

From e-WOM Drivers to Sustainable Decisions: Review Adoption as a Mediator in Eco-Label Buying Products in Emerging Markets

Amir Saeed ^a Asma Rehman ^b Awais Alam ^c

Abstract: This study aims to investigate the effect of e-WOM on consumers' purchase intention for green eco-label products in the context of environmental sustainability and to explore how to create positive e-WOM by using these determinants. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data from 400 graduate and postgraduate students who had knowledge of green eco-label products. The data were analyzed through structural equation modeling (SEM). Results indicate that homophily, tie strength, valence of comments, receiver's search extent and perceived source credibility have significant relationship with green purchase intention. Likewise, electronic review adoption and green purchase intention also have a positive relationship. The research results provide marketers with an understanding of young consumers' intention regarding the purchase of green eco-label products, which ultimately supports the purchase intention of buying green products. From a managerial standpoint, this study provides valuable insights into how marketers can tap into key factors of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) to sway consumer behavior towards sustainable choices. Businesses can strategically increase consumer engagement with green products by creating online spaces that prioritize reliable sources, pertinent peer networks, and positive message framing. The research introduces a detailed model of e-WOM factors that can guide focused digital marketing strategies, with the goal of enhancing green brand visibility and encouraging environmentally conscious consumer.

Keywords: Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM), Social Networking Sites (SNSs), Green Eco-label Products, Homophily, Tie Strength, Purchase intention

Introduction

Electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) is one of the most valuable marketing strategies, as it involves leveraging personal email, blogs, instant messaging, online customer reviews, and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to disseminate the information. E-WOM is an important factor that influences consumer decision making around the world because information that is shared by people's personal experiences and opinions can influence buying decisions (Roy et al., 2024). In addition, with the growing use of social commerce tools, E-WOM has become an indispensable information source for users making purchasing decisions (Iqbal et al, 2022).

In addition to being effective, E-WOM is a cost effective way to connect with consumers and is widely perceived as one of the most reliable and persuasive marketing strategies (Bushara et al., 2023). With the growth and expansion of social media as the dominant medium for communication in today's society, consumers' attitudes to products have drastically changed. In addition, this increase in growth has also heightened the potential and reach of E-WOM, along with the facilitation of social network sharing of reviews, recommendations, opinion and notification on a global scale (Akbari et al., 2022).

However, since the evolving landscape of social networks poses multiple challenges for our understanding of the perceived impact of E-WOM, external factors such as opinion leaders' influence, the

^a Associate Professor, Department of Marketing, Institute of Business Management (IoBM), Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

^b Senior Lecturer, Department of Marketing, Institute of Business Management (IoBM), Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

^c Assistant Professor, Institute of Management Sciences (IM Sciences), Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

nature of the platform (Sudaryanto et al., 2025), and the quality of relationships between consumers and social network sites (SNS) have traditionally played increasingly significant roles in an informed consumer decision process (Ngo et al., 2024). Word-of-mouth (WOM) advertising is an important channel for eliciting awareness of products as it involves the communication of marketing information among the consumer population in order to alter his/her behavior, perceptions and attitudes (in turn supporting his/her decision making process when deciding to purchase a product or brand) (Widjaya, 2025 & Grewal et al., 2003). WOM is also regarded to be a more trustworthy type of communication medium compared with non-personal media and because consumers consider WOM more reliable in buying decisions (Mainolfi & Vergura, 2022).

In recent years, environmental issues have attracted a high degree of attention both by the governments as well as by the marketers on the global level (Doan, et al., 2024 & Rahim, et al., 2016). These stakeholders on the global level are not only implementing regulations aimed at environmental sustainability but also adopting the green values as part of their strategies (Zolfagharinia et al., 2024). Green Eco-label products are defined as products that are environmentally friendly and less harmful to human health than conventional products because they are recyclable, they cause less pollution and preserve resources (Sharma et al., 2024).

The study the aim is to explore the influence of E-WOM determinants on consumers' purchase intentions of Green Eco-label products as these products are very new type of product on the market and environmentally friendly alternatives are very scarce as compared to conventional products. Although some literature suggests the information provided by manufacturers and marketers is considered less credible as compared to consumption generated material on social networking sites (SNSs) (Chan et al., 2022 & Rahim et al., 2016).

