



## The Impact of Social and Peer Influence on Intention to Purchase in the E-commerce Market

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### ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of e-commerce has changed consumer buying behavior. Social engagement is particularly prevalent in developing markets and is a key component, but it also brings unpredictability. This research explores the impact of social influence and time on consumers' propensity to buy in the e-commerce market, with attitude and e-commerce serving as mediating factors. Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the study adopts a deductive approach and collects a sample of 260 through a survey questionnaire for data analysis. Data was collected via structured questionnaires and analyzed using PLS-SEM. According to the findings, social and peer influences significantly affect both consumers' attitudes toward e-commerce and their purchase intentions, with attitude toward e-commerce mediating the link between social, peer influences and purchase intention. The study offers useful insights into e-commerce platforms and markets, highlighting how social and peer-based strategies can increase consumer engagement and adoption, especially in emerging economies such as Pakistan.



## Introduction

The advancement of digital technologies has led to the rise of e-commerce, a major way to purchase and sell goods and services enabled by the development of digital technology and the widespread use of the Internet, which has transformed global business (Rolando & Mulyono, 2025). The popularity of e-commerce platforms has increased significantly in recent years in developing nations like Pakistan, driven by rising Internet penetration, the spread of smartphones, and the expansion of digital payment methods (Daniyal et al., 2025). However, despite the expansion, customer concerns about trust, security, and product quality remain significant obstacles to increasing the role of social and peer influence in online buying behavior (Lee, 2025).

Social influence refers to the extent to which individuals' opinions and decisions are influenced by others within their social environment, such as family, friends, colleagues, and online communities, in the context of e-commerce (Patwa et al., 2025). Consumers often rely on reviews, recommendations, and shared experiences to reduce perceived risk and uncertainty (Nguyen et al., 2026). Peer influence, as a specific form of social influence, plays a critical role in shaping attitudes and intentions by providing credible experiences and information that enhance consumer confidence in online purchase intentions (Lee, 2025).

While previous studies have explored the combined impact of social and peer influence, and attitude towards e-commerce in the context of Pakistan, they have focused on elements such as perceived value and technology acceptance (Sanam et al., 2024). The current research addresses this gap by examining the direct impact of social and peer influence on purchase intention as well as the moderating influence of attitude toward e-commerce. The study seeks to contribute to the current body of knowledge and provide useful advice to e-commerce enterprises looking to improve customer engagement and adoption through social-driven approaches.

The theory of Planned behavior (TPB hereafter) serves as the foundation for this research which proposed that attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, all affect behavioral intention, people's impressions of what is socially acceptable, or encourage our influence by social and peer pressure which are closely linked to subjective norms furthermore, the technology acceptance model (TAM) explores how users' perceptions of visibility and ease of use affect their attitude and behaviors about adopting technology such as e-commerce platform when used together TPB and TAM offers a solid theoretical basis for comprehending how social and peer influences impact consumer opinions, and purchasing choices.

## **Literature Review**

### **Social influence and Online Buying Behavior/ Purchase intention through E-Commerce**

Prior literature claims the positive impact of social influence on online purchasing recommendations (Chaudhary et al., 2024). They suggested that households and consumers are influenced by external factors, such as social influences on product perceptions. The objective is to understand how social influence affects online purchasing decisions and how e-commerce companies can leverage it to improve customer relationships and sales. Furthermore, recent literature indicates that normative social influence plays a significant role among new urbanites in E-commerce, especially rural people who have become urbanized in their place (Wang & Zhang, 2023). During rapid urbanization, reinforcing social norms around online purchasing can encourage sustainable e-commerce and help close the digital gap between urban and rural areas. Moreover, earlier literature analyzes how peer influence contributes to impulsive purchases in social commerce (Hu et al., 2019). It concludes that informational and normative social influence, which in turn encourages impulsive purchasing behavior in e-commerce environments, are enhanced by social support and peers' credibility. In addition, recent literature indicates that social capital increases emotional connection both directly and indirectly through peer pressure (Yan et al., 2023).

