strategic approach; individuals called influencer having active following use social media platforms and collaborate with different brands to promote their product or services. These individuals influence consumer purchase decisions as they share their personal experience regarding that specific product or service fostering trust in comparison with traditional marketing resulting in enhanced brand image (Thamrin & Utami, 2023; Agustian et al., 2023; Chopra et al., 2020).

7.2.3. Search Engine Optimization (SEO):

A digital marketing strategy called “Search Engine Optimization (SEO)” defined as a technique use to improve the visibility of the website and customer browsing experience fostering consumer trust having a significant impact on consumer purchase intention (Caro et al., 2024). In simpler terms, using certain keywords and website design to make the website appear in the top result of search engines (Yalcin & Kose, 2010).

7.2.4. Consumer Trust:

It is defined as the consumer faith on a specific brand (Bishop, 2024). Trust is an important relationship among consumer and brands, developing loyalty also playing an important role in enhancing consumer decision process (Desembrianita et al., 2024; Reyhanrafif et al., 2024).

7.2.5. Consumer Purchase Intention:

It is defined as the decision made by a consumer to purchase a specific product or service of a brand in an exchange of money molded by several factors including perception, attitude, brand

image and customer feedback. Purchase intention is influenced by trust generated through social media platforms (Ziko & Asfour, 2023; Manzoor et al., 2020; Ansari et al., 2019).

7.2.6. Unethical Practice:

Firms following practices that are violating moral principles or standards of the industries in order to maximize profits and to attain competitive edge over other competitors is called “Unethical Practice”. There are many unethical practices including violation of data, false and deceptive advertisement, click-baits and unfair-pricing (Digital, 2023). In simpler terms organization using unlawful practices to gain monetary benefit (Cheung & To, 2020).

8.3.1. Consumer Purchase Intention:

In the era of digitalization where organization are focused on maximizing profits, as maximized profits depends on consumer purchase making it an important aspect to study. Hence, forecasting the purchase behavior of consumers is a necessity for organizations, leading towards profit maximization (Alkharabsheh & Zhen, 2021; Manzoor et al., 2020). Another reason that makes it a crucial factor in the context of digital marketing is lack of physical interactions of consumers with brands leaving a space of dissatisfaction, negatively affecting the purchase decisions. Numerous studies conducted in past explored consumer purchase intention as a dependent variable in context of digital marketing (Subasinghe & Weerasisri, 2019; Nizar & Janathanan, 2018). Furthermore, past literature also explored the impact of unethical marketing practices on purchase decision of consumers (Saraih et al., 2021). However, leaving a room to study consumer purchase intentions in depth and in relationship with other digital marketing strategies, current research studies purchase intentions of consumers by exploring the impact of “Social Media Marketing”, “Influencer Marketing” and “Search Engine Optimization” followed by the mediating role of trust and moderating impact of unethical practices.

8.3.2. Social Media Marketing:

In this modern world where people mostly rely on social media platforms for purchasing, Social Media Marketing (SMM) plays an important role in influencing purchase decisions of the consumer, supported by a study done in 2019 at Pakistan. The research was based on surveys collected from 150 respondents, after analyzing the data it was evident that Social Media Marketing (SMM) has a major impact in influencing consumer purchase decisions positively (Ansari, 2019), supporting our hypothesis. This study, complimented by previous research explaining that digital marketing has a significant positive impact on purchase intention (Qalati et al., 2020). However, brand awareness has a weak but positive impact on consumer purchase intention (Ansari, 2019). Apart from where previous studies focused on website quality (Qalati et al., 2020) or on trust (Yunus et al., 2022) this study has highlighted the importance of Social Media Marketing (SMM) in influencing purchase decisions of consumers. This implies that if customer is aware about the brand, customer might still choose other competitor brand based on various factors not limited to quality and price etc. but likelihood of consumer purchase increases when complimented by effective Social Media Marketing (Manzoor et al., 2020; Ansari et al., 2019).

H1: Social Media Marketing (SMM) has a positive impact on Consumer Purchase Intention.

8.3.3. Influencer Marketing:

In past years, influencer marketing has been emerged as an important strategy of digital marketing. It fills the gap present between brands and consumers by building brand awareness resulting in enhanced trust of consumers (Chopra et al., 2020). Previous study shows that influencer marketing positively impacts consumer purchase intention (Thamrin & Utami, 2023). This is supporting our

framework in which consumer trust acts as a mediator between influencer marketing. However, impacts of unethical practices on purchase decision of consumers remains underexplored.

H2: Influencer Marketing has a positive impact on Consumer Purchase Intention.

8.3.4. Search Engine Optimization (SEO):

A more technical strategy that has a major impact on purchase intention of consumers is Search Engine Optimization (SEO). It plays a crucial role in building brand awareness, visibility influencing consumer trust affecting purchase intention of consumers (Caro et al., 2024; Putri, 2021). This aligns with current framework, supporting it as trust is acting a mediator between SEO and purchase intention of consumers. There is still limited research available on SEO effects on purchase intention, using digital marketing strategies with a holistic approach and studying its impact of consumer purchase intention with trust as a mediator and unethical practices as a moderator is remain unexplored.

