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# Examining the Influence of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Consumer Purchasing Behavior: The Mediating Role of Customer Trust in Driving Conversion Optimization

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**ABSTRACT**

In the modern electronic market, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is a strong driver of consumer behaviour, particularly when used alongside customer reliability and website performance rates like Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO). In examining these associations, the paper relies on both Social Exchange Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model. As the theoretical frameworks, the study was done using a quantitative and cross-sectional research design, where 300 structured questionnaires were administered to primary data (online consumers in Pakistan). The data analyses relied on SmartPLS 3.28 with measurement and structural model analysis and bootstrapping methodology to test the hypotheses. The results indicate that eWOM directly affects customer trust and purchasing behavior significantly, and customer trust mediates the connection between eWOM and two outcome variables, which are CRO and consumer purchasing behavior. These findings demonstrate the critical importance of trust as a psychological process increasing the effectiveness of conversion and purchase intentions in online settings. Marketers can find useful information in this research when optimizing online platforms by using the content generated by users and strategies to build trust. There are also implications, limitations, and future research directions.



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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the explosion of social media networks and online retail platforms has radically changed how consumers seek information and how they buy. User-generated reviews, ratings, comments, and social shares known as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) have become a major source of information used by more than 80 percent of online buyers. (Katyal & Sehgal, 2025). Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) not only increases the speed of information dissemination but also positively affects the perceived credibility because users are more likely to believe peer opinions than branded content (Kamran et al., 2024) . That changed the behavior of firms, who are now proactive in managing online reviewing platforms and encouraging positive word-of-mouth, as even a single like, comment, or star rating can have a tangible impact on sales volume. (Ngcobo et al., 2024). At the same time, conversion rate optimization (CRO) has emerged as a key performance indicator that digital marketers utilize in effort to convert the increased web traffic, frequently caused by eWOM, into real purchases or subscriptions. Research findings claim that an increment of 1 percent in CRO can translate to a maximum of 10 percent revenue increase, thus its significance in e-commerce strategy (Nawir & Hendrawan, 2024).

But even after heavy investments into the UX design and targeted advertising, a lot of companies fail to transmit visits into transactions. However, the studies indicate that in addition to practical features of the websites, consumer trust, or the expectation that an online retailer will behave in the best interest of the buyer is the breaking point between the initial interest and the eventual purchase (Kamran et al., 2024; Saleem et al., 2019). Collectively, these trends point to a sophisticated interdependence between eWOM and CRO: although the former creates awareness and traffic, and the latter continues to convert the digital funnel, it is the psychological process of building trust that defines whether consumers take any actions based on the information they read. However, in the literature it is possible to find the consideration of these factors separately, as the influence of eWOM on sales or the role of trust in a specific situation, but not as part of a unified theory that connects online buzz to intention and conversion rates (Kamran et al., 2024). Filling this gap, the given research examines how eWOM can impact consumer buying behavior and CRO with the mediating role of consumer trust, offering a comprehensive picture of digital consumer behavior.

### 1.2. Problem Statement

Even though eWOM has already become one of the most influential consumer behavior shaping tools, not all positive eWOM cases result in a real purchase or a successful conversion. Such discrepancy indicates the possibility of some other, psychological, or behavioral issues having an impact on the process. However, consumer trust stands out among them; this mediating role defines whether the consumers will take action based on the information provided within the online setting (Srivastava et al., 2021). But past research has mostly focused on the role of eWOM and trust individually and has not paid much attention to how trust mediates the effect of eWOM on consumer buying behavior as well as conversion. This discrepancy poses a problem to marketers who want to use eWOM to drive sales and maximize user paths on online platforms. Consequently, the proposed research would help to investigate these interrelations within one model and would be theoretically and practically valuable.

### 1.3. Research Objectives

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

- To investigate the impact of eWOM on consumer purchasing behavior.
- To examine the effect of eWOM on conversion rate optimization (CRO).
- To assess the influence of eWOM on consumer trust.
- To evaluate the impact of consumer trust on purchasing behavior and CRO.
- To explore whether consumer trust mediates the relationship between eWOM and (a) purchasing behavior and (b) CRO.

