

# Analysis Of Moderating Role Of E-WOM On Impulse Purchase Intentions For Street Food Using SEM Approach

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## ABSTRACT

Social media is crucial and effective tool in disseminating information about the low-end products. However, there is research gap regarding the connection between social media and hedonic value and how it influences impulse purchase intentions for local food vendors (street food) and moderating role of e-WOM. Present study, investigated how online advertising and hedonic value leads to impulsive purchase intentions, primarily focused on Indian street cuisine and moderating role of e-WOM, of 367 responses from Delhi-NCR (India), using PLS-SEM for data analysis. The empirical outcomes provide significant association between online advertising and impulsive buying tendencies specifically in the context of street food. Hedonic values strategically focusing on strong sense of enjoyment, motivation, pleasure, excitement among food fans, influences their impulse purchasing decisions. Secondly, e-WOM significantly moderates the impulse purchase decisions. The findings of present study prospects for implementing marketing strategies that can efficiently target and captivate fresh consumer.

**Keywords:** Social media, e-WOM, Purchase intention, impulse buying, hedonic value

## Introduction

India is notable for its wide varied cultural heritage, encompassing an extensive range of spices that contribute to the rich and distinct flavours of its cuisine. Additionally, India is noted for its food production, storage methods, and other aspects that contribute to the diverse nature of Indian cuisine. In India, food carries significant cultural significance since it serves as a representation of the rituals, traditions, and customs that unify the people (Singh, 2017). Due to the rapid economic expansion, metropolitan regions in India have seen an increase in job prospects for food sellers who are not subject to taxation or government monitoring. In western context, eating habits have seen change due to popularity of street food. Street food has consistently been a favoured choice among persons with low and intermediate incomes, particularly in urban areas of developing nations and growing economies. Street food vendors lack permanent brick and mortar structure, prefer using non-permanent structure or a mobile stall. Street vendors occupy vacant spaces on pavements or other public/private areas, or mobile vans, adding vibrancy to urban life and in many cornerstones of historical and cultural heritage sites adding employment to 4% of Indian population (WEIGO, 2019).

Researchers found that food exposed directly to the natural environment and sold by local vendors or hawkers is highly health risky (Raina, 2021). However, content promoted on various media platforms has several benefits at the present time, particularly when it comes to establishing a business through online marketing. Promoting through social networking is latest development among the new marketing tactics catering awareness needs among the consumers across various sectors (big and small). This new growing promotional technique allows street food sellers to utilize social media into their daily operations (Khokhar et al., 2019).

Online content on social media platforms by using catchy names and highlighting the thoughts preparation process creates emotional appeal among the viewers of different age groups. Rapid surge in viewership and content on these platforms, it has become incredibly easy for people to communicate and share their thoughts and ideas featuring product recommendations for customers. Utilizing online posted advertisements through

social media can generate significant publicity, attracting customers and boosting product demand. It is evident that sellers have significantly improved their engagement with local people and those from different geographical locations through the appealing content posted and shared in the form of short videos and live food preparations.

Numerous studies delve into comprehending the various key elements that influence impulsive buying behavior, such as shopping, cosmetics, online shopping, and fine dining establishments. In addition, numerous researchers have also discussed the impact of impulsive purchasing, yet none of the studies have identified a similar connection in relation to impulse buying. Street food has often been associated with concerns about hygiene, but the rise of social media has provided a powerful platform for vendors to showcase their food preparation process and final products, effectively promoting their offerings. Content disseminated on social e-platforms like YouTube, Instagram and Facebook create strong desire to purchase and consume products without much thought/ impulsively. Research has indicated that emotions and sentimental affection towards the content significantly impact on impulsive buying decisions. This is often influenced by compelling advertising messages and videos shared on social media platforms (Rahman & Hossain 2023).