H3: Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has a positive impact on Consumer Purchase Intention.

8.3.5. Consumer Trust:

In the context of digital marketing, trust is a crucial factor significantly influencing purchase intention of consumers, as there is no direct interaction involved between brand and consumer (Desembrianita et al., 2024). As consumer is interacting with brand digitally so if he is not satisfied with authenticity of the source than it will have an adverse effect on purchase intention of consumers (Nizar & Janathanan, 2018). In order to enhance consumer trust e-commerce platforms should pay close attention to the security and details in their working including accurate and precise descriptions of the product and secure transactions, providing them with satisfactory shopping experience resulting in customer loyalty (Kurniadi & Rana, 2023). This supports the choice to use trust as a mediator in this current research because past literature provides strong evidences against consumer trust influencing purchase intention positively.

H4: Consumer Trust mediates the relationship between Social Media Marketing and Consumer Purchase Intention.

H5: Consumer Trust mediates the relationship between Influencer Marketing and Consumer Purchase Intention.

H6: Consumer Trust mediates the relationship between Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Consumer Purchase Intention.

8.3.6. Unethical Practice:

Currently where digital marketing is a need of every organization but with the rise of digital marketing, unethical practices of organizations are also increasing. Unethical practices reduce the level of trust consumers have on a brand resulting in decreased customer loyalty (Leonidou et al., 2012). Furthermore, unethical practices of organizations influence consumer purchase decisions. Additionally, unethical practice used as an independent variable in previous research thus strengthening the approach of using it as a variable in a conceptual framework and studying its moderating impact on consumer trust and purchase intention (Saraih et al., 2021). Moreover, in past study ethical belief explored as moderator, having an influence on relationship between Consumer perceptions of the ethics of retailers, purchase behavior and word of mouth. It builds a ground, supporting the use of opposite variable, unethical practice as a moderator having an influence on the relationship between digital marketing strategies and consumer trust (Cheung & To, 2020).

H7: Un-Ethical practices moderates the relationship between Consumer Trust and Consumer Purchase Intention.

To summarize, past literatures supports and studied the impact of social media marketing, influencer marketing and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) on purchase decisions of consumers, few have used consumer trust as a mediator and a holistic approach. Furthermore, none of them studied the moderating impact of unethical practices between trust and purchase intention of consumers in context of digital marketing. Current study is filling this gap by presenting a comprehensive framework, combining social media marketing, influencer marketing and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) under one framework and studying its impact on consumer purchase intention mediated by trust and moderated by unethical practices, contributing theoretically and practically to the field of business research.

3. Research Methodology

This research conducted uses a quantitative research method along with a cross-sectional time horizon based on the philosophy of positivism in order to accurately measure the relationship between the variables. Individual who are active on social media platform have been targeted by using convenience-sampling method. Raosoft calculator has been used to determine the sample size. Response were collected from 385 individuals. Demographics of the respondent includes gender, age, city of residence, education, occupation and online engagement frequency.

Furthermore, a structured questionnaire has been developed having 5 point likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Past literatures were used to adapt the manifest variables in order to ensure accuracy, using an adapted approach.

Smart PLS 4.0 has been used to analyze the data by applying Partial Least Squares Structure Equational Modeling (PLS-SEM), conducting the analysis in two steps. First step includes the assessment of outer model in order to validate outer loading, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Fornell-Larcker criterion and Hetrotrait-monotrait (HTMT) criterion. Second step includes the assessment of inner model to validate the path coefficients, f^2 and signifance level for hypothesis testing.

Table 1: *Measurements Items Adapted*

Constructs	Items	Construct 1 Independent Variable	Citation
Social Media Marketing	SMM 1	Social media advertising is relevant to me.	(Zeng et al., 2009; Alalwan, 2018)
	SMM 2	I think social media advertising fits with my interests.	(Zhu and Chang, 2016; Alalwan, 2018)
	SMM 3	Social media influences my buying decisions.	(Duffet, 2016)
	SMM 4	I recommend others to purchase products on social media commerce platforms.	(Hamdan et al., 2021)
	SMM 5	Social media advertising is a good source of product information and supplies relevant product information.	(Logan et al., 2012; Alalwan, 2018)