### **Peer Influence and Online Buying Behavior**

Gunawan et al. (2023) describe the intention to purchase in E-commerce and show that consumers become more interested and confident in choosing a product based on their peers' opinions. It shows a person's attitude towards e-commerce, and trust in the opinion from family and peers can increase purchase intention. The objective is to understand how peer influence affects online

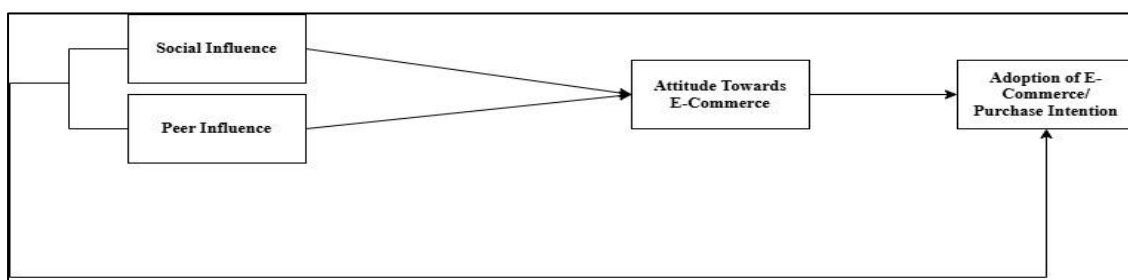
purchasing decisions and how e-commerce companies can leverage it to improve customer relationships and sales. Recent literature claims that social capital increases emotional connection both directly and indirectly via peer pressure (Yan et al., 2023). Moreover, literature claims that social capital affects users' emotional connection to social e-commerce platforms (Chen et al., 2024). Furthermore, prior literature indicates that peer influence through user-generated content drives eco-friendly product purchases more effectively than marketer-generated content (Jusoh et al., 2012). It finds that informational and normative peer influence boost buying intentions

Furthermore, Permatasari and Jaelani (2021) focus on the importance of perceived value, trust, and security in building customer loyalty in e-commerce. It shows a positive effect on consumer purchase intention. The objective is to identify the factors that influence consumers' behavioral intention to purchase in social commerce. Prior literature claims that peer influence through user-generated content drives eco-friendly product purchases more effectively than marketer-generated content (Jusoh et al., 2012). It finds that informational and normative peer influence boost buying intentions.

### **Theoretical framework and underpinning theory**

The theoretical framework in the study is based on two fundamental theories that clarifies the actions among peer influence and social influence and purchase intention to purchase an e-commerce in particular the theory of plant behavior, which is basically the TPB acts as a core framework the TPB is an extension of theory of recent action is a framework that actually clarifies how an individual behave is basically influenced by their actions (Fishbein, 1975; Fishbein, 1980). This theory Mainly highlights the principles of three main principle factors which are attitude towards the behavior, pertains to persons, individual perspective and specific behavior, including the total knowledge and beliefs in perceived behavioral control refers to the degree to which a person feels that they can govern their own actions Shaped by internal factors like ability and motivation, and with the external elements, such as resources support impacting intention to act in a specific ways and directly affecting behave.

The idea is strongly connected by Bandura (1982), which shows a concept of perceived effectiveness, where more subjective norms indicate how people view others' beliefs regarding a particular action. The theory of land behavior differentiates among these three beliefs, offering in-depth insight into the elements that influence behavioral intentions and actions. In the realm of e-commerce TPB, it provides insight into how pure pressure and social impact can affect a person's purchase intentions, attitude, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms, which are important factors in this mechanism. It is the model that approximates how users behave when receiving a technology based on its perceived usefulness (Davis,1989). TAM suggests that social influences, such as compliance, internalization, and identification, are involved. The main objective of TAM was to pay attention to the processes underpinning the acceptance of technology. It simply explains how people decide to use technology, and it has two main factors.



**Figure 1: Theoretical Framework**

## **Research Methodology**

It is suitable for studying and testing the relationship of social and peer influences on purchase intention in e-commerce and focuses on empirical data. The data is theory-driven (e.g., TPB and TAM), hypothesis testing is used, and the research moves from general theories to specific variables and relationships. This research is survey-based because it uses existing data, focuses on relationships, involves no variable manipulation, and uses a quantitative approach. The research is based on a mono method because the research involves collecting data through a single method and it focuses on a single paradigm. It provides a snapshot of the relationships between social influence, peer influence, and purchase intention. It focuses on current relationships between variables.

The target population for this study consists of consumers in Pakistan who have prior experience purchasing goods or services through e-commerce platforms (e.g., Daraz, Foodpanda, OLX, or similar online retail channels). Because the study's theoretical foundation, the TPB and the TAM, assumes respondents have a meaningful experiential basis for forming attitudes and behavioral intentions toward e-commerce, only individuals with at least one prior online purchase experience were considered eligible to participate. The demographic profile of the achieved sample indicates that the accessible population was concentrated among digitally engaged young adults: 70.77% of respondents were aged 18–22, and 66.92% held a graduate-level education. This suggests the study's findings are most representative of young, educated, urban e-commerce consumers in Pakistan, predominantly students and early-career professionals, rather than the broader national population of online shoppers across all age and income brackets.