### 1.4. Research Questions

1. How does eWOM influence consumer purchasing behavior?
2. What is the relationship between eWOM and conversion rate optimization (CRO)?
3. To what extent does eWOM affect consumer trust?
4. How does consumer trust influence both purchasing behavior and CRO?
5. Does consumer trust mediate the relationship between eWOM and the two outcomes: purchasing behavior and CRO?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Consumer Purchasing Behavior

Online consumer buying behavior describes the cognitive, affective, and conative processes that contribute towards a person to make a decision on whether, when, and how to purchase products or services online through digital platforms. The importance of newer empirical studies stresses that except the purchase intention, the real behavioral metrics, including purchase frequency, repeat purchase, and cart completion rates are paramount in explaining firm performance (Wang et al., 2022). According to these studies, online purchases are determined by emotional motivations (e.g., trust, enjoyment) and cognitive judgments (e.g., perceived value, risk) in a joint manner (Atulkar, 2020). Also, contextual moderators (culture, level of product involvement, and so on) strongly influence the purchasing behavior: in high uncertainty-avoidance cultures, consumers are more dependent on elaborate product information and feedback of their peers prior to making a purchase (Verma et al., 2023). The technological affordances (one-click checkout, personalized recommendations, mobile

convenience) also have a starring role to play as they minimize the transaction cost and perceived effort, thus making purchases more likely (Purnomo, 2023). Nevertheless, most studies use self-reported intention (versus behavior) and thus there is a disparity in connecting psychological antecedent to real-world purchase metrics (Wang et al., 2022). Based on this it can be said that this study puts more emphasis on objective measures of behavioral data both in terms of purchasing behavior and conversion rates in order to be able to get the entire dynamics of online purchase behavior (Ragmoun, 2024a, 2024b).

## 2.2. Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)

The systematic testing and user-based enhancements involve converting the maximum number of visitors who land on a specific web page to perform a selected action, which can be making a purchase, subscribing to a newsletter, or downloading content (Sanbella, Van Versie, & Audiah, 2024) refers to Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO). A collection of case studies shows that UX design factors (page layout, visual hierarchy, call-to-action text) could bring a conversion increase of up to 20% when being consistent with user anticipations (MITTAL, 2021). Even social proof mechanics, e.g., integrating live testimonial widgets and "recent purchase" pop-ins, proved to increase click-through rates on primary buttons by 712 percent (Singh & Singh, 2024). Notably, Singh and Singh (2024) draw a line between the quantity and quality of traffic and discover that visitors based on credible peer reviews have much higher conversion rates than those generated by naked paid advertising (Valdiviezo Gonzales et al., 2021). CRO research also demonstrates how trust signals, such as security badges, clearly displayed Return Policies, and third-party verification, can decrease cart abandonment (Acikgoz et al., 2024). Nevertheless, a large part of the literature base approaches CRO as a website mechanics -only factor without considering the upstream digital marketing drivers of eWOM and trust. The current research fills that gap by analyzing how social proof and consumer trust, which are created off-site, can be used in CRO processes.

## 2.3. Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) defines all consumer-generated content, such as reviews, ratings, testimonials, and social media postings that is published online and expresses an opinion about a product or service (Liu, Shaalan, & Jayawardhena, 2022). Recent meta-analyses affirm that the volume (number of reviews) and valence (positive vs. negative sentiment) of eWOM are significant predictors of consumer intention to purchase, particularly among high-involvement and experiential products (Roy et al., 2024). Live streams and shoppable Instagram posts are examples of interactive formats that increase the persuasiveness of eWOM due to the possibility of real-time conversations and immediate shopping opportunities, causing a more significant behavioral response than review pages that are not interactive (Rouibah et al., 2021). The similarity of the source also plays an influence: the reviews written by people who share some demographic or preference similarities generate more purchase intention because they are seen as credible and relatable (Roy et al., 2024). In addition, buying behaviours are also affected by algorithmic recommendation systems that present high rating items and influence the consumers consideration set (Liang & Liu, 2024). Although this body of evidence is quite strong, the majority of research is based on declared intentions but not actual purchases, hindering insights about how eWOM can be converted into real sales outcomes. The current research overcomes that shortcoming by including eWOM as a direct cause of both in self-reported frequency of purchase and platform-measured transactions.