Influencer Marketing	SMM 6	Social media provides accurate and useful knowledge about products and services.	(Logan et al., 2012)
	SMM 7	Social media advertising is a good source of up-to-date product information.	(Logan et al., 2012)
	SMM 8	Social media advertising facilitates two-way communication between the customers and the firms.	(Alalwan, 2018)
	IM1	The influencer appears honest and trustworthy.	(Miller et al., 2018; Sokolova & Kefi, 2019)
	IM2	The influencer has expertise in the promoted products.	(Sokolova & Kefi, 2019)
	IM3	I find the influencer's content informative and useful.	(Koay et al., 2021)
	IM4	The influencer and I share similar values.	(Koay et al., 2021)
	IM5	I enjoy engaging with influencers posts.	(Sokolova & Kefi, 2019)
	IM6	I look forward to watching influencer videos or posts.	(Sokolova & Kefi, 2019)
	IM7	I follow influencer accounts across different platforms.	(Sokolova & Kefi, 2019)
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	IM8	I feel emotionally connected to products promoted by influencers.	
	IM9	I would consider buying products recommended by influencers.	(Sokolova & Kefi, 2019)
	IM10	Influencer posts affect my perception of product quality.	
	SEO1	I trust brands that rank higher on search engine results.	
	SEO2	A top search ranking influences my perception of product quality.	
	SEO3	SEO improves website visibility and user trust.	(Khraim, 2015)
	SEO4	SEO improves my confidence in purchasing from a website.	
	SEO5	SEO helps brands appear more credible.	(Khraim, 2015)
	SEO6	Optimized websites are easier to use.	

Consumer Trust	SEO7	The higher a website ranks, the more likely I am to visit it.	
	SEO8	I trust websites that appear on the first page of Google search results.	
	CT1	I trust brands I interact with online.	
	CT2	I believe online businesses keep their promises.	(Hing & Hoon, 2013)
	CT3	I feel safe sharing personal data with trusted brands.	(Kurniadi & Junaid, 2023)
	CT4	I believe brands care about consumer well-being.	(Leonidou et al., 2012)
	CT5	I am satisfied with online service quality.	
	CT6	I trust product descriptions provided online.	(Hing & Hoon, 2013)
Unethical Practices	CT7	I rely on digital brands to deliver what they advertise.	(Hing & Hoon, 2013)
	CT8	My trust increases if the website design is professional.	
	UEP1	Unethical behavior by a brand reduces my intention to buy.	(Creyer, 2006)
	UEP2	I would avoid a brand that I knew acted unethically.	(Creyer, 2006)
	UEP3	I care if a company I buy from has a history of unethical behavior.	(Creyer, 2006)
	UEP4	Firms that act unethically should not be supported.	(Creyer, 2006)
	UEP5	I would pay less for a product from an unethical company.	(Creyer, 2006)
	UEP6	I prefer brands that show ethical responsibility.	(Creyer, 2006)
Consumer Purchase Intention	UEP7	It bothers me when I find out a firm has acted unethically.	(Creyer, 2006)
	UEP8	I avoid purchasing from brands known for unethical practices.	(Creyer, 2006)
	CPI1	I am considering purchasing the product I saw online.	(Miller et al., 2018)

CPI2	I would seriously contemplate buying a product seen via digital ads.	(Miller et al., 2018)
CPI3	I intend to purchase a product promoted online in the future.	(Duffet, 2016)
CPI4	I would recommend online-purchased products to others.	
CPI5	I prefer purchasing from digital platforms due to convenience.	
CPI6	My likelihood of buying increases after seeing trusted digital content.	(Duffet, 2016)
CPI7	I usually act on digital ads if I trust the source.	
CPI8	I will likely buy a product promoted through social media or search engines.	(Duffet, 2016)

Table 2: Respondents Profile

Demographic characteristic		
Age Group	18-25	
	26-35	44.6
	36-45	4.3
	46+	6.4
Gender	Male	51.1
	Female	48.9
	Prefer not to say	0
City	Karachi	100
Education	Matric (SSC)	27.7
	High School (HSSC)	8.5
	Bachelor's Degree	63.8
	Master's Degree	0
Occupation	Doctorate or Higher	0
	Self Employed	10.6
	Salaried Person	61.7
	Student	27.7
How often do you shop online	Daily	4.3
	Weekly	8.5
	Monthly	31.9
	Occasionally	55.3

Table 3: Validity and Reliability for Constructs

Constructs	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR
Social Media Marketing	SMM1	0.68	0.47	0.87
	SMM2	0.72		
	SMM3	0.68		
	SMM4	0.81		
	SMM5	0.75		
	SMM6			
	SMM7	0.64		
	SMM8	0.52		
Influencer Marketing	IM1	0.80	0.63	0.94
	IM2	0.78		
	IM3	0.77		
	IM4	0.84		
	IM5	0.84		
	IM6	0.82		
	IM7	0.67		
	IM8	0.74		
	IM9	0.80		
	IM10	0.86		
Search Engine Optimization	SEO1	0.75	0.44	0.86
	SEO2	0.75		
	SEO3	0.77		
	SEO4	0.71		
	SEO5	0.61		
	SEO6	0.44		
	SEO7	0.51		
	SEO8	0.68		
Consumer Trust	CT1	0.73	0.51	0.89
	CT2	0.85		
	CT3	0.57		
	CT4	0.67		

	CT5	0.75		
	CT6	0.74		
	CT7	0.74		
	CT8	0.64		
Unethical Practice	UEP1	0.48	0.28	0.73
	UEP2	0.82		
	UEP3	0.53		
	UEP4	0.28		
	UEP5	0.76		
	UEP6	0.40		
	UEP7	0.25		
	UEP8	0.44		
Consumer Purchase Intention	CPI1	0.74	0.47	0.87
	CPI2	0.67		
	CPI3	0.63		
	CPI4	0.72		
	CPI5	0.76		
	CPI6	0.71		
	CPI7	0.55		
	CPI8	0.64		

Table 4: *Discriminant Validity.*
Fornell and Larcker Criterion.

