

## Role of Social Media Comments on Consumer Behavior: A Study of Food Industry

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### Abstract

*This study aims to explore the influence of social media comments on consumer behavior within the food industry, focusing specifically on how comments affect behavioral intentions and brand trust. The research examines how the quality, quantity, credibility, and comprehensiveness of comments impact consumer behavioral intentions. Data were collected from 367 participants using a cross-sectional survey method employing a positivist and deductive approach. 316 responses were deemed valid. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to identify relationships between variables. The findings indicate that brand trust is positively influenced by social media comments' quantity, quality, and credibility, thereby affecting consumer intentions regarding food purchases. Surprisingly, the comprehensiveness of comments did not significantly impact behavioral intentions or brand trust, despite the higher volume and quality of comments enhancing customer intent and trust.*

**Keywords:** Social Media Comments, Consumer Behavior, Brand Trust, Behavioral Intention, Food Industry, Structural Equation Modelling

### Introduction

Approximately 3.5 billion people worldwide are active on social media, with Instagram boasting 802 million of these users. In today's landscape, businesses increasingly turn to social media to boost their brand visibility and enhance brand quality (Aji et al., 2020). Pakistan, with a total population of 242.8 million, is home to 122.37 million men and 120.42 million women. The country's internet user base is 111.0 million, with an internet penetration rate of 45.7%. Social media usage in Pakistan is at 71.79 million, and mobile connections total 188.9 million (Kemp, 2022). The advent of digital technology has propelled social media into a formidable tool that shapes consumer choices across various industries (Dolan et al., 2016). Social media's pervasive use and importance in daily life significantly influence the food industry. This study contributes to the existing knowledge by providing a comprehensive analysis of how various aspects of social media comments influence consumer purchasing decisions in the food sector. It reveals two primary ways in which social media comments impact consumer trust and purchase intentions, thereby extending the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and SOR. The findings have significant implications for individuals in the food industry seeking to engage with consumers through social media and manage their brand effectively. (Wu et al., 2021) described that high-quality online review information influences users purchasing decisions and can encourage a change in consumers' intentions and actual purchasing patterns. As seen by the millions of posts about the food industry, the camera always eats first when it comes to food. Taking a photo of your food at a restaurant and posting it to social media has become a worldwide trend in the current digital era and it keeps getting better (Marwick, 2015; Cash et al., 2022). According to (Nikolov et al., 2022; Dvergedal, 2021), marketers anticipate that over the next five years, social media spending will account for 71% of all marketing spending, allows marketers to carry out integrated marketing operations with little effort on social media. In 2024, the food market will generate US\$ 123.30 billion in revenue. The market is expected to expand by 7.62% a year (CAGR 2024-2028). The size of the food service market was estimated at USD 2323.29 billion in 2021 and it is expected to increase at a compound annual growth rate (CAGRO of 10.76% from USD 2540.05 billion in 2022 to USD 5194.6 billion in 2030 (Kemp, 2022). With over 250 million posts, the most popular hashtag on Instagram is #Food. Food content is viewed

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by 38% of Instagram users and it is shared by 27% of users (Formigoni, 2023). When making food decisions, a surprising 88% of consumers consider social media friend recommendations and online reviews. An estimated 22% of consumers are motivated to return to a place as a result of its social media presence (Alaql et al., 2023). The purchasing habits of consumers can occasionally be confusing and difficult. Continuous changing procedures have been greatly impacted by the open nature and simplicity of the facts; therefore, it is crucial to understand the challenges and possibilities focus that either keeps consumers from choosing to make another purchase or holds interested parties in mind. Thus, the decision-making process of consumers reveals the crucial elements of personal consumption behavior (Andoy et al., 2022). Management of marketing should pay close attention to what customers are saying and they can only do this by reading their comments (Dep, 2021). When making decisions on what to buy, especially food they gather information and utilize it. They visit food-related Facebook pages, read reviews, and conduct other online searches. Online reviews have become a valuable additional resource that helps customers decide what to buy when they shop online (Cho & Chan, 2021). The food industry faces complex challenges due to social media comments have an increasing impact on consumers' behavior. A lot of research has been done on online reviews. The comments of consumers or other people influence the new consumer, so positive comments can build trust in the consumers. It is still crucial to understand how these comments influence consumer decisions. There is very limited work on the role of comments, comments quality, comments quantity, commentator's credibility, and comments comprehensiveness that's why it is necessary to investigate the scenario that arises from the interaction of comments, food involvement, brand trust, and behavioral intention. The food managers and marketing managers should understand that it is important for businesses to manage this digital environment to understand the consequences effect on behavioral intentions by listening to consumers. By attempting to clarify these complexities, this study hopes to provide useful information for companies hoping to prosper in the digital age. Specifically, it will highlight the revolutionary influence of social media comments on consumer behavior in the food industry. The introduction of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) theory to understand the role of the comments industry provides a deeper understanding of how social media comments impact consumer behavior. The research aims to reveal the refined ways that define the modern relationship between social media comments and consumer decision-making in the context of food. The impact of social media comments on behavioral intention and brand trust will be examined in this study. The result will examine the types, timing, and styles of comments made on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. This study demonstrates how social media remarks can influence consumers' perception of the legitimacy and dependability of food businesses. An accurate grasp of the look will be provided by the research, which will include a wide range of food companies from restaurants to natural food items. The scope includes examining how consumers react socially and personally to the comments made on social media to identify a direct connection between these online interactions and the decisions consumers take later. The research will evaluate how these variables influence customers' behavioral intentions, including their ability to buy, support, or avoid something. The research will help the brand manager to understand consumers and the role of comments in shaping consumer purchase behavior.