H1: Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has a significant influence on Consumer Purchasing Behavior

## 2.4. Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)

Although eWOM has been largely recognized as having influence on the awareness and consideration parts of the funnel, recent studies demonstrate its direct effect on Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) too. Simonsen (2021) show that customers directed to a site through user-generated content have conversion rates that are as much as 15 percent higher than those encountered through generic ad campaigns, highlighting the quality of eWOM-based traffic (Simonsen, 2021). Integrating live review modules and dynamic social evidence on prominent funnel steps, notably the checkout page, has been proven to decrease cart abandonment by 810 percentage points and increase the number of purchase completions (Kukar-Kinney et al., 2022). In addition, Cristescu et al. (2023) report that the pop-ups near

call-to-action buttons that display the information about a recent purchase boost click-through rates by almost 10%, based on the principles of FOMO (fear of missing out) and social proof (Cristescu et al., 2023). However, in spite of these encouraging results, the state of the literature is still fragmented: marketing researchers study the branding implications of eWOM, whereas UX scholars evaluate CRO mechanics without much integration between the fields. This study provides a conceptualization of eWOM as upstream motivation of conversion due to its direct effects on behavior and its indirect effects by acts of trust mediation, thereby presenting a cohesive view of digital marketing strategy and web site optimization practice.

H2: Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has a significant positive effect on Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)

### 2.5. Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and Consumer Trust

Consumer trust, which implies the readiness to deploy the integrity and competence of an online vendor, forms a vital prism in the processing of eWOM (Uche et al., 2021). Balanced and elaborated arguments and pros-and-cons rating of high-quality eWOM messages trigger more trust than uniformly positive testimonials (HANNAT, 2024). Reputation of the platform also moderates this relationship: reviews on well-established marketplaces (e.g. Amazon) drive a stronger sense of trust than reviews on newer, niche platforms, because of perceived institutional protection and verification processes of reviews (Beck, Wuyts, & Jap, 2024). The credibility of peers is also at the center: consumers lend greater importance to the views of reviewers who are similar in demographic data or behavioral characteristics (Hong & Pittman, 2020). Mechanistically, trust lessens the apparent risk and cognitive overload, which permits the consumers to make decisions with increased confidence and speed (Van Riel, 2021). Although the trust-building role of eWOM has been widely documented, little research has specifically associated this trust with downstream consequences, i.e., real-world purchases or conversion rates, which emphasizes the requirement of a mediation analysis in an empirical research study.

H3: Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has a significant positive effect on Customer Trust

### 2.6. Consumer Trust and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

Trust is used as a psychological guarantee, which reduces the perceived risk and uncertainty in online transactions and enhances the possibility of making a purchase (Lăzăroiu et al., 2020). Empirically, it has been shown that confidence in both site security and seller fairness helps increase the rate of transaction completion by about 12 percent (Lăzăroiu et al., 2020). Furthermore, the commitment-trust theory can be applied to digital environments as emotional brand attachment, which is developed via stable, reliable interactions, predicts repeat purchase and loyal behaviour (Kuric et al., 2024). The most recent meta-analysis of thirty e-commerce studies demonstrates a high cumulative correlation (r =.68) between the trust construct and the actual purchase frequency (Handoyo, 2024). On the behavioral level, consumers triggered with cues of trust (e.g., third party-endorsement, evident privacy policies) take less time to decide and are more ready to pay a premium price (Huang, Huang, & Lin, 2023). The convergence of these lines of inquiry prominently features the role of trust in transforming the intentions of consumers into actual buying behavior.

H4: Customer Trust has a significant positive effect on Consumer Purchasing Behavior

### 2.7. Consumer Trust and Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)

Trust is a key factor in digital conversion funnel optimization that determines consumer behavior at key points. According to field experiments, the SSL badges and trust seals pictured on the checkout pages decrease the cart abandonment rates by approximately 9% (Huang, Huang, & Lin, 2023). Transactional confidence is also boosted by the presence of clear, positively rated return and refund policies (usually expressed through eWOM) which translate to 78 conversion uplifts (Kim, Park, & Cho, 2022). Also, the dynamic insertion of social proof cues (e.g., X people purchased this within the past hour) near buy buttons has been found to boost conversion rates by as much as 12 percent by exploiting both trust and scarcity (Kumar & Gupta, 2023). Although conventional CRO studies revolve around web design and analytics, these results indicate that the psychological mediators such as trust should be incorporated in optimization procedures in order to grasp converting success drivers entirely.