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6
CPI	0.68					
CT	0.77	0.72				
IM	0.69	0.65	0.79			
SEO	0.65	0.57	0.54	0.66		
SMM	0.58	0.49	0.73	0.44	0.68	
UEP	0.25	0.02	0.08	0.34	0.01	0.53

Table 5: Discriminant Validity.
Hetrotrait-monotrait (HTMT).

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6
CPI						
CT	0.86					
IM	0.77	0.70				
SEO	0.75	0.62	0.60			
SMM	0.67	0.58	0.83	0.56		
UEP	0.25	0.26	0.24	0.30	0.26	

Table 6: Structural estimates (hypotheses testing).

Hypothesis	Beta	T Value	P values	f Square
SMM -> CPI	0.13	0.98	0.32	0.03
IM -> CPI	0.18	1.07	0.28	0.04
SEO -> CPI	0.12	1.05	0.29	0.02
SMM -> CT -> CPI	0.00	0.03	0.97	
IM -> CT -> CPI	0.23	1.81	0.07	
SEO -> CT -> CPI	0.15	1.77	0.07	
UEP x CT -> CPI	0.050	0.453	0.651	0.007

4. Findings and Result

4.1. Measurement Model

Convergent validity has been validated first by testing outer model, it was evaluated through factors loadings, Composite Reliability (CR) from which the construct reliability can be evaluated and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) through which the degree of variance for latent variable is explained by the items. Table 2 shows that all loadings of manifest variables are above the recommended value of 0.7 and AVE above 0.5 (Hair et al., 2017).

Cronbachs Alpha has not been reported due to the criticism. Furthermore, Composite Reliability and AVE has been reported in table 3 which is a more reliable substitute in context of structural equation modelling (SEM) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

In the second step, discriminant validity which is the extent to which an item is not related to the other item, has been validated which has been showed in table 4, values of each construct square root of AVE in diagonal should be higher than all other values in rows and columns (Fornell & Larcker 1981). Furthermore, Hetrotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) has also been reported in table 5 which is the most suitable method to validate discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). The reported values of HTMT are less than 0.85 and 0.9, which is acceptable (Kline, 2011; Gold et al., 2001; Henseler et al., 2014).

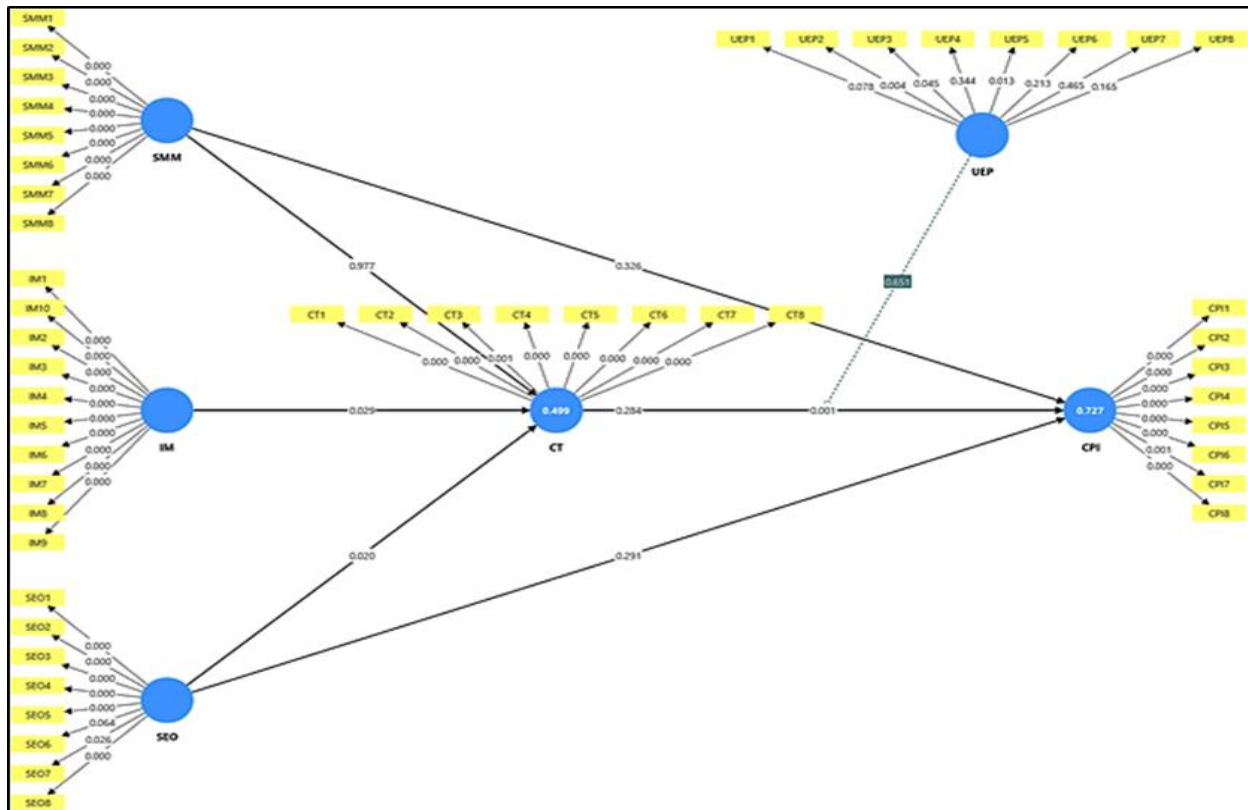


Figure 1: shows the relationship between the construct and latent variables along with the outer loadings.