The study therefore employed non-probability convenience sampling, supplemented by snowball sampling, as the self-administered online questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp groups, and respondents were encouraged to share the survey link within their own networks. Sample size adequacy for PLS-SEM was evaluated using the "10-times rule" (Barclay et al., 1995; Hair et al., 2019), which recommends a minimum sample size of ten times the largest number of structural paths directed at any single construct in the model.

Data was analyzed using PLS-SEM in SmartPLS 4, given its suitability for prediction-oriented research with reflective measurement models and moderate sample sizes. Analysis proceeded in two stages: (1) assessment of the measurement model (internal consistency reliability via Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, convergent validity via Average Variance Extracted, and discriminant validity via the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio), followed by (2) assessment of the structural model (path coefficients,  $R^2$ , and mediation analysis using bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples). Descriptive and correlation analyses were conducted to supplement the SEM results.

The present study measures the impact of social and peer influences on intention to purchase in e-commerce using a 5-point Likert scale adapted from the literature.

**Table 1: Measurement of Variable**

<b>Variable Name</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Measurement Scale</b>	<b>Source</b>
Social Influence	Social influence has a substantial influence on the seller Social influence has a substantial influence on the buyer People with the same interests influence my purchasing decisions	5 Likert Scale	(Chaudhary et al., 2024)

Peer Influence	Someone important influences my purchasing decision	5 Scale	Likert	(Gunawan et al., 2023)
	Positive social feedback affects my purchasing decision			
	My peer gives me valuable information about products			
	My peers and I discuss product information			
	I rely on peers' recommendations when making a purchase			
	My peers consistently do something that influences my purchasing decision			
	My peers share their experiences with products			
Attitude toward Online Shopping	My peers share their knowledge about products	5 Scale	Likert	(Hu et al., 2019)
	I benefit from using e-commerce technology			
	I feel the value of using e-commerce technology			
	I am interested in using e-commerce technology			
Purchase Intention	Using e-commerce technology is a fun experience	5 Scale	Likert	(Mariani & Iqbal, 2017)
	I am interested in owning a product I see online			
	I consider making a purchase online			
	I am interested in trying products I see online			

## Results and Findings

### Descriptive Analysis

A total of 260 respondents participated in the study. Female respondents constituted most of the sample (58.85%, n = 153), while male respondents accounted for 41.15% (n = 107). Regarding age, most respondents belonged to Age Category 1 (70.77%, n = 184), followed by Age Category 2 (18.08%, n = 47). Categories 3 and 4 represented smaller proportions of the sample, accounting for 5.77% (n = 15) and 5.38% (n = 14), respectively. In terms of educational attainment, the majority of respondents fell within Education Category 2 (66.92%, n = 174). This was followed by Education Category 1 (19.23%, n = 50) and Education Category 3 (11.92%, n = 31), while Education Category 4 (1.92%, n = 5) represented the smallest group. Regarding income, more than half of the respondents belonged to Income Category 1 (56.92%, n = 148). The remaining respondents were distributed across Income Category 3 (13.85%, n = 36), Income Category 2 (11.92%, n = 31), Income Category 4 (10.38%, n = 27), and Income Category 5 (6.92%, n = 18). Overall, the sample was predominantly composed of female respondents, younger participants, individuals from Education Category 2, and those belonging to Income Category 1.

**Table 2: Demographic analysis**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	153	58.85
Male	107	41.15
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age Category</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
18-22	184	70.77
23-27	47	18.08
28-32	15	5.77
33 and above	14	5.38

<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education Category</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
High School	50	19.23
Graduation	174	66.92
PGD	31	11.92
Masters	5	1.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Income Category</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
25 to 49k	148	56.92
50 to 74k	31	11.92
75 to 99K	36	13.85
100 to 124k	27	10.38
125k and above	18	6.92
<b>Total</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>100</b>

**Correlation Analysis**

The correlation matrix shows the strength and direction of relationships between IP, SI, PI, and AE. According to Cohen (1988), correlation coefficients ranging from 0.50 to 0.69 indicate a moderate-to-strong positive relationship, whereas values above 0.70 indicate a strong relationship.