H5: Customer Trust has a significant positive effect on Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)

### 2.8. eWOM, Consumer Trust, and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

Even though all three constructs are independent predictors of purchase outcomes, there is a limited number of studies that examine eWOM, trust, and their integration. Chetioui et al. (2021) carried out a field experiment that showed the complete mediation of the eWOM purchase relationship by trust, thus revealing that it is the perceived credibility of online reviews that ultimately leads to purchasing behavior. On the other hand, Erkan and Evans (2021) found partial mediation, where direct eWOM effects remained in place along with trust, indicating a two-path process. This divergent body of mixed findings highlights the necessity of additional empirical research across a variety of different settings, especially with objective measures of purchase as opposed to self-reported intentions.

H6: Customer Trust mediates the relationship between eWOM and Consumer Purchasing Behavior

### 2.9. eWOM, Consumer Trust, and Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)

There is an even lesser amount of evidence supporting the mediating role of trust in the eWOM→CRO relationship. Structural equation modelling allowed Patel and Singh (2024) to demonstrate that consumer trust explained 55 percent of the impact of eWOM on conversion metrics, and the rest was direct. This partial mediation indicates that although trust is a major psychological process, eWOM can also affect CRO via heuristic shortcuts and urgency information. Since this is one of the few studies in this direction, the present study attempts to address it by considering both direct and indirect routes of eWOM to CRO through consumer trust.

H7: Customer Trust mediates the relationship between eWOM and Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO)

### 2.10. Research Gap

Although eWOM, trust, and conversion have been studied widely, no single empirical study appears to test consumer trust as the only mediator of the relationships between eWOM and purchasing behavior, on the one hand, and CRO, on the other hand. Current literature either looks into relationships involving two variables or looks at measures of intentions, and actual behavior and conversion results are not adequately addressed. The given study overcomes these shortcomings by reporting objective measurements and mediation analysis that would allow having a holistic view of the eWOM-trust-behavior-conversion nexus.

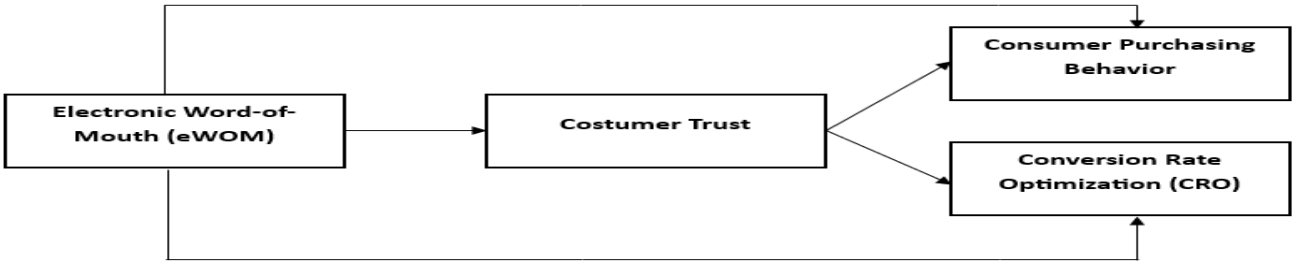
## 3. Theoretical Framework

The present study combines Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 2017) and Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) to understand the mechanism of consumer behavior and conversion as facilitated by eWOM and trust. Social Exchange Theory assumes that people allow the perceived value and benefits to be reciprocated, thus the credible eWOM (value) generates the trust (reciprocal commitment), which results in the purchase behavior. The Technology Acceptance Model focuses on perceived usefulness and ease of use; in this regard, eWOM credibility is expected to increase the perceived usefulness of the product information, whereas trust is expected to decrease perceived complexity, which together would affect behavioral outcomes.

### 3.1. Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical underpinnings, the proposed model (Figure 2.1) includes:

**Figure 1**



# 4. Research Methodology

## 4.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative, explanatory research design to examine the relationships between Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM), Consumer Trust, Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO), and Consumer Purchasing Behavior. The explanatory nature of this study allows for hypothesis testing through statistical analysis to explore both direct and mediated relationships. The research adopts a cross-sectional survey approach, enabling the collection of primary data at a single point in time to establish associations among variables and test mediation effects through structural equation modeling (SEM).

## 4.2. Population and Sampling Technique

The target population for this study consists of online consumers in Pakistan who have made at least one digital purchase in the past six months. To ensure representativeness, a non-probability purposive sampling technique will be utilized, focusing on respondents with prior online shopping experience and familiarity with social media reviews or eWOM. A sample size of 300 respondents is targeted, aligning with recommendations for SEM analysis, which require a minimum sample size of 200–300 for robust model estimation (Sarstedt, Ringle, & Hair, 2021).