4.2. Structural Model:

PLS-SEM has been used to validate the hypothesized relationship between the latent variables. It has been observed that consumer purchase intention is not significantly impacted by Social Media Marketing ($\beta = 0.13$, $t = 0.98$, $p = 0.32$, $f^2 = 0.03$), Influencer Marketing ($\beta = 0.18$, $t = 1.07$, $p = 0.28$, $f^2 = 0.04$) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) ($\beta = 0.12$, $t = 1.05$, $p = 0.29$, $f^2 = 0.02$), showing that digital marketing strategies do not affect purchase intention of customers. Similarly, no significant mediation of consumer trust observed between Social Media Marketing ($\beta = 0.00$, $t = 0.03$, $p = 0.97$), Influencer Marketing ($\beta = 0.23$, $t = 1.81$, $p = 0.07$), Search Engine Optimization (SEO) ($\beta = 0.15$, $t = 1.77$, $p = 0.07$) and Consumer Purchase Intention. However, weak mediation was present between Influencer Marketing, Search Engine Optimization and Consumer Purchase Intention. Furthermore, no significant moderating affect present of unethical practices on relationship between trust and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.05$, $t = 0.45$, $p = 0.65$, $f^2 = 0.00$).

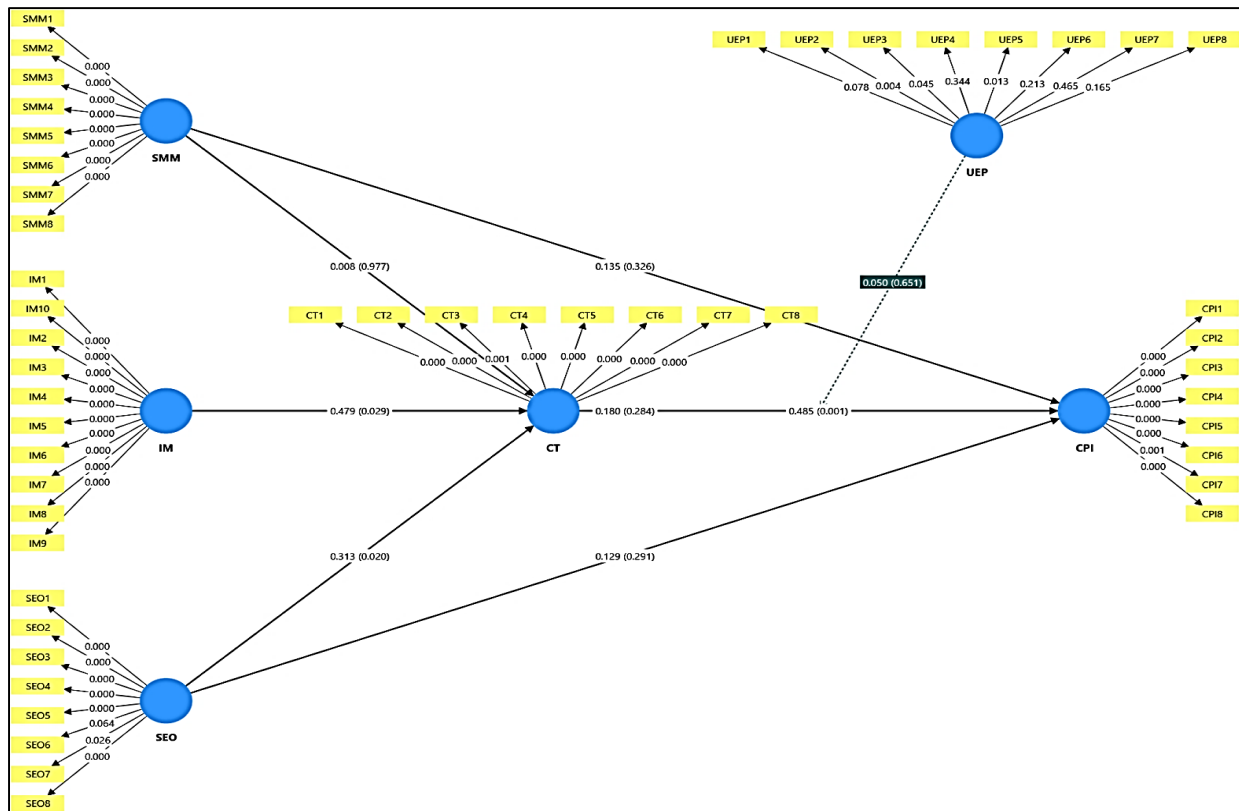


Figure 2: Shows Path Coefficients and P Values.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