Generally, consumers use reviews and other other people's opinions to evaluate a product more positively as e-WOM provides the most immediate opportunity to gather information. The Internet has been influential in helping consumers get useful information faster; it facilitates discussion, sharing of experience, and reviews about the products (Jenneboer et al., 2022). Thus, E-WOM really affects consumption intentions because both positive and negative reviews can affect the buyer's purchase decisions through comments, user feedback, and online messages (Bo et al., 2023). With the expansion of digitalization, social media has become a crucial factor that encourages consumers to share their opinions on products via online media (i.e. electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM)). E-WOM is widely noted for its influence on the future of advertising (Chu & Kim, 2018). As such, marketers should leverage its influence through the use of social networking websites and understanding the aspects that impact consumer relationships and engagement through E- WOM (Mainolfi & Vergura, 2022).

In obtaining the information consumers seek from interpersonal sources, and these interactions play a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions of brands, a concept heavily studied in Consumer Behavior and Marketing literature (Diawati, 2023). The development of social media, particularly Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram, has exacerbated this impact, opening a wide-angle of access to product awareness and allowing consumers to provide their opinion via E-WOM, which impacts buying intentions (Ahmed & Zahid, 2014).

Consumers become more informed in today's market and emphasize on collecting product-related information when making a purchase decision. Marketers take into account this trend in their promotion strategy to better understand and influence consumer activities in E-WOM. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Myspace are used for promotions, product reviews, feedback, ratings and other brand influence (end result shaping of consumer behavior and purchase intentions) (Jasin, 2022).

The recent studies have focused more on the effects of positive and negative word-of-mouth on purchase decisions, in part because of its complexity (Sajid et al., 2024). Although it is challenging for companies to promote positive WOM and obtain understanding of what leads to it without using positive review mechanisms to influence user behavior, the nature of consumer behaviour on social networking sites (SNS) and lack of research on E-WOM point to the need for more studies (Alkandi, 2023). Another issue that marketers must address is maintaining a high degree of relationships with engaged customers who share positive WOM about a brand or product (Noor et al., 2024).

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

E-WOM through social networking sites (SNSs) has a strong influence on consumer buying behavior, as individuals increasingly rely on social media for making purchase decisions. To support this concept, the Source Credibility Theory (SCT) is used as a theoretical framework, as credibility refers to a person's perception of the truthfulness of information and is considered a multi-dimensional construct. It plays a key role in how consumers evaluate the reliability of a source or sender (Ngo et al., 2024; González-Rodríguez et al., 2022 & Serman & Sims, 2023).

Source credibility refers to how recipients perceive the trustworthiness of a message's source (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). It is defined as the extent to which recipients believe, trust, and recognize the competence of an information source (Kyung, Kwon & Sung, 2010). The two most important factors of source credibility, trustworthiness and expertise contribute to perceived credibility (Luo et al., 2013). In online discussion forums, users can assess the credibility of information by viewing the sender's profile and rankings assigned by forum administrators (Taylor et al., 2023).

Social media referrals are now a major factor in consumers' purchase decisions. Businesses increasingly rely on SNS-based communication to stay competitive. However, managers are still exploring key indicators that encourage social media users to engage in E-WOM (Khanom, 2023). Since SNSs rely on user interactions, they play an increasingly important role in facilitating E-WOM among consumers. E-WOM communication on SNSs is shaped by consumers' existing social connections, and the impact of shared information is often stronger than direct persuasive efforts (Luo & Zhong, 2015). Consumer intention regarding the purchase of a product, in general, happens at the decision-making period when consumer built up a positive mind-set to continue towards the product/brand as higher purchase intention leads to higher readiness to purchase brand/product.

Consumer purchase intention and SN marketing are positively associated and likewise consumers' engagement act as a mediator regarding the impact of SN marketing for purchase intention of consumers (Husnain & Toor, 2017). Consumers' engagement related to the content is dependent on how good, interesting, educational, and entertaining the content is, and it is found that more educational and entertaining contents are to be shared on social media (Yang et al., 2022). Likewise, consumers share and post more appealing brands and products because consumers have more time to check and send messages as compared to speaking.