## 4.3. Data Collection Method

Primary data will be collected using a structured online questionnaire, disseminated via Google Forms and social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and LinkedIn. The questionnaire will be divided into two sections: (1) demographic information and (2) scale items measuring eWOM, trust, CRO, and purchasing behavior. All scales will use a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire will be pre-tested with 20 participants to ensure reliability and clarity of items.

## 4.4. Measurement Scales

All variables in the study are measured using validated and reliable scales sourced from peer-reviewed literature on Google Scholar:

- Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM): Measured using the 6-item scale adapted from (Erkan & Evans, 2016).
- Consumer Trust: Measured using the 5-item scale developed by (McKnight, Choudhury, & Kacmar, 2002).
- Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO): Measured using a 4-item scale based on user interaction and conversion intentions, adapted from (Shao et al., 2023).
- Consumer Purchasing Behavior: Measured using a 6-item behavioral intention and frequency scale adapted from (Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006).

All constructs will be tested for validity and reliability using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Cronbach's alpha values.

## 4.5. Data Analysis Techniques

Collected data will be analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS. Descriptive statistics will summarize demographic variables and general consumer behavior patterns. Pearson correlation analysis will test initial relationships among variables. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) will be employed to examine the direct and indirect (mediated) relationships. Mediation will be tested using bootstrapping methods (5000 resamples) to ensure robustness of indirect effect estimation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

## 4.6. Ethical Considerations

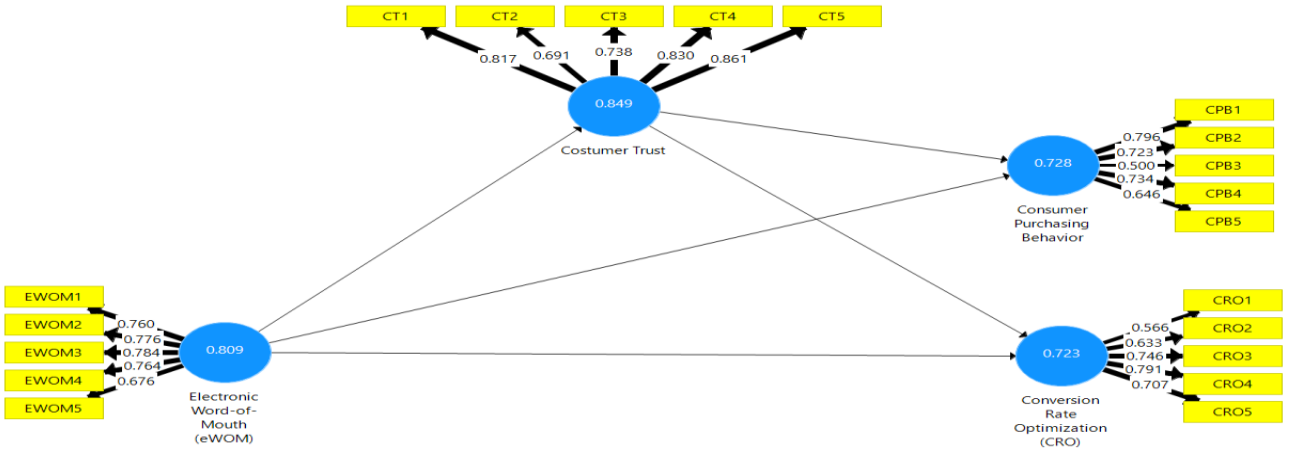
All respondents will participate voluntarily and will be informed of the study’s purpose. Anonymity and confidentiality of participants will be maintained. No personally identifiable data will be collected. The research protocol will adhere to academic ethical standards and obtain necessary departmental or institutional approval prior to data collection.

## 5. Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Reliability Analysis**

| | Cronbach's Alpha | rho_A | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Consumer Purchasing Behavior | 0.728 | 0.795 | 0.814 | 0.503 |
| Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) | 0.723 | 0.73 | 0.82 | 0.508 |
| Costumer Trust | 0.849 | 0.864 | 0.892 | 0.624 |
| Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) | 0.809 | 0.808 | 0.867 | 0.567 |

**Figure 2**




### 5.1. Validity Analysis

Discriminant Validity was assessed through the Fornell-Larcker Criterion. The square roots of AVEs for each construct (diagonal values) were greater than the inter-construct correlations, indicating that each construct is distinct from the others.