### **Role of Social Media Comments on Consumer Behavior**

Social media comments can influence consumer behavior. Some consumers' share their experiences and feedback in the form of comments on social media platforms thus acting as a tool for spreading word of mouth among other consumers (Zhang et al., 2022). These comments act as influential cheerleaders or incentives influencing others' choices about restaurants to visit or try food (Zhu et al., 2022; Kwahk & Kim, 2017). However, the negative comments may cause concern and scare prospective consumers, highlighting the significant role that social media conversations play in influencing the decisions and viewpoints of consumers. Brands can learn a lot by listening to consumer's comments on social media, they can recognize industry trends and shifts in consumer preferences. Brands can build image and trust through responsible interaction with consumers on social media and can improve their business (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014; Andoy et al., 2022).

### **Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)**

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) is widely used to understand consumer information processing. Ho & Bodoff, (2024) states that consumers evaluate the credibility of information in different ways and use this in decision making. Two routes are involved in ELM theory, central and peripheral; customers use both for the selection of food.

The comments' quality and comprehensiveness define the central route, but the commentator's reliability and quantities are considered in the peripheral route. The central route focuses on the depth of information and the logical reasoning within comments, while the peripheral route focuses on external factors such as the reliability of the commenter, which is the marginal clue of online comments.

Additionally, behavioral intention and brand trust are closely related. Consumers' low willingness and aptitude for digesting information depend on the peripheral route. Consumers interpret information by the quantity of text, video, and photo comments and reviews. In comparison, the central route includes positive online comments on food quality, which can increase consumer interest. Brand trust can also be built through food-related posts because consumers' online comments can affect people's tastes (Zheng et al., 2018; Liao & Huang, 2021). ELM usage enables the differentiation between central and peripheral routes in the food industry through online remarks because useful data and content marketing affect consumers' attitudes and behavior (Wand & Lee, 2019). Reports showed that both central and peripheral routes exert impacts on behavioral intentions. When Dep (2021) used the ELM to observe the behavioral intentions of food, they concluded that online reviews positively enhance the consumers' behavioral intentions. The positive and negative impacts of both routes on consumers' intentions can be controlled by brand trust. Brand quality and accuracy positively impact behavioral intentions, such as the intense desire to purchase from or refer others to those brands. This study suggested that comments' content and context significantly influence customers' trust and buying behaviors. The application of ELM proved that different forms and reliable resources can positively and negatively impact customers' choices in the food industries (Wan, 2008; Brankovic & Zvezlj, 2010). When customers find parallels between their identities or experiences in comments, self-reflection improves communication efficacy (Chang, 2011). Furthermore, Malaviya (2007) observed that the frequency of communications affects the kind and level of elaboration, suggesting that regular interaction with comprehensive, high-quality comments can strengthen consumer confidence and buying intention in the food business.