**Table 3: Correlation Matrix**

	<b>IP</b>	<b>SI</b>	<b>PI</b>	<b>AE</b>
IP	1.00			
PI	0.54	0.73	1.00	
AE	0.61	0.55	0.64	1.00

The table presents the results of the measurement model assessment, including factor loadings, Cronbach's Alpha (CA), rho\_A, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). These indicators were used to evaluate the reliability and convergent validity of the constructs. Table 4 shows the factor-loading variable items; the minimum value is 0.69, which meets the threshold for constructing a variable from items. The reliability analysis of all constructs meets the threshold values; for instance, CA values range from 0.78 to 0.90, indicating the items' internal consistency. Moreover, the average variance is also near the threshold level of 0.5.

**Table 4: Reliability and Validity**

	<b>Loadings</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>rho_a</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>
AE1	0.904				
AE2	0.909	0.868	0.869	0.919	0.792
AE3	0.855				
IP1	0.848				
IP2	0.844	0.820	0.821	0.893	0.735
IP3	0.880				
PI1	0.802				
PI2	0.787				
PI3	0.694	0.854	0.856	0.892	0.579
PI4	0.757				
PI5	0.805				

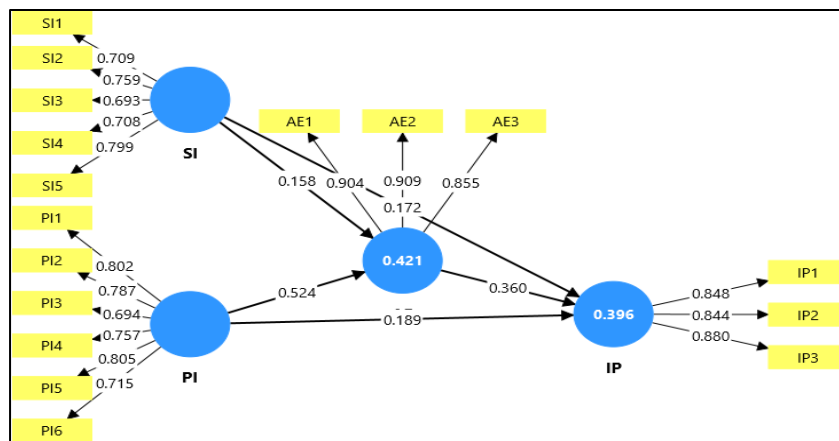
PI6	0.715				
SI1	0.709				
SI2	0.759				
SI3	0.693	0.787	0.798	0.854	0.539
SI4	0.708				
SI5	0.799				

The Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) is a widely recommended method for assessing discriminant validity in PLS-SEM. According to Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015), discriminant validity is established when HTMT values are below 0.85 (strict criterion) or 0.90.

**Table 5: HTMT Matrix**

	AE	IP	PI
AE			
IP	0.679		
PI	0.742	0.644	
SI	0.643	0.618	0.884

As the measurement model satisfied all reliability and validity criteria, the structural model was evaluated. Two exogenous constructs were specified as predictors of each endogenous construct (AE and IP). With a sample size of 260, the model demonstrated adequate statistical power relative to model complexity. The R<sup>2</sup> values of 0.421 (AE) and 0.396 (IP) indicate moderate explanatory power according to Chin's (1998) thresholds (0.19 weak, 0.33 moderate, 0.67 substantial). The minimal divergence between R<sup>2</sup> and adjusted R<sup>2</sup> values ( $\Delta R^2$  of 0.008 and 0.012, respectively) reflects the favorable ratio of sample size to predictor count, confirming that the explained variance is not an artifact of overfitting and that the model's predictive accuracy is dependable.



**Figure 2: Measurement Model**

**Table 6: Hypothesis testing**

	Coeff.	S.D	T-values	P-values
PI -> AE	0.524	0.108	4.852	0.000
SI -> AE	0.158	0.109	1.447	0.148
AE -> IP	0.360	0.111	3.247	0.001
PI -> IP	0.189	0.121	1.559	0.119
SI -> IP	0.172	0.102	1.697	0.090

Mediation analysis was conducted following the typology reported in prior literature (Zhao et al., 2010). Results revealed that AE fully mediates the relationship between PI and IP, as the indirect effect (PI→AE→IP:  $\beta = 0.189$ ) was supported by significant a- and b-paths ( $t = 4.852$  and  $t = 3.247$ , respectively), while the direct effect of PI on IP was non-significant ( $\beta = 0.189$ ,  $t = 1.559$ ,  $p = 0.119$ ). This indicates that PI influences IP entirely through its effect on AE, rather than directly. In contrast, no mediation was found for the SI–AE–IP path, as the SI→AE relationship was non-significant ( $\beta = 0.158$ ,  $t = 1.447$ ,  $p = 0.148$ ), and the direct effect of SI on IP was only marginally significant at the 10% level ( $\beta = 0.172$ ,  $t = 1.697$ ,  $p = 0.090$ ). These findings suggest that attitude towards E-commerce (AE) plays a critical mediating role between peer influence (PI) and social influence (SI) in explaining intention to purchase (IP).