After testing the hypothesis, it is evident from the results that there is no significant direct impact of all three digital marketing strategies including Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing and Social Media Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intention, P-values are exceeding the recommended conventional threshold, which is 0.05 along with low beta values suggesting weak direct bonds between the observed variables. Whereas, in past literatures results indicated the positive impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Purchase Intention (Subedi & Bhandari, 2024). Influencer Marketing also showed significant impact on purchase intention as validated in previous study (Caro et al., 2024; Thamrin & Utami, 2023). Search Engine Optimization (SEO) impact was also validated in the past study, which as per result showed significant impact on purchase intention (Erwin et al., 2023). Additionally, no significant mediating impact has been validated by the results of trust between strategies of digital marketing and purchase intention specially in the relationship of Social Media Marketing having an extremely low value of beta ($\beta = 0.00$) along with a very high P-value ($p = 0.97$). Which contradicts with the findings of past study that validated the mediation between them (Manzoor et al., 2020). However, weak mediating impact of consumer trust observed between Influencer Marketing and Purchase Intention. Consumer Trust also showed weak mediating impact in relationship between Search Engine Optimization and purchase intention having p-values slightly greater than the defined threshold (Qalati et al., 2021). Moreover, no significant moderating impact of unethical practices was present on relationship between trust and purchase intention due to high P-value supported by the past

literature in which moderating affect has been observed between Consumer perceptions of the ethics of retailers and purchase behavior (Cheung & To, 2020).

Absence of direct significant effects of Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) might be because of the distrust or doubt of consumer on firms, saturation of the market or because of the possibility that these three discussed strategies of digital marketing only shape attitudinal factor of consumer trust instead of directly influencing purchase intention. Furthermore, the weak mediation of Consumer Trust between Search Engine Optimization, Influencer Marketing and Purchase Intention suggest that these strategies might be more effective when accompanied by trustworthy and engaging content.

However, the results are above the recommended threshold leaving a gap for a fruitful future research. Moreover, dynamic consumer behavior in digital environment might not fully captured by this model due to the evolving digital marketing trends. The indirect effects can be further explored in future also additional moderators or mediators can be used to study the relationship between the variables that help in clarifying the most impactful digital marketing strategies. Additionally, Unethical Practices has a minimal moderating effecting suggesting that consumers do care about ethics but will continue to purchase the product if the product meets their requirements or fulfills their needs. Furthermore, evolution of trust and purchase intention can be observed by using longitudinal studies. Moreover, using a mixed-method approach can provide insights of qualitative factors. This research can be further expand to different industry and geographical locations.

It has been revealed by the results that Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing and Search Engine Optimization does not directly influence Purchase Intention in a holistic approach. However, Search Engine Optimization and Influencer Marketing indirectly influence Purchase Intention by fostering Consumer Trust although the impact was minimal. Trust and Purchase Intention relationship is not significantly moderated by Unethical Practices in this research.

This research highlights the significant importance of Consumer Trust as it acts as a crucial factor that ultimately influences the Purchase Intention of consumers. For firms, the efficient step is to focus on the marketing strategies that help in fostering consumer trust with the help content optimization and credible influencer promotions.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

Funding

The authors did not mention any funding for this research.

References

- Abdulnasir, A. M. (2015). Marketing ethics practices of small businesses and their effect on consumer purchase intention: An empirical investigation from Addis Ketema sub-city. *J Account Mark*, 4(133), 2.
- Agustian, K., Hidayat, R., Zen, A., Sekarini, R. A., & Malik, A. J. (2023). The influence of influencer marketing in increasing brand awareness and sales for SMEs. *Technology and Society Perspectives (Tacit)*, 1(2), 68-78. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.61100/tacit.v1i2.54>
- Ansari, S., Ansari, G., Ghorri, M. U., & Kazi, A. G. (2019). Impact of brand awareness and social media content marketing on consumer purchase decision. *Journal of Public Value and Administrative Insight*, 2(2), 5-10.
- Alalwan, A. A. (2018). Investigating the impact of social media advertising features on customer purchase intention. *International journal of information management*, 42, 65-77. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2018.06.001>
- Bishop, C. (2024, March 21). *Customer trust: Definition, importance & 5 ways to gain it*. Zendesk. <https://www.zendesk.com/blog/customer-trust/>
- Boonmalert, W., Ayasanond, C., Phoothong, B., & Chaitorn, T. (2021). A causal influence model of innovation and digital marketing on the small and medium enterprise (SME) performance in Thailand. *European Journal of Molecular & Clinical Medicine*, 8(3), 63-72.
- Bruce, E., Shurong, Z., Ying, D., Yaqi, M., Amoah, J., & Egala, S. B. (2023). *The effect of digital marketing adoption on SMEs sustainable growth: Empirical evidence from Ghana. Sustainability*, 15 (6), 4760. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15064760>
- Caro, A., Mendoza, A. J., Noble, H., & Tanglao, K. A. (2024). Influence of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Towards Purchase Intention of Online Shoppers. *Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 6(3), 279-285. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jbms.2024.6.3.24>
- Cheung, M. F., & To, W. M. (2021). The effect of consumer perceptions of the ethics of retailers on purchase behavior and word-of-mouth: The moderating role of ethical beliefs. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 171(4), 771-788.
- Chopra, A., Avhad, V., & Jaju, A. S. (2021). Influencer marketing: An exploratory study to identify antecedents of consumer behavior of millennial. *Business Perspectives and Research*, 9(1), 77-91. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2278533720923486>
- Creyer, E. H. (1997). The influence of firm behavior on purchase intention: do consumers really care about business ethics? *Journal of consumer Marketing*, 14(6), 421-432. <https://doi.org/10.1108/07363769710185999>
- Datareportal. (2025). *Global Social Media Stats*. Data Reportal – Global Digital Insights; Kepios. <https://datareportal.com/social-media-users>
- Desembrianita, E., Mulyono, S., Putra, W. P., & Tarjono, T. (2024). Influence of digital marketing, consumer trust, and brand loyalty on purchase intention (case study of green product consumers). *International Journal of Business, Law, and Education*, 5(2), 2003-2015.
- Digital, N. (2023, August 14). *A List of Unethical Marketing Practices*. New Style Digital. <https://newstyledigital.com/a-list-of-unethical-marketing-practices/>