Subsequently, the notion arose to examine the influence of online advertising posted promoting street food sellers leads to impulsive purchase among social media users. This research aims to investigate the impact of hedonic value achieved by impulse purchase behavior in the context of trying out street food.

### *Review of Literature*

#### **Online advertising through social media**

Social media significantly influence consumers' tendency to make impulse purchases. It plays an instrumental part in influencing impulsive purchasing behavior among the users. Additionally, it also impacts the shopping behavior of consumers (Xiang et al., 2016). Users on social platforms share a wide variety of experiences, ranging from their current mood to their thoughtful evaluations of products and services they are interested in. According to Rahman & Hossain 2023 it has emerged as a powerful means of disseminating business concepts to a wide audience. Social media has the potential to serve purposes beyond mere communication, as it may also be leveraged for commercial endeavours by taking the proper actions (Nasir, Khatoon, & Bharadwaj, 2018). Social media significantly creates excitement and capture consumers attention when it comes to unplanned purchasing decisions (Han, 2023; Madhu et al., 2023). Especially, earlier researchers have revealed that social media enhances consumers to circumvent to abide by traditional shopping procedure, frequently leading to unplanned buying intentions (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021; Han, 2023; Pellegrino et al., 2022; Wu et al., 2020; Yi et al., 2023). Young people devote a significant portion of their daily lives to engaging with others through social media platforms (El-Badawy & Hashem, 2015).

Social media provides modern platform where individuals can engage in the exchange of ideas, thoughts, and connect with others (Tien & Liao 2019). It provides a space for people to seek guidance, offer comments, and mobilize for various causes (Harchekar, 2017). According to Rydell & Kucera (2021), the three most popular social media networks are Instagram, Facebook, X formally twitter, and other online platforms. Social media significantly boosts in creating awareness of food delivery companies by generating excitement among the Gen-Z (Prajapati et al., 2020). Social media content significantly impact human brain and self-identity, (Zeitel & Tat, 2014). The information pool created by e-platform users, such as posts, comments, reviews and video sharing, play a crucial role in the creating a spark among the viewers (Abbas et al., 2019) leading to unintentional purchasing among gen Z (Kaushal et al., 2024).

Online content is a highly effective method of promoting products and services, leaving a strong impression on customers (Krishnamurthy, 2001). Previously researchers have identified various factors that impact on impulse purchases. These factors include the visual appeal of product images, the presence of banner ads, competitive pricing, and enticing advertising offers (Kervenoael et.al, 2009). Numerous studies have investigated the nature of internet purchasing impulse, exploring the psychological perspective (Wells et al., 2011). Although, consumers' buying behavior is shaped by the intellectual and emotional aspects of social media marketing whereas impulsive purchases can't be categorized under same lens (Koski, 2004). In addition, the different demographical profiles, such as age, gender, and socioeconomic level, have a substantial influence on the connection between social media content promotion and impulsive purchasing behavior (Chawla, 2020).

#### ***H1: Online promotional content through social media significantly induces impulse buying for local street food.***

##### ***Hedonic value***

Street food refers to a distinct method of providing food at locations that are close to areas with heavy pedestrian traffic, educational institutions, recreational areas, commercial hubs, and popular tourist spots (MichalWiatrowski, -Skubina, & Trafialek, 2021). A significant number of individuals lacking specialized skills generate a consistent source of revenue by engaging in the preparation and vending of meals in public areas. Nevertheless, there are inherent hazards associated with vending food on the streets. Several hazards associated with this include: creating accidents in crowded locations, facing penalties for obstructing sidewalks, engaging in unlawful sales, and employing underage labor (Sezgin & Şanlıer, 2016).

Hedonism principle is defined as pleasure of achieving desirable goal in lifestyle, and enthusiasm for enjoyment (Chauhan et al., 2020). Emotional pleasure can be derived from indulging in street food, according to Seo and Lee (2021). Ozdemir et al., (2018) found that hedonism plays a substantial role in predicting intentions to consume street foods. Enjoying street food can provide a delightful experience, allowing you to connect with the local culture. (She et al., 2021).