### **SOR MODEL**

Mehrabian & Russell (1974) proposed the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organisms-Response) framework, which can be used to examine how different stimuli (contents, visuals, messaging) via food marketers affect people's internal state, which in turn impacts their behavioral responses. This is especially relevant to social media users who are food-related. The S-O-R framework has recently been extended to the multiple platforms research context to investigate how consumers' views of various platform interactions impact their behavior (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Xin et al., 2022). The stimulus is comments about food quality, quantity, commenter credibility, and comprehensiveness. Comments that the food is of excellent quality and advice from experienced or reliable people can be seen as a positive stimulus. Complimentary comments about a great deal of food act as a motivator. In-depth comments may also be viewed as motivating factors. Individuals interpret the information in the comments based on people's preferences, past experiences, and attitudes toward food. In the S-O-R model, brand trust serves as an organism, indicating an individual perception of the brand's reliability and trustworthiness. Positive comments can help to build brand trust among people. The SOR model represents that both stimulus (comments) and the mediating factors (the organism: brand trust) have an impact on consumers' intentions (response).

There is a need to investigate how social media comments affect consumer behavior in the food industry sectors by developing a theoretical framework, the S-O-R (Stimulus-Organism-Response) framework. This framework states that inputs in the case of social media comments change the organism (brand trust), affecting the reaction (behavioral goals). In this particular scenario, the essential path variables,

such as the comprehensiveness and quality of the comments, represent highly complex stimuli that fascinate customers.

These in-depth and insightful comments can greatly improve customer's comprehension and impression of a food brand, strengthening their brand trust. High-quality feedback that addresses all aspects of a product can enhance concerns and provide reassurance, leading to improved ratings and enhanced trust in the company. Excellent feedback that comprehensively covers all facets of a product can allay fears and give comfort, resulting in higher ratings and more faith in the company. Many researchers, including (Eroglu et al., 2001; Chang & Chen, 2008; Manganari et al., 2009; Kim & Lennon 2013; Demangeot & Broderick, 2016), have recently used the SOR paradigm to study consumer behavior. Understanding consumer behavior, including emotional and behavioral responses to websites, trust and intention to purchase, the impact of the online environment on consumer behavior and customer engagement and communication with other online businesses, all were investigated.

### **Online Comments**

Consumers use online reviews to convey their subjective judgement about food products they consume (Zhang et al., 2021; Verma & Yadav, 2021). The significance and impact of online reviews have increased with the swift growth of digital commerce. According to Liao & Huang (2021), online reviews offer users a valuable source of information for online trading platforms' feedback systems as they provide personal opinions and experiences from customers that can enable multiple directions interactions between sellers and buyers as well as between buyers and consumers. In spoken and written conversations, a commenter's quality is defined by its usefulness, reliability, and ability to further the conversations. It contributes meaningfully to conversations and is evaluated based on logical reasoning, clarity, and courtesy. The quantity of comments shows how frequently comments, exchanges, or viewpoints occur in a particular area or period. A comprehensive comment shows a deep comprehension of the topic of discussion by offering broad, extensive, and well-rounded information. When someone comments, particularly in an online debate or forum, their credibility is defined as how reliable, knowledgeable, and trustworthy they are deemed to be. The trust other people place in a commenter's contributions to a conversation is often determined by their knowledge, experience, or capacity to provide accurate and well-supported information.

### **Central Route**

The central route plays a role; consumers will invest more time and energy in assessing and judging knowledge and developing a stable attitude per ELM theory when they have high motivation and the capacity to process facts. Internet comments are extensive; customers have left favorable and unfavorable comments, and their usefulness is determined by the ELM's central and peripheral paths (Aghakhani et al., 2021). In their investigation into the significance of customers' early trust in the food sector, (Deng et al., 2022) found that in the context of a low level of trust, the caliber of online comments significantly influenced the intention of behavior. Zhang et al. (2018) thought that customer's perception of the value of online comments would improve their browsing habits.

### **Peripheral Route**

ELM theory states that the peripheral route is relevant when consumers have low desires and the capacity to understand details about food products. Customers will only process content-based data based on the quantity of text, photos, or video comments and the reviewer's credit. The attention and popularity of the product increase with the number of online comments, which influences the mentality of the consumers. According to (Zhang et al., 2022), consumers who participate in real-time online commenting experience a heightened sense of social presence. Additionally, the continuous flow of real-time comments considerably impacts consumers' perceptions of value and purchasing decisions. Online comments have grown in importance as a source of product knowledge for customers (Battad et al., 2022). The reliability of these comments influences customers' attention to buy by creating a virtual environment that greatly impacts online behavior intentions.