Consumers' self-enhancement also acts as the main motivation for posting related to products. The significance of interest relies on the information that is acquired from the post (Chandra, 2024). Marketers find it a vital technique to generate positive WOM for creating and sustaining brand relationships among positively engaged consumers on social sites (Habib, 2021). Consumers' intention to purchase a product typically emerges during the decision-making process when they develop a positive attitude toward a brand or product. A stronger purchase intention increases their willingness to proceed with the purchase. Social networking (SN) marketing is positively linked to consumer purchase intention, with consumer engagement acting as a mediator in this relationship (Husnain & Toor, 2017).

Consumer engagement with content depends on its quality, relevance, educational value, and entertainment appeal. Research shows that consumers are more likely to share educational and entertaining content on social media (Nguyen, 2023). Similarly, they tend to post and share visually appealing brands and products, as digital communication allows for more interaction compared to face-to-face conversations. Self-enhancement is also a key motivation for consumers to share product-related content, as the value of a post depends on the information it provides (Nguyen, 2023). Marketers view positive word-of-mouth (WOM) as a crucial strategy for building and maintaining strong brand relationships among actively engaged consumers on social media (Habib, 2021).

Homophily

Homophily is a key factor influencing purchase intentions within social networks. It refers to the tendency of individuals to associate and form groups with others who share similar characteristics rather than those with whom they have little in common (Kasahara & Karasawa, 2024; Khanam et al., 2023). Previous research on homophily highlights its critical role in shaping and influencing social networks, with various

forms of homophily being identified as significant in relationship formation (Ertug et al., 2022). In the context of purchase intentions, individuals who are closely connected within a network often exhibit similar purchasing behaviors, which can be attributed to homophily. Empirical evidence suggests that homophily influences both purchase intentions and product choices (Khanam et al., 2023; Fazelpour & Rubin, 2022). Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: *There is a positive relationship between homophily and consumers' purchase intention for green ecolabel products.*

Tie Strength

Previous studies related to green products show that consumers are more skeptical of the green product (Chen, Y.-S., Lin, & Chang, 2014). Green product consumption, its market is undeveloped and small therefore consumers have fewer experiences with green products (Teng & Wang, 2015). Regular consumption-based research shows that inexperienced teenagers usually shop together to decrease the associated risk for their purchases (Kiecker & Hartman, 1993). Consequently, it helps inexperienced consumers to decide on a less risk basis when it is based on the opinion, observation of relevant others' purchase behaviors. So, it is assumed consumers make the decision alone hardly (Shukla, 2011) and more likely to shop with family and friends. Tie strength probably influences consumers' purchase intention regarding organic/green products as tie strength is referred to as the close relationship between receiver and sender (Brown & Reingen, 1987). It is identified that high tie strength between receiver and sender leads to the assumption of receiver's high attribution credibility to the sender (Bansal & Voyer, 2000), which impacts the consumers' behaviour (Frenzen & Nakamoto, 1993). Hence when close family and friends provide an experience or opinion via WOM regarding green/organic product, inexperienced consumers usually more rely on them because of the comfort of attaining information from close acquaintances (Chang & Chang, 2017) based on above foundation, suggested hypothesis is as follows:

H2: *There is a positive relationship between tie strength and consumers' purchase intention for green ecolabel products.*

Valence of Comments

Consumers share online reviews for a variety of reasons, but the most dependable feedback often comes from those who post early. These early reviewers typically possess a high level of expertise with the product, making their evaluations particularly influential. Their opinions can shape the decision-making of other consumers, as experienced users tend to be seen as more credible. Positive reviews, in particular, reflect well on a product's quality and reputation (Chen & Xia, 2024), whereas negative feedback from early adopters can signal a lack of confidence in the product and subsequently hinder its market performance (Haq et al., 2024).

Beyond just the overall tone or valence of the reviews, the ratio of positive to negative feedback serves as a critical measure of consumer sentiment and can greatly impact how a product is perceived. Many e-commerce platforms, such as Amazon.com, highlight this information by displaying not only the average rating but also the number and proportion of ratings—often visualized through star ratings or like/dislike metrics. These visual cues help customers quickly gauge the general reception of a product (Walle & Dukes, 2023).

Research on consumer information behavior suggests that under time constraints, individuals are more likely to focus on negative reviews than positive ones. Unfavorable evaluations tend to exert a stronger influence on purchase intentions than favorable ones. In general, negative information holds greater persuasive power in word-of-mouth communication, as consumers assign it more weight during judgment and decision-making processes (Golmohammadi et al., 2020).