***H2: The impact of social media on purchasing intention for street food is significant when considering the hedonic value it provides.***

***Moderating role of e-WOM on impulse buying behaviour.***

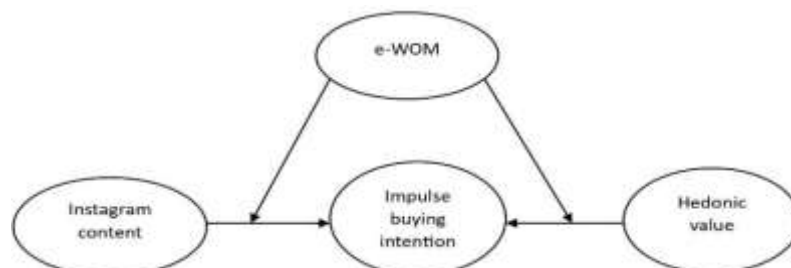
Customers have a hard time assessing the quality of the things they wish to acquire when they shop online. Internet word-of-mouth (e-WOM) is one of the primary metrics that customers use to judge online stores. "e-WOM" is specified to indicate the reviews posted by online shoppers posting their encouraging and adverse experiences with a product or service's quality and performance (Zhao et al., 2020). As per Cheung & Thadani (2010) encouraging and adverse posted by direct, indirect or potential consumer of the product or a company on social media platform influences the future prospects. According to a various researcher (e.g., Baber et al., 2016; Pinochet et al., 2019; Liew & Falahat, 2019), e-WOM provides valuable information on various attributes of shopping such as from where to buy, when to buy and how to buy. Furthermore, e-WOM is crucial since it has the ability to impact customers' perceptions of a product or business in the here and now as well as their propensity to switch brands in the future (Hirschfelder & Chigada, 2020).

The impact of e-WOM on purchasing decisions has been documented in several research. Cheung & Thandai (2019) found that while making purchases online, people trust e-WOM more than other sources of information. for the reason that e-WOM content may be both positive and bad, independent of marketing ads. and the data is more reliable as it is derived from actual customers who have bought the product and are not affiliated with the advertiser. Consumers are more inclined to take e-WOM into account when making evaluations, according to Cheung & Lee (2012), as the information derived by e-WOM is often more accessible and available for a longer duration. Consumers are more inclined to spread negative e-WOM when they are dissatisfied with a product's performance or the marketers' dedication to the brand than positive e-WOM when consumers are satisfied (Anderson, 1998). This makes online purchases less appealing to consumers (Kim et al., 2016).

Perceived value of the information provided via social media content and hedonic value to create purchase intention are all moderated by e-WOM (proposed research model) in this study. Influencing purchasing intention with online e-WOM can lower consumers' perceived risk while increasing trust. Earlier investigations have pointed about strong relationship between e-WOM and the intent towards unplanned purchases. For instance, according to studies done by Tien et al. (2019), customers typically look at reviews written by other customers before making a purchase. People are more inclined to buy something if the information they hear is good. On the flip side, if customers hear nothing but bad things about a store or product, they will stop buying from that business. Tien et al., (2019) established correlation between e-WOM and desire to buy. Before making or deciding to purchase, e-WOM acts as a cue in curating their response (reliability or purchase) of the customers from the vendor. E-WOM acts as a stimulus in encouraging customers to buy.

***H3: e-WOM acts as a moderator between the information posted via Instagram posts and unplanned intention to try out street food.***

***H4: When the hedonic value of street food is considered, e-WOM considerably moderates the desire to purchase.***



**Figure 1: Hypothetical model for the present study**

## Methodology

### Sample and Data collection:

With the tremendous surge in internet and social media users in India (2<sup>nd</sup> largest globally). The primary emphasis of this investigation is on India, namely the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) region. The questionnaire items were divided into two distinct sections. First, we acquired the demographic profile of the respondents, which included their gender, age, and level of education. The subsequent section consisted of

questions that were related to the factors that were being investigated. In accordance with the criteria that were defined, 230 of the total 300 questionnaires that were sent were analysed using a 7-point Likert scale. The remaining were discarded because they included insufficient information. In conclusion, the final number of respondents was supported by referring to representative samples for PLS-SEM, which were referred to by Hair et al. (2011).