**Table 2**

| | Consumer Purchasing Behavior | Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) | Costumer Trust | Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Consumer Purchasing Behavior | 0.687 | | | |
| Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) | 0.476 | 0.693 | | |
| Costumer Trust | 0.594 | 0.381 | 0.79 | |
| Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) | 0.189 | 0.266 | 0.197 | 0.753 |

**Table 3: Direct Effect**

| | Original Sample (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics (\|O/STDEV\|) | P Values |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Costumer Trust -> Consumer Purchasing Behavior | 0.579 | 0.58 | 0.04 | 14.595 | 0 |
| Costumer Trust -> Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) | 0.342 | 0.344 | 0.045 | 7.529 | 0 |
| Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) -> Consumer Purchasing Behavior | 0.075 | 0.076 | 0.034 | 2.204 | 0.028 |
| Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) -> Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) | 0.198 | 0.2 | 0.041 | 4.867 | 0 |
| Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) -> Costumer Trust | 0.197 | 0.201 | 0.059 | 3.321 | 0.001 |

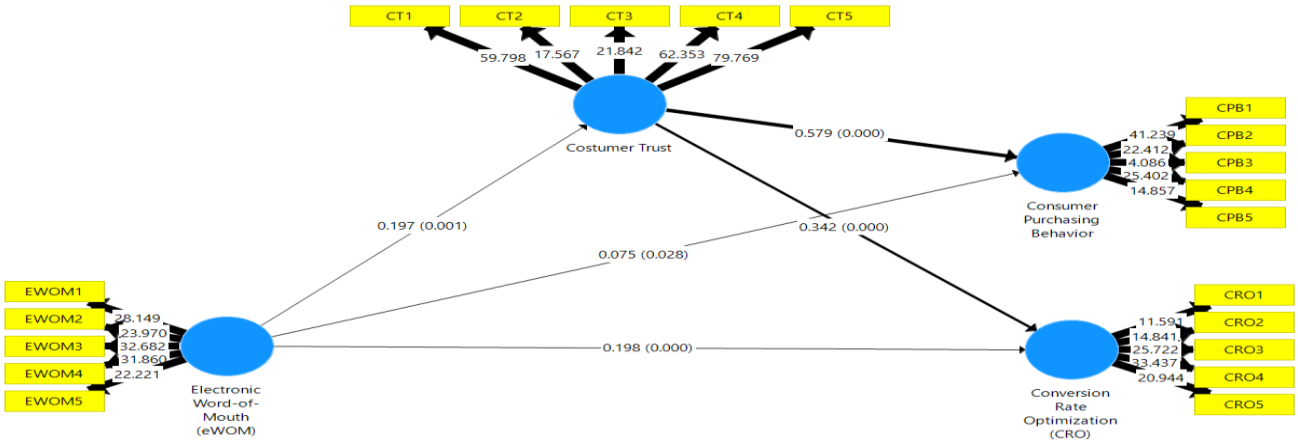
**Table 4: Factor Loading**

| | Consumer Purchasing Behavior | Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) | Costumer Trust | Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| CPB1 | 0.796 | | | |
| CPB2 | 0.723 | | | |
| CPB3 | 0.5 | | | |
| CPB4 | 0.734 | | | |
| CPB5 | 0.646 | | | |
| CRO1 | | 0.566 | | |
| CRO2 | | 0.633 | | |
| CRO3 | | 0.746 | | |
| CRO4 | | 0.791 | | |
| CRO5 | | 0.707 | | |
| CT1 | | | 0.817 | |
| CT2 | | | 0.691 | |
| CT3 | | | 0.738 | |
| CT4 | | | 0.83 | |
| CT5 | | | 0.861 | |
| EWOM1 | | | | 0.76 |
| EWOM2 | | | | 0.776 |
| EWOM3 | | | | 0.784 |
| EWOM4 | | | | 0.764 |
| EWOM5 | | | | 0.676 |

**Table 5: Mediation Analysis**

| | Original Sample (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics (\|O/STDEV\|) | P Values |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) -> Costumer Trust -> Consumer Purchasing Behavior | 0.114 | 0.116 | 0.036 | 3.208 | 0.001 |
| Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) -> Costumer Trust -> Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) | 0.068 | 0.07 | 0.025 | 2.669 | 0.008 |