H3: *There is a positive relationship between valence of comments and purchase intention.*

Receiver's Search Extent

Consumers are likely to make purchases over the internet regarding specific products who use the internet frequently because, during the problem-solving quest, consumers would like to know about the product and have many queries which ultimately reflects in different level of more focused searching (Chauhan & Gupta, 2024). Focused searching refers to the information seeking's extent by online community

members/receivers who have to know about specific needs and actively find out information regarding the specific topic (Moujabber, 2023). It is estimated that consumers who are more active in using online reviews are more prone to adopt EWOM reviews which ultimately leads to purchase intention (Požerskaitė, 2025).

H4a: There is a positive relationship between receiver’s search extent and EWOM review adoption.

H4b: EWOM review adoption mediates the relationship between receiver’s search extent and consumers’ purchase intention for green ecolabel products.

Perceived Source Credibility

Trust is recognized as a crucial factor that affects consumers’ activities reflect online for instance adoption of advice. Message trustworthiness acts as a belief of recipients for the message related to product information (Baudier et al., 2023). If the information is more relevant, truthful and helpful in the message then members consider arguments are of higher quality (Roy et al., 2024 & Von Hohenberg) which ultimately results in information adoption by more members. Previous studies illustrate that when consumers perceive a review to be trusted has got more assurance regarding EWOM adoption and consequently helps in making a decision related to purchases (Khan & Qabool, 2023). It is identified that when online community members read the message properly and anticipate validity it means they are more likely to engage in the systematic process of information. EWOM trustworthiness alludes to the trust in online reviews which is based on the judgment of message recipients. Positive trustable messages support the adoption of EWOM reviews for the purchase of the product as EWOM’s content influences the receiver’s response and if the content is relevant to a similar theme, then reviewers more rely on EWOM. High EWOM credibility leads to the High EWOM’s Adoption (Mucundorfeanu et al., 2025).

H5a: There is a positive relationship between perceived source credibility and EWOM review adoption.

H5b: EWOM review adoption mediates the relationship between perceived source credibility and consumers’ purchase intention for green Eco-label products.

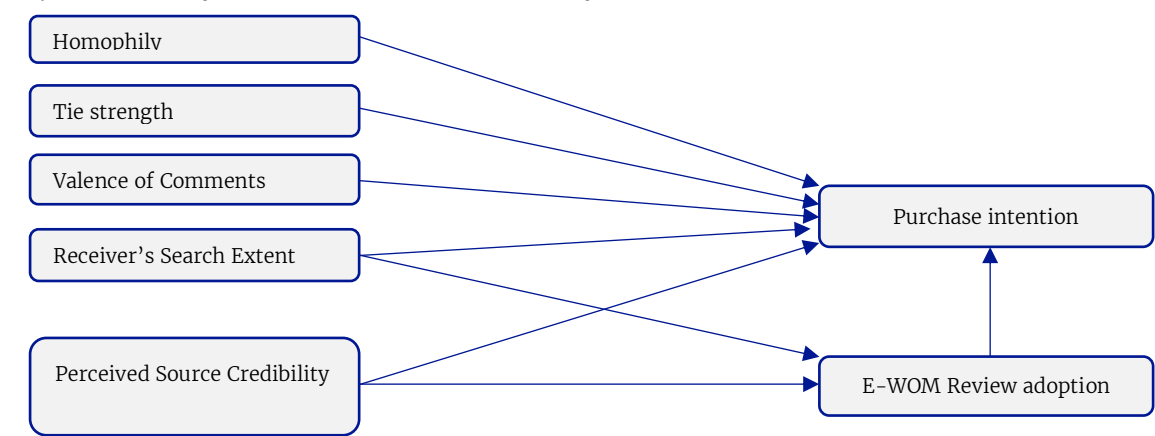
Research Methodology

Measures

This study used multi-items and all the constructs were measured by several items.Homophily was assessed by a 4-items adopted from (Wu,2013).Tie strength for buying green products was measured with three- items ,Normative influences were analyzed through 6 items whereas Informational influences were measured through 4 items scale adopted from (Chu & Kim, 2011).Valence of comments, Receiver’s Search Extent, Perceived source credibility, E-WOM Review Adoption, and Purchase intention were examined by 7-items, 5- items, 5-items, 4-items, 5-items respectively taken from (Rahim et al., 2016). Responses were recorded on 7 point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree (1-7). Cronbach’s alpha is represented in the table II. This study used multi-items, and all the items were measured by several items.