7-likert scale ranged from SD (strongly disagree) to SA (strongly agree). The data analysis was carried out by using variance-based structural equation modelling (SEM) with the Smart-PLS software. The model is evaluated by testing the composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE) values, and the connection between the variables.

**Table 2: Construct items adapted from**

| S. No | Constructs used        | Authors Detail                             |
|-------|------------------------|--|
| 1     | Social media and Trust | Sharma et al., (2018), Ponte et al. (2015) |
| 2     | Hedonic Value          | Babine et al. (1994)                       |
| 3     | Impulse Buying         | Rook and Hoch (1985)                       |
| 4     | e-WOM                  | Rita et al. (2019)                         |

## Analysis and results

### Measurement model

Analysis for the present study was carried out using PLS-SEM. For assessing the reliability of the model, as shown in table 3, all items had loading values greater than the threshold (0.70), CV (convergent validity), CR (composite reliability) were found above the threshold value (0.70) (Ali et al., 2016), (Hair et al., 2019). Additionally, CR and Cronbach's alpha were greater than the acceptable values for good internal consistency (Hair et al., 2019, Chen et al., 2017).

Secondly, convergent validity (CV) was assessed by AVE (average variance extracted) ( $> 0.50$ ) for all construct items used in the study. Values greater than 0.50 signifies that all construct items met the prerequisite of CV (Hair et al., 2011).

**Table 3: Result of the measurement model**

| Constructs            | Parameters | Factor Loadings | Cronbach's Alpha | CR    | AVE   |
|-----------------------|------------|-----------------|------------------|-------|-------|
| Social media content  | SM1        | 0.708           | 0.785            | 0.882 | 0.601 |
|                       | SM2        | 0.753           |                  |       |       |
|                       | SM3        | 0.875           |                  |       |       |
|                       | SM4        | 0.742           |                  |       |       |
|                       | SM 5       | 0.789           |                  |       |       |
| Hedonic Value         | HV1        | 0.749           | 0.754            | 0.892 | 0.623 |
|                       | HV2        | 0.801           |                  |       |       |
|                       | HV3        | 0.792           |                  |       |       |
|                       | HV4        | 0.796           |                  |       |       |
|                       | HV5        | 0.806           |                  |       |       |
| Impulse Buying        | IB1        | 0.782           | 0.885            | 0.906 | 0.660 |
|                       | IB2        | 0.812           |                  |       |       |
|                       | IB3        | 0.792           |                  |       |       |
|                       | IB4        | 0.892           |                  |       |       |
|                       | IB5        | 0.779           |                  |       |       |
| e-word of mouth e-WOM | WOM1       | 0.881           | 0.842            | 0.898 | 0.746 |
|                       | WOM2       | 0.811           |                  |       |       |
|                       | WOM3       | 0.896           |                  |       |       |

Among the several methods for ensuring that measurement models are discriminately valid, Fronell-Larcker criteria is ranked high (Chen et al., 2017). Specifically, this criteria states that a construct's square root of its average variance must be larger than the correlation between that construct and any other construct. As shown in table 4 this criterion is met, complying with the thumb rule of the experts (Hair et al., 2011).