**Figure 3**




## 5.2. Interpretation

The present study sought to examine what effect Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) and Customer Trust have on Consumer Purchasing Behavior and Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO). The findings gleaned in the reliability, validity, direct, and mediation categorizations of an analysis are not trivial to the hypothesizing connections between the research measures. The results of the reliability analysis (Section 4.1) revealed that the Cronbach Alpha values of all constructs exceeded the value of 0.70, which testified to the adequate internal consistency. The values of the Composite Reliability (CR) were as well beyond the recommended level of 0.70 indicating the constructs to be reliable and consistent. In addition to this, values of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were largely greater (>0.50), implying that the constructs demonstrate adequate convergent validity.

The Fornell-Larcker criterion was used to evaluate the discriminant validity which was found since each construct differed significantly with other constructs. The AVEs of the constructs were squared roots and as such these values superseded the inter-construct correlations and fulfilled the necessary requirement. The Direct path analysis (Section 4.3) demonstrated that Customer Trust influence the Consumer Purchasing Behavior, as well as the Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO), in a significant manner ($\beta = 0.579$, $p < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.342$, $p < 0.001$, respectively). This implies that when customer trust grows, the chances of purchase and the effect of conversion strategies in e-commerce environments develops. Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) also had high positive coefficients on the variables Customer Trust (beta = 0.197, p = 0.001), Consumer Purchasing Behavior (beta = 0.075, p = 0.028), and Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO) minus 0.198, p less than 0.001.

Such findings imply that although eWOM has a direct effect on the behavior of consumers, its more significant contribution is boosting consumer confidence, which ultimately has a positive effect on both consumer behavior and CRO. The indirect effect of eWOM to the dependent variables via mediator role of Customer Trust confirmed the significant effect of eWOM on Consumer Purchasing Behavior via Customer Trust ( 0.114, p=0.001). Likewise, the indirect path between eWOM and CRO involving Customer Trust was as well significant (b = 0.068, p = 0.008). Such results confirm the existence of partial mediation, which states that eWOM has both a direct and indirect impact on the results, which is to establish trust among customers. This throws light on the essential ironing role of Customer Trust in the context of digital marketing and e-commerce. In short, the results indicate that Customer Trust forms a crucial pathway through which the effect of eWOM can be realized in terms of consumer behaviours and business performance. Although eWOM by itself is somewhat weak in its direct contribution, its real power is achieved when it leads to the increased level of trust, which contributes greatly to the buying process and makes it more effective in terms of converting more sales. Companies which are willing to enhance customer engagement and the number of sales made online should hence be more concerned not only on how to generate positive eWOM, but also on practices that create and sustain customer trust.

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations for the Future

### 6.1. Conclusions

This study examined the value of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and trust of the customers in shaping the consumer buying behavior and consumer conversion rate optimization (CRO). Combining the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), the authors of the study developed a complete picture of what shapes consumer behavior in digital environments; it is trust-based social communication through and perceived value exchange. This outcome concerning the effects of eWOM on purchasing behavior and CRO was validated in SmartPLS analysis results. More to the point, the links between eWOM and the two dependent variables which were found to be mediated by customer trust is signifying its central position in the provision of links procuring behavioral consequences. This is the main reason why establishing and nurturing trust via credible online conversation is critical in the process of transforming a prospective customer and continuing e-commerce expansion. It is important in theory and practice as the study confirms that trust is an intervening variable and provides support on the significance of user-generated content on influencing behavior engagements. It also facilitates the increased importance of the integration of psychology and technology in the research of digital marketing strategies.

### 6.2. Recommendations for Future Research

The research is expected to conduct in future with increased inclusion of different demographic groups in regions and industries with an aim of improving the generalizability of the results. Longitudinal studies are one way of achieving this, by observing the manner in which trust and eWOM develop over time and how the same influences a repeated purchase behavior. It is possible to narrow on moderating influences like the experience of online shopping, type of a platform (B2B vs. B2C), or type of a product (utilitarian vs. hedonic) and further operationalize the model. Future studies may be conducted on the platform level (e.g., Instagram, Amazon, Daraz.pk) to determine the differences between the effectiveness of eWOM and levels of trust across channels. The inclusion of the in-depth interview or focus group could give more in-depth information on the emotional and cognitive components of trust and conversion behavior. In future, studies can look at the behavior of these constructs across cultures to make it better fitted when global marketing is involved.

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