- Digitalsolved. (2023, January 16). *So How Big Is the Digital Marketing World?* -. Digital-Solved.com. <https://www.digital-solved.com/digitalmarketing/hello-world/>
- Duffett, R. G. (2017). Influence of social media marketing communications on young consumers' attitudes. *Young Consumers*, 18(1), 19-39. <https://doi.org/10.1108/YC-07-2016-00622>
- Enge, E., Spencer, S., Stricchiola, J., & Fishkin, R. (2012). *The art of SEO*. " O'Reilly Media, Inc."
- Erwin, E., Suade, Y. K. M., & Alam, N. (2023, May). Social Media Micro-enterprise: Utilizing Social Media Influencers, Marketing Contents and Viral Marketing Campaigns to Increase Customer Engagement. In *International Conference of Economics, Business, and Entrepreneur (Icebe 2022)* (pp. 578-593). Atlantis Press. 10.2991/978-2-38476-064-0_58
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39-50. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3151312>
- Gefen, D., & Straub, D. W. (2004). Consumer trust in B2C e-Commerce and the importance of social presence: experiments in e-Products and e-Services. *Omega*, 32(6), 407-424. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.omega.2004.01.006>
- Goo, J. L., Saraih, U. N., Jaafar, H. J., Noraini, M. B., Yusoff, W. S., & Ramish, M. S. (2021). The influence of unethical marketing practices on consumers' buying behaviours among malaysian tertiary students. *International Journal of Business and Technopreneurship*, 11(3), 77-88.
- Gossett, S. (2025, January 15). *130 SEO Statistics Every Marketer Must Know in 2025*. Exploding Topics. <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/seo-statistics>
- Gold, A. H., Malhotra, A., & Segars, A. H. (2001). Knowledge management: An organizational capabilities perspective. *Journal of management information systems*, 18(1), 185-214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07421222.2001.11045669>
- Habib, S., Hamadneh, N. N., & Hassan, A. (2022). The relationship between digital marketing, customer engagement, and purchase intention via OTT platforms. *Journal of Mathematics*, 2022(1), 5327626. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/5327626>
- Hair Jr, J. F., Matthews, L. M., Matthews, R. L., & Sarstedt, M. (2017). PLS-SEM or CB-SEM: updated guidelines on which method to use. *International Journal of Multivariate Data Analysis*, 1(2), 107-123. <https://doi.org/10.1504/Ijmda.2017.087624>
- Hamdan, O., Zhen, B. H., Alkharabsheh, M., & Ho Zhen, B. (2021). *The Impact of Content Marketing, Social Media Marketing and Online Convenience on Consumer Buying Decision Process (Vol. 1, Issue 1)*.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M. (2015). A New Criterion for Assessing Discriminant Validity in Variance-Based Structural Equation Modeling. *Journal of the academy of marketing science*, 43, 115-135.
- Hong, I. B., & Cha, H. S. (2013). The mediating role of consumer trust in an online merchant in predicting purchase intention. *International Journal of Information Management*, 33(6), 927-939. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2013.08.007>