### **Brand Trust**

Research on brand trust stated that consumers' perceptions of the brand's distinctive attributes, such as skill, honesty, responsibility, and dependability, are the foundation of brand expectations. Khadim et al. (2018) stated that brand trust and perceived reliability from the customer's perspective developed through experiences and interactions that consistently meet performance expectations. Brand trust is the most crucial element that may increase or decrease its overall worth and give customers a feeling of attachment to the company. Trust can convince people to purchase a brand since it may inspire strong feelings in individuals. According to some beliefs (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), trust is essential for the success of relationship marketing activities. Trust has been considered a factor in an individual's communications, interaction levels, and judgments of food quality (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Mohar & Nevin, 1990; Anderson & Narus, 1990). Trust can be enhanced by favorable reviews about responsiveness and quality of the product and service, while it can be undermined by unfavorable comments (Kuan-Yin et al., 2007). Additionally, brand trust is also involved in the development of long-lasting relationships between consumers and food brands. Studies stated that customers' intentions and brand loyalty in the food business are significantly influenced by social media comments, which represent the experiences and views of consumers (Punniyamoorthy & Prasanna Mohan Raj, 2007).

### **Behavioral Intention**

According to the definition (Ajzen, 1980), a customer's behavioral intention is the extent to which an individual consciously plans to carry out or refrain from performing a specific future action. Positive and negative attitudes directly influence the strength of behavioral intent, the stronger the attention to perform a behavior, the more likely it is to be enacted (Kim et al., 2013). Studies on food menus demonstrated how customers' attitudes developed during the evaluation of food information impact their subsequent behavior (Din et al., 2012; Sun, 2013). A person's ability to act or a customer's willingness to use the procedure going forward is an example of behavioral intentions (Venkatesh et al., 2008). According to (Zeithmal et al., 1996), customer's behavioral intentions show whether or not they are willing to maintain a long-term relationship with the business. This is significant because several studies stated that keeping existing consumers seems more financially intelligent than attracting new ones from competitors, especially in mature markets (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Christopher et al., 1991; Kazemi et al., 2013). There has been little scientific study on the connection between brand trust and consumer's behavioral intentions, with a few notable recent expectations (Gounaris & Stathakopoulos, 2004; Wang et al., 2004). The researcher's preference to view attachment as a behavior of frequent purchases rather than an attitude appears to explain this lack of empirical study (Boulding et al., 1993; Olsen, 2002).

### **Hypothesis Development**

#### **Comments Quality and Brand Trust**

Previous research has shown that positive reviews and endorsements enhance consumer trust and contribute to behavioral outcomes like brand loyalty and advocacy (Drotar, 2009). Positive, detailed comments build credibility and encourage purchase, while negative comments highlight frequent issues that can harm brand reputation. However, quality comments can positively impact brand trust in the food sector. Food brands who aim to strengthen their market position foster an environment where high-quality feedback is encouraged and can be a strategic advantage. There is a need to investigate how the quality of social media comments can influence brand trust. Hence, this leads to the following hypothesis.

**H1:** High quality comments are positively associated with brand trust.

#### **Comments Comprehensiveness and Brand Trust**

Authentic and high-quality comments on social media substantially influence consumer trust by enhancing brand reputation. In the case of food brands, consumers look for information about flavor, safety, hygiene, and taste. Consumers generally trust brands linked to favorable, informative, and well-articulated reviews, which enhance brand reputation. The comprehensive reviews and comments on social media can promote profound information processing, resulting in consumers developing enduring, favourable sentiments toward the brand (Aghakhani et al., 2021). When initial trust is minimal, the caliber of online



comments significantly affects buy intentions, influencing consumer behavior and decision-making in the food industry. Our research addresses a significant gap in the literature about the precise mechanisms by which comment comprehensiveness influences brand trust in case of food sector. Hence, this leads to the following hypothesis.

**H2:** Greater comprehensiveness of comments is positively associated with brand trust.

### **Comments Quantity and Brand Trust**

A substantial volume of comments indicates brand popularity and can enhance consumer trust and purchasing decisions, as people view active participation as a marker of authenticity and reliability (Aghakhani et al., 2021). A substantial quantity of favorable remarks fosters a sense of community and reassurance, which is vital in the food industry, where trust in product quality and safety is paramount. Consistent customer contacts, including favorable evaluations and brand answers, enhance this perception by demonstrating transparency and dedication to customer happiness (Andoy et al., 2022). Hence, the volume and caliber of interactions in the comment section profoundly influence consumer trust and stimulate purchasing behavior within the competitive food sector. There is a need to investigate in the food sector how the quantity of social media comments can impact trust.