**Table 7: Mediation Results**

Path	Coeff.	t-value	p-value	Significant?
PI → AE ( $a_1$ )	0.524	4.852	0	Yes
SI → AE ( $a_2$ )	0.158	1.447	0.148	No
AE → IP ( $b$ )	0.36	3.247	0.001	Yes
PI → IP ( $c_1'$ , direct)	0.189	1.559	0.119	No
SI → IP ( $c_2'$ , direct)	0.172	1.697	0.09	No (marginal at 10%)

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined the impact of Social Influence (SI) and Peer Influence (PI) on consumers' Intention to Purchase (IP) in the Pakistani e-commerce market, with Attitude toward E-commerce (AE) tested as a mediating mechanism, grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Technology Acceptance Model.

The findings show that peer influence affects both attitude towards e-commerce and the intention to purchase, with a significant and positive influence in the situation of Pakistan. In emerging markets, the risks of uncertainty, payment security, and product quality are frequently higher, and peer recommendations play an important role in selecting products through e-commerce (Farhat et al., 2025). Friends, family members, or work colleagues play a powerful role in fostering a positive attitude towards e-commerce by sharing their personal experiences and minimizing perceived risk (Tseng et al., 2025). These results align with previous research on emerging markets, highlighting the role of interpersonal influence in shaping online consumer attitudes and intentions (Hajili et al., 2014).

This pattern indicates full mediation: peers do not influence purchase intention directly but rather shape it indirectly by first shaping consumers' attitudes toward e-commerce as a channel. This is consistent with prior findings that peer recommendations reduce perceived risk and uncertainty in online transactions (Hu et al., 2019; Gunawan et al., 2023), which is particularly salient in an emerging market like Pakistan, where trust, payment security, and product-quality concerns remain significant barriers to e-commerce adoption (Farhat et al., 2025). Friends, family, and colleagues appear to function less as direct persuaders of a purchase decision and more as credibility-building sources that make the e-commerce channel itself feel safer and more legitimate (Tseng et al., 2025).

Furthermore, Ajzen et al. (2020) state that social influence positively affects both attitude toward e-commerce and purchase intention, while attitude itself significantly predicts purchase intention, thereby confirming its mediating role. In Pakistan, social norms, online communities, and social media influencers shape consumers' perceptions of the legitimacy and usefulness of e-commerce

platforms, thereby fostering positive attitudes. This result aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, which posits that social influence indirectly affects behavioral intention through the formation of attitudes. Ayo et al. (2016) state that prior studies in developing-country contexts similarly report that positive attitudes toward e-commerce are associated with higher purchase intentions.

The central theoretical contribution of this study is that Attitude toward E-commerce operates as the critical psychological mechanism linking interpersonal influence to purchase behavior — fully consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior's core premise that proximal attitudes, not distal social pressures, are the more immediate driver of intention. This also extends the Technology Acceptance Model to a social-commerce context, suggesting that in emerging markets, social/peer cues serve largely as inputs to platform-level attitude formation rather than as standalone determinants of purchase decisions.

This study set out to examine how social and peer influences shape consumers' purchase intentions in the Pakistani e-commerce market, and whether attitude toward e-commerce mediates these relationships. The results show that peer influence is the dominant interpersonal driver of purchase intention, operating entirely through its effect on consumer attitude, whereas social influence, in its broader, more generalized form, does not exert a significant independent effect once peer influence is accounted for. These findings underscore the centrality of attitude formation, built through credible peer experience rather than generalized social pressure, as the mechanism by which interpersonal influence translates into e-commerce purchase behavior in an emerging-market context. For practitioners, the implication is clear: cultivating authentic, peer-driven trust signals is likely to be a more effective lever for e-commerce growth in Pakistan than broad-based social influence strategies alone.

The findings suggest that strengthening social and peer-based communication strategies is crucial for accelerating e-commerce adoption in Pakistan. The present study is limited to emerging adults in Pakistan due to resources and time utilization. The present study adopts only one mediator: customers' attitude towards e-commerce. In the future, data can be expanded to all age groups in different regions. Moreover, other variables, such as trust and the perceived value of online shopping, can also be added as mediating or moderating variables.

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