**Table 4: Result of Discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)**

| Variables          | Social media | Hedonic value | e-WOM  | Purchase intention | Moderating 1 | Moderating 2 |
|--------------------|--------------|---------------|--------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Social media       | 0.775        | -             | -      | -                  | -            | -            |
| Hedonic value      | -0.455       | 0.789         | -      | -                  | -            | -            |
| e-WOM              | 0.307        | -0.390        | 0.812  | -                  | -            | -            |
| Purchase intention | 0.605        | -0.586        | 0.413  | 0.863              | -            | -            |
| Moderating 1       | -0.207       | 0.007         | -0.111 | -0.245             | 1.000        | -            |
| Moderating 2       | 0.007        | -0.011        | 0.281  | 0.232              | 0.560        | 1.000        |



### Structural model

Structural models were evaluated with an intent to assess the predictive ability of the proposed model. Evaluation of the model was carried out by assessing how well a regression line fits actual data known as coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), the effect size ( $f^2$ ) and path coefficients.  $R^2$  value (69.8%) of the impulse purchase intention can be explained by social media (Instagram content), hedonic value, e-WOM\*social media information and e-WOM\*hedonic value (see figure 2). Thus, the predictive ability of the model examined in the current study lies in moderate category (Hair et al., 2019). To examine relative impact of exogenous latent variables on endogenous latent variables  $f^2$  was used through changes in  $R^2$  (Hair et al., 2012). The results of  $f^2$  were in medium category other than for e-WOM\* Hedonic value  $\rightarrow$  Impulse buying path (see table 5), as  $f^2$  values (0.02, 0.15, 0.35) point to small, medium and large effects (Chen et al., 2017).

Table 5:  $f^2$  results

| Path   | $f^2$ -values |
|--|---------------|
| Instagram content $\rightarrow$ Impulse buying         | 0.382         |
| Hedonic value $\rightarrow$ Impulse buying             | 0.046         |
| e-WOM * Instagram content $\rightarrow$ Impulse buying | 0.214         |
| e-WOM * Hedonic value $\rightarrow$ Impulse buying     | 0.002         |

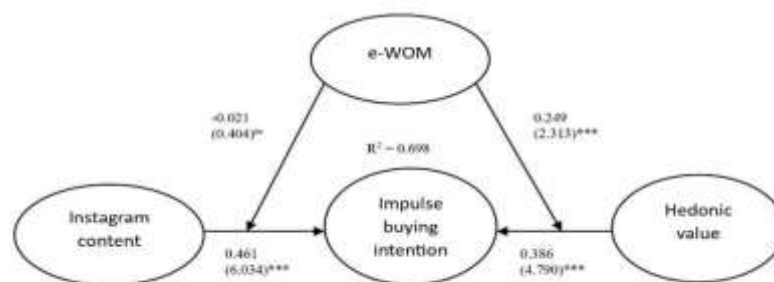


Figure: 2 Result of structural model analysis

As shown in table 6, H1, H2, H3 were supported whereas H4 was rejected. Firstly, Instagram content ( $\beta = 0.437$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and hedonic value ( $\beta = 0.363$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), had a positive and significant effect on impulse buying H1 and H2 were supported. Secondly, e-WOM was found to positively moderate the effect of Instagram content on impulse purchase intention ( $\beta = 1.353$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), thus H3 was accepted. On the other hand, contrary to moderation results of H3, e-WOM was unable to moderate the effect hedonic value on impulse buying decisions.

Table 6: Hypothesis testing result

| Hypothesis   | Path coefficients | t-value | p-value | Support |
|--|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Instagram content $\rightarrow$ Impulse buying         | 0.461***          | 6.034   | 0.00    | Yes     |
| Hedonic value $\rightarrow$ Impulse buying             | 0.386***          | 4.790   | 0.00    | Yes     |
| e-WOM * Instagram content $\rightarrow$ Impulse buying | 0.249**           | 2.313   | 0.013   | Yes     |
| e-WOM * Hedonic value $\rightarrow$ Impulse buying     | -0.021 n.s.       | 0.404   | 0.740   | No      |

Note: \*\*\* significant at  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*significant at  $p < 0.05$ ; (n.s): not significant.