**H3:** A large quantity of comments is positively associated with brand trust.

### **Commentator's Credibility and Brand Trust**

Professional comments, particularly from reliable sources or experts, can enhance brand trust more effectively than generic customer feedback in the competitive business world. When consumers possess restricted time or interest, they depend on indications such as the credibility of commenters instead of engaging in thorough study (Andoy et al., 2022). There is a need to determine how consumers trust brands linked to reputable reviewers whose expertise or authority enhances brand reliability. Real-time, authoritative opinions can establish a social presence and shape customer views, making credible commentary a significant catalyst for brand trust.

**H4:** Higher credibility of comments is positively associated with brand trust (Andoy et al., 2022)

### **Brand Trust and Behavioral Intention**

Trust influences consumer behavior, especially in the food industry, where safety, integrity, and dependability are essential. Previous research indicates that customer trust in a food brand is associated with positive behavioral intentions, including recurrent purchases, brand loyalty, and referrals to others (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Kabadayi & Alan, 2012). Comprehending the mediating function of brand trust is essential for food enterprises seeking to cultivate enduring relationships and effectively shape consumer behavior (Donney & Cannon, 1997; Kabadayi & Alan, 2012). Hence, for food businesses, there is a need to investigate the role of brand trust in building behavioral intentions.

**H5:** Brand trust has a positive impact on behavioral intention.

Positive, high-quality social media comments increase customer trust in food brands, subsequently affecting their intent to engage with or purchase from the company. Well-crafted, informative, and credible comments enhance brand trust, hence elevating the probability that consumers would engage in favorable behaviors such as purchasing and endorsing the brand. Conversely, believable negative feedback may diminish trust, resulting in avoidance behaviors. Hence, comprehending the mediating function of brand trust enables food brands to influence consumer behavior via social media more effectively.

**H6:** The relationship between consumers' behavioral intentions in the food business and the quality of comments on social media is mediated by brand trust.

Social media comments play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior in the food industry. Detailed, positive comments enhance consumers' understanding of a brand, building trust and increasing the likelihood of purchase or recommendation. Conversely, thorough negative reviews can strongly discourage consumer engagement, as their depth and specificity make them highly persuasive. Both positive and negative comments, when comprehensive, significantly impact consumer trust and behavioral intentions. Hence, trust in the brand mediates the relationship between comment comprehensiveness and consumers' intentions.

Therefore, managing social media feedback is essential for influencing consumer decision-making in the food business.

**H7:** The relationship between consumers' behavioral intentions in the food business and the comprehensiveness of social media comments is mediated by brand trust.

A high number of positive comments boosts a brand's credibility, creating a social proof effect that encourages purchasing or recommendation (Andoy et al., 2022). Conversely, a large volume of negative comments can signal dissatisfaction, discouraging new customers. Therefore, brands should actively monitor and address online feedback to influence consumer intentions.

**H8:** The quantity of social media comments and consumers' intention to behave in the food business are mediated by brand trust.

Authentic positive reviews enhance brand reputation and encourage new customers, while reliable negative reviews can strongly deter engagement, raising doubts among potential buyers (Zhang et al., 2022). The perceived trustworthiness of comments amplifies their influence on consumer intentions. Consequently, brands should actively monitor and address credible feedback to shape consumer perceptions and behavior.

**H9:** The relationship between consumers' behavioral intentions in the food business and the credibility of comments made on social media is mediated by brand trust.'

## Methodology

### Data Collection and Procedure

The participants were given online Google forms and survey sheets that were divided into two portions. The data regarding the participants' demographic attributes was included in the first section. These characteristics included age, gender, and two screening questions. Questions about the study's constructs were asked in the second section of the survey form. A seven-point Likert scale was used to score the responses. A total of 367 responses were included in the sample size for this investigation, of which 316 were considered valid.

## Results

### Demographics

Table 1 represents the demographic profile of the respondents of the current study. Different age groups of people gave satisfactory results.

**Table 1. Representing Demographics**

		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-25	250	79.1
	26-33	42	13.3
	34-40	14	4.4
	Above 40	10	3.2
	Total	316	100.0
Gender	Male	180	57.0
	Female	136	43.0
	Total	316	100.0

### Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model assessment includes measuring internal consistency, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Hair Jr et al., 2017). The measurement model represents the relationship and pertinent items observed among latent variables (Muhammad, 2017).