- Influencer Marketing Hub. (2025, January 30). *Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report 2025*. Influencer Marketing Hub. <https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-benchmark-report/>
- Islam, S., & Mahmood, M. I. (2018). A qualitative study on the outcomes of social media advertising
- Jason. (2018, October 23). *Ecommerce Marketing Strategies to Increase Your Online Sales – Sellers Commerce*. Sellers Commerce. <https://www.sellerscommerce.com/blog/ecommerce>
- Kurniadi, H., & Rana, J. A. S. (2023). The power of trust: How does consumer trust impact satisfaction and loyalty in Indonesian digital business? *Innovative Marketing*, 19(2), 236. [http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/im.19\(2\).2023.19](http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/im.19(2).2023.19)
- Kline, R. B. (2011). Principles and practice of structural equation modeling. New York: Guilford Press.
- Leonidou, L. C., Kvasova, O., Leonidou, C. N., & Chari, S. (2013). Business unethically as an impediment to consumer trust: The moderating role of demographic and cultural characteristics. *Journal of business ethics*, 112, 397-415.
- Logan, K., Bright, L. F., & Gangadharbatla, H. (2012). Facebook versus television: advertising value perceptions among females. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 6(3), 164-179. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17505931211274651>
- Makhitha, K. M., & Ngobeni, K. M. (2024). The Effect of Perceived Risk in Online Shopping Intention: Does Attitude Mediate the Relationship? *Expert Journal of Marketing*, 12(1).
- Manzoor, U., Baig, S. A., Hashim, M., & Sami, A. (2020). Impact of social media marketing on consumer's purchase intentions: the mediating role of customer trust. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Research*, 3(2), 41-48. <https://doi.org/10.31580/ijer.v3i2.1386>
- Marino, S. (2025). *165 Powerful Digital Marketing Statistics for 2023*. WordStream. <https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2022/04/19/digital-marketing-statistics>
- Marketing, G. M. (2012). Influencer marketing
- Nizar, N. A., & Janathanan, C. (2018). Impact of digital marketing on consumer purchase behaviour. In APIIT Business, Law & Technology Conference (Vol. 1).
- Nkpurukwe, O., Arumdeben, G., & Tungkir, K. (2025). Digital Marketing Communication Strategies: A Sure Way of Gaining Customer Patronage. *Abuja journal of business and management*, 3(1).
- Pham, P. H., & Gammoh, B. S. (2015). Characteristics of social-media marketing strategy and customer-based brand equity outcomes: a conceptual model. *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*, 9(4), 321-337. <https://doi.org/10.1504/Ijima.2015.072885>
- Putri, D. R. (2021). Digital marketing strategy to increase brand awareness and customer purchase intention (case study: Ailesh green consulting). *European Journal of Business and Management Research*, 6(5), 87-93.
- Qalati, S. A., Vela, E. G., Li, W., Dakhan, S. A., Hong Thuy, T. T., & Merani, S. H. (2021). Effects of perceived service quality, website quality, and reputation on purchase intention: The

- mediating and moderating roles of trust and perceived risk in online shopping. *Cogent Business & Management*, 8(1), 1869363. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2020.1869363>
- Reyhanrafif, M. D., La, M. A. N. I., Nitular, A. P., Criswanto, H., & Rahyadi, I. (2024). Optimizing Distribution Channels: How Digital Marketing Communication Enhances Trust and Loyalty in Indonesian Banking. *Journal of Distribution Science*, 22(8), 1-15.
- Setiaboedi, A. P., Sari, H., & Prihartono, B. (2018, October). Conceptual model for online marketing strategy to success in the survival phase of small firms. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management* (Vol. 1877).
- Sprout social. (2024, February 8). *50+ of the Most Important Social Media Marketing Statistics for 2023*. Sprout Social. <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-statistics/>
- Statista. (2024b). *e Commerce - Worldwide | Statista Market Forecast*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/outlook/emo/ecommerce/worldwide>
- Statista. (2025, April 15). *Share of marketing budgets spent on influencer marketing worldwide 2025*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/268641/share-of-marketing-budgets-spent-on-digital-worldwide/>
- Subedi, D. P., & Bhandari, D. R. (2024). Social Media Marketing and Purchase Intentions of Fashionable Goods: The Mediating Effect of Customer Trust. *E-Investa: Jurnal Rumpun Ilmu Ekonomi dan Bisnis Islam*, 1(2), 48-65.
- Subasinghe, U., & Weerasisri, R. A. S. (2019). The impact of digital content marketing on the purchase intention of connected consumers: A study based on natural ingredient-based personal care products. *Sri Lanka Journal of Marketing*, 5(1). Doi: 10.4038/sljmuok.v5i1.39
- Tanwar, A. S., Chaudhry, H., & Srivastava, M. K. (2022). Trends in influencer marketing: a review and bibliometric analysis. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 22(1), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2021.2007822>
- Thamrin, E. M., & Utami, G. S. (2023). Influencer marketing and traditional marketing in Indonesia. *Ultimacomm: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 15(1), 32-44. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.31937/ultimacomm.v15i1.2992>
- Yunus, M., Saputra, J., & Muhammad, Z. (2022). International Journal of Data and Network Science. *International Journal of Data and Network Science*, 6, 935-944.
- Zeng, F., Huang, L., & Dou, W. (2009). Social factors in user perceptions and responses to advertising in online social networking communities. *Journal of interactive advertising*, 10(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2009.10722159>
- Ziko, A. O. A., & Asfour, A. (2023). Effect of Digital Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour in the Modern Trade Sector in Egypt. *Journal of Business*, 11(4), 46-62.