Second, the empirical findings of this study also confirm the significant moderating role of e-WOM in strengthening the perception of social media information via. Instagram posts on impulse purchase intention (H4), which indicates, positive e-WOM minimise the risks faced by consumers by generating trust, triggering consumer impulse purchase intention. Several previous studies have found that e-WOM has a positive effect on impulse purchase intention (Madhu et al., 2023, Tien et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the findings in this study provide valuable insight of e-WOM as moderator in the relationship between social media content and hedonic value towards impulse purchase intention.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The empirical findings of the study affirm that in current scenario, it is evident that street food serves a large market and is rapidly growing attraction point due to various underlying factors such as low pricing, easy availability, value for money etc. In context to street food social media (Instagram), plays crucial role in raising awareness, particularly in exhibiting food preparation, among its users.

This industry is commonly regarded as disorganized, yet it has the potential to transition into a structured market by raising awareness among viewers and the public. Vendors have the potential to expand their sales operations and generate substantial income, which can significantly impact their financial security and overall quality of life. Social media is a contemporary concept that has increased popularity in expanding businesses. It serves as a platform for generating trending news, raising awareness, and facilitating networking, particularly

in the context of selling Indian street cuisine. Both structured and unstructured businesses can get advantages from networking, utilizing various forms of long-distance contact, sometimes in an informal manner.

Consumers conveniently engage with street food sellers due to the online advertisement they view on social media. As, it facilitates easy sharing of information, leading to the creation of e-WOM among consumers. This, in turn, helps in affection and emotional attachment, excitement, or pleasure intent ultimately triggering their impulsive purchasing behaviour for the consumption of Indian street food. In context to street foods, viewers form an emotional connection with the information they come across the social media platform, which impacts their sense of enthusiasm to consume these food items. The most notable real-life instance occurred in Delhi NCR with the emergence of Baba Da Dhaba. Residents from the neighbouring area came to the aid of the elderly seller and his wife by purchasing and devouring the meals they were delivering.

Furthermore, the empirical findings of the present study also confirm significant moderating role of e-WOM in strengthening the e-content shown on social media (Instagram) on impulse buying intention (H3), indicating that positive e-WOM leads to trust and attachment triggering impulse purchase intentions. As earlier, (Tien et al., 2019, See-To & Ho 2014) indicated positive effects of e-WOM on purchase intention. In addition, the present study provides insights about moderating effects of positive e-WOM on impulse purchase intentions. On the other hand, the moderating effect of e-WOM in effecting the role of hedonic value leading to impulse purchase intention (H4) results were non-significant.

Furthermore, the outcomes of statistical analysis indicate that e-WOM has a significant role in decreasing customer perceptions of risks associated with trying-out street meals, hence leading to an increase in consumers' inclination to make impulsive purchases. Moreover, the statistical results have demonstrated significant influence of e-WOM in regulating the connection between Instagram content and the propensity to make impulsive purchases. This information is highly valuable, since customers prefer to prioritize the prominence of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) in the field of electronic commerce (Kim et al., 2016). The stronger and more influential electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) is, the more customers will be stimulated, and vice versa. In summary, the findings of this study are applicable to marketers, Instagram content creators, and local fast-food vendors that value customer trust, want to reduce risks, and are interested in understanding how e-WOM in form of reviews, feedbacks influences consumer purchase intention.

### Limitations of the present research

Despite our utmost efforts, it is undeniable that present study still has limitations. This study focuses only on the utilization of e-WOM as a moderating factor in the connection between Instagram content and the hedonic value that ultimately influences the desire to make impulsive purchases from local fast-food vendors.

However, it is plausible that consumer behaviour is impacted by several elements, and one significant factor is the consumer's situational and experiencing circumstances. Hence, it is strongly advised to consider nexus between social media and hedonic value, which ultimately influences the propensity to make impulsive.

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