**Table 2. Represents Reliability and Validity**

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho a)	Composite reliability (rho c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
<b>BINT</b>	0.780	0.781	0.872	0.695
<b>BT</b>	0.826	0.828	0.885	0.658
<b>CCRED</b>	0.671	0.676	0.858	0.752
<b>COMP</b>	0.814	1.126	0.873	0.697
<b>CQUAL</b>	0.738	0.749	0.851	0.657
<b>CQUAN</b>	0.632	0.637	0.844	0.730

The model's validity and reliability have been determined using the criteria shown in table 2.

#### Discriminant Validity

It is typically assessed in two stages: first, the discriminant validity and (partial) cross-loadings are determined using the Fornell-Larcker model (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

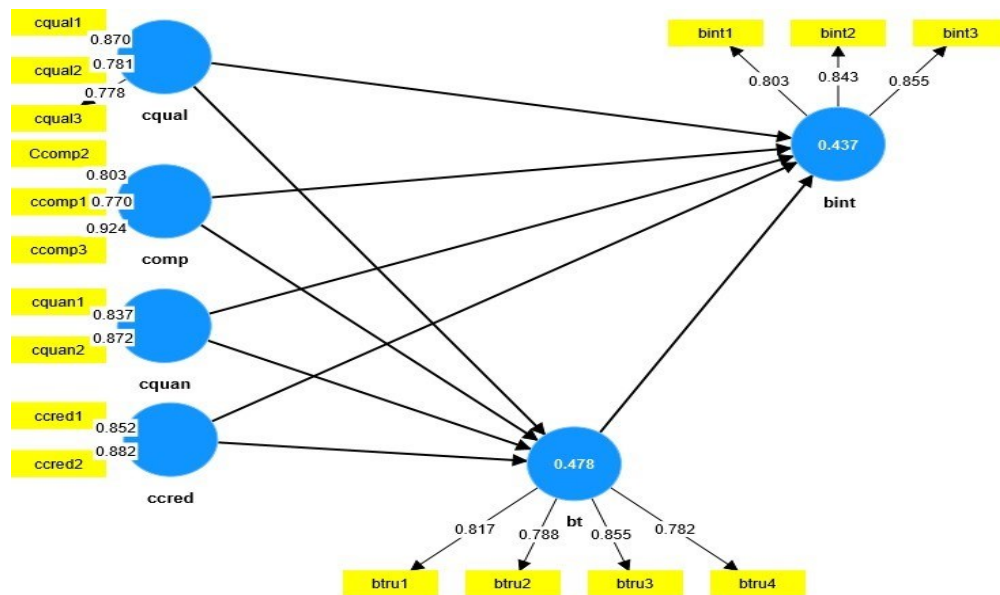
#### Fornell-Larcker criterion

**Table 3. Represents Fornell – Larcker criterion**

	BINT	BT	CCRED	COMP	CQUAL	CQUAN
<b>BINT</b>	<b>0.834</b>					
<b>BT</b>	0.616	<b>0.811</b>				
<b>CCRED</b>	0.500	0.574	<b>0.867</b>			
<b>COMP</b>	-0.094	-0.086	-0.131	<b>0.835</b>		
<b>CQUAL</b>	0.528	0.588	0.559	-0.074	<b>0.811</b>	
<b>CQUAN</b>	0.380	0.553	0.540	-0.069	0.489	<b>0.855</b>

As shown in Table 3, none of the off-diagonal values exceed their diagonals, so the conditions for the validity of discrimination are met, and the validity of discrimination is complete.

#### Cross Loading

**Figure 1. Cross loadings**

#### Structural Model Assessment

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), which indicates the percentage of the predictive connection ( $Q^2$ )—which provides the estimate of the model other than power and size ( $F^2$ )—is used to evaluate the model. This measure takes into account all outside influences on the model interior structure construction.

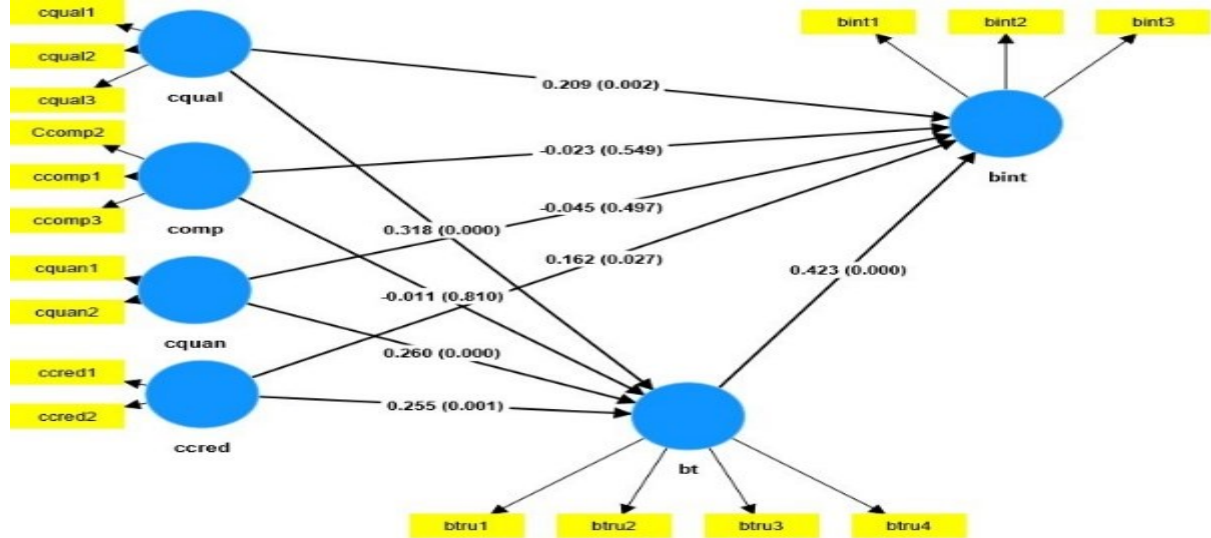


Ultimately, the hypothesis test was assessed based on the route coefficients' size, sign, and significance (Hair Jr et al., 2017; Quoquab et al., 2019).

### Multi-Collinearity Assessment

The first step in determining the convergence issues is to evaluate the model. In PLS-SEM, acceptance values of 0.20 or less and VIF values of 5 or higher, respectively, denote collinearity issues. If the VIF process involves convergence, the convergence issue should be fixed by removing the construct, combining it into a single construct, or creating higher orders.

**Figure 2. Shows multi-collinearity assessment**



### Direct Relationship

**Table 4. Represents direct relationships**

Relationships	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values
bt -> bint	0.423	0.418	0.079	5.362	0.000
ccred -> bint	0.162	0.162	0.073	2.211	0.027
ccred -> bt	0.255	0.254	0.074	3.424	0.001
comp -> bint	-0.023	-0.025	0.039	0.600	0.549
comp -> bt	-0.011	-0.017	0.047	0.240	0.810
cqual -> bint	0.209	0.215	0.069	3.047	0.002
cqual -> bt	0.318	0.320	0.060	5.274	0.000
cquan -> bint	-0.045	-0.042	0.066	0.680	0.497
cquan -> bt	0.260	0.259	0.060	4.334	0.000

There is a significant and positive relationship between the quality of comments and brand trust. Hypothesis (H<sub>1</sub>) is strongly supported by the T statistic (5.274) and P value (0.000) for this association. This result supports Hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>) and indicates that the quantity of comments indicates a strong positive association with brand trust. With a t-statistic of 4.334 and a p-value of 0.000, Hypothesis (H<sub>3</sub>) is strongly supported. Hypothesis (H<sub>4</sub>) is supported by the t-statistic of 3.424 and the p-value of 0.001. This relationship's t-statistic is 5.362, and its p-value is 0.000, which supports Hypothesis (H<sub>5</sub>). (H<sub>6</sub>) The observed relationship's statistical significance. A significant relationship between the quality of the comments and the behavioral intention is indicated in this instance by p=0.002 (H<sub>7</sub>). The observed relationship's statistical significance, p = 0.549 indicates that there is no statistically significant correlation between the comprehensiveness of the comments and the behavioral intention in this specific case. (H<sub>8</sub>) The observed relationship's statistical

significance.  $P = 0.497$  indicates that there is no statistically significant correlation between the quantity of comments and the behavioral intention in this particular case. ( $H_0$ ) The observed relationship's statistical significance.  $P = 0.027$  indicates a strong correlation between the credibility of the commentator and the intended behavior in the present instance.

### Mediation

Through the mediation the Hypothesis ( $H_a$ ), with a t-statistic of 4.120 and a p-value of 0.000 is significant. It is suggested that the detailed nature of comments does not significantly affect brand trust or future consumer behavior, hence supporting Hypothesis ( $H_b$ ) with the t-statistic of 0.235 and the P value of 0.815. Supporting Hypothesis ( $H_c$ ), this link is significant with a t-statistic of 3.140 and a p-value of 0.002. There is a significant link that supports Hypothesis ( $H_d$ ) as indicated by the t-statistic of 3.029 and the p-value of 0.002.

**Table 5. Represents mediation**

Relationships	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values
cqual -> bt -> bint	0.134	0.133	0.033	4.120	0.000
comp -> bt -> bint	-0.005	-0.007	0.020	0.235	0.815
cquan -> bt -> bint	0.110	0.109	0.035	3.140	0.002
ccred -> bt -> bint	0.108	0.105	0.036	3.029	0.002

### Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )

**Table 6. Coefficient of determination**

	R-square	R-square adjusted
BINT	0.437	0.428
BT	0.478	0.471

The model (Abrahams, 1986) is evaluated using table 6 that displays the coefficient above for determination ( $R^2$ ).  $R^2$  is a statistical measure of accuracy; numbers between 0 and 1 indicate higher levels of detail.

### Level of effect size $F^2$

Table 7 represents the values of  $F^2$ . Findings from a comprehensive review of the internal model are in the guide above. The analysis includes basic f-square measurements.

**Table 7. Represents level of effect size  $F^2$**

Variables	F-square
bt -> bint	0.166
ccred -> bint	0.026
ccred -> bt	0.073
comp -> bint	0.001
comp -> bt	0.000
cqual -> bint	0.044
cqual -> bt	0.123
cquan -> bint	0.002
cquan -> bt	0.085

### Predictive Relevance $Q^2$

Table 8 represent the values of  $Q^2$  and all the values are in an acceptable range. The  $Q^2$  values of all the variables in table 8 were larger than zero (0), indicating the predictive effectiveness of the model.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The present research investigated the influence of social media comments on consumer behavior in the food industry, mainly focusing on how these comments affect behavioral intention by influencing brand trust. This research suggested that quality, value, authority, and accuracy of customer feedback are the main factors that build brand confidence. Increased brand trust encourages favorable behavioral intentions like representation, loyalty, and purchasing choices.

**Table 8. Represents predictive Relevance  $Q^2$** 

Variables	$Q^2$ predict
bint1	0.227
bint2	0.236
bint3	0.176
btru1	0.305
btru2	0.266
btru3	0.327
btru4	0.287

The results demonstrated that online social media comments are crucial to brand trust and loyalty. This research suggested that an important variable in establishing brand trust is the nature of comments; positive comments enhance the brand trust of consumers (Cho & Chan, 2021). Comments' credibility helps build consumer confidence about food products. Other studies demonstrated that social media comments significantly influence brand trust and consumer intentions to purchase food (Jacinto et al., 2021). Through knowledge of these dynamics, brands may effectively move through the online environment and utilize consumer feedback to create closer bonds with their target audience. This study investigates how social media comments influence customers' buying selections in the food industry. The research findings demonstrated that social media comments significantly affect customers' desires and behavior because the decisions about the selection of food items and eating varieties depend on other customers' experiences, advice, and views. This study focuses on creating stable and persistent customer trust because it is vital for businesses in the food industry to regularly evaluate and respond to social media comments. In addition, this study provides information about Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), showing two different routes including the central route and the peripheral route, and their influence on customers' behavior (Wang & Lee, 2019). This primary channel provides in-depth information that helps customers select the best food in the food industry. In contrast, by giving the information of quantity and commentators credibility, consumers' choice can be enhanced by the peripheral route. Based on the data, social media platforms are effective means for consumers to share their experiences and for brands to connect with their target market. Food businesses can utilize social media's interactive features to answer client complaints, enhance their offers, and cultivate a devoted customer base by instantly asking for feedback and engaging in conversation. The study also demonstrated how important it is for social media comments to be genuine and reliable to influence consumer behavior. User-generated content has a greater chance of influencing consumers than traditional marketing methods do. The results also indicate that businesses in the food industry need to create complete social media plans that involve commenting and watching over comments, promoting satisfied clients to share their good experiences, and minimizing the adverse effects of reviews by providing efficient and timely customer care. Businesses' web profiles can be improved by enhancing customer involvement. This research adds to the expanding data of academic research on media marketing. It provides actionable advice for professionals in the food industry who want to utilize social media comments to impact consumer decisions.

### Limitations and Future Directions

The current study has several limitations that suggest valuable directions for future research. As this study was conducted solely in Pakistan, future cross-cultural and cross-country studies could provide more nuanced insights into the influence of social media comments on consumer behavioral intentions. While the study focused on the food industry, exploring other sectors, such as fashion, technology, tourism, and housing, could reveal variations in social media's impact across industries. Future researchers should expand this research to test if similar results apply to other food service.

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