Figure 1

Proposed Model of Consumers’ Purchase Intention for Green Eco-Label Product via EWOM’s Determinants



Control Variables

This Survey was used to statistically control the demographic variables for avoiding confound relationships. Personal information (demographics) like gender, age and qualification were asked from respondents. All these were given codes where gender coded as 0 for male and 1 for female, age was coded as 1 (Less than 21), 2(21–30), 3(31–40), 4(41–50), 5(51 and above), qualification as 1(Matric), 2(Intermediate), 3(Graduate), 4(post-graduate).

Data Analysis

Current study has designed in the form of formal study initially start with research questions and hypothesis. This research is used for indicating the asymmetrical relationships between independent and dependent variables and it is estimated that amendment in independent variable will have impact on dependent variable. Quantitative research has adopted for this study and self-administered questionnaire has been adopted as the instrument which is distributed among respondents as survey forms. Structured questionnaires are usually used to gather the essential/basic information which regularly identifying with individuals' conduct and furthermore gain the authentic data with the goal to group individuals and their conditions (Phellas, Blocj, Seale, 2011). In view of sample size table given by the Research Advisor (2006), there is negative connection between the margin of error and sample size, which implies that small sample size leads to the larger margin error. It is recommended that the populace size which more than 250,000, the sample size would be 384, which develop a 95% certainty interim with a Margin of Error of $\pm 5\%$. In this research study, the sample size was 400 for the analysis of the study regarding mobile/e-wallet acceptance. Primary data has been obtained for the analysis where computerized analysis has been done by using Smartpls software.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents

Demographic Information	Frequency (Total=400)	%
Gender		
Male	247	62
Female	153	38
Age		
21–30	193	48
31–40	203	51
41–50	3	0.8
51 and above	1	0.2
Qualification		
Graduate	184	46
Post- Graduate	216	54

Results

Data was analyzed through PLS (partial least square) method of SEM. The aim of using PLS– SEM was to identify the determinants of EWOM and to develop a comprehensive model for explaining relationship among them which is a rule of thumb (Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt, M, 2016). It requires small sample size was another reason of using PLS method (Urbach and Ahlemann, 2010). Moreover, PLS–SEM is also appropriate for the analysis of comprehensive model with several constructs. Therefore, in this study Smart-pls was used to analyse the data in the form of structural and measurement model.

Measurement Model Assessment

Convergent and discriminant validity were measured before the analysis of hypothesis as Convergent validity measures the convergence of each item in relation to the construct and which was based on CR (Composite Reliability) and AVE (average variance extracted) and outer loadings. Threshold required for CR, AVE and outer loadings are 0.7, 0.5 and 0.7 respectively (Hair et al., 2016) which is fulfilled as shown

in Table II, all the AVE values have met the criteria of 0.5. likewise, CR and outer loadings are also above 0.7. However, Uniqueness and distinctiveness of the adopted constructs was examined through discriminant validity analysis by using Fornell–Larcker criterion.as presented in Table III.

Table 2

Measures and Factor Loadings

	Item	Factor Loading	CR	AVE
E-WOM Review Adoption	ERA1	0.887	0.919	0.739
	ERA2	0.897		
	ERA3	0.845		
	ERA4	0.808		
Homophily	H1	0.874	0.915	0.730
	H2	0.857		
	H3	0.883		
	H4	0.802		
Perceived Source Credibility	MT1	0.916	0.935	0.743
	MT2	0.846		
	MT3	0.885		
	MT4	0.754		
	MT5	0.899		
Purchase intention	PI1	0.831	0.939	0.754
	PI2	0.873		
	PI3	0.842		
	PI4	0.881		
	PI5	0.913		
Receiver's Search Extent	RSE1	0.894	0.936	0.745
	RSE2	0.83		
	RSE3	0.878		
	RSE4	0.886		
	RSE5	0.826		
Valence of comments	SE1	0.741	0.944	0.707
	SE2	0.884		
	SE3	0.909		
	SE4	0.754		
	SE5	0.848		
	SE6	0.862		
	SE7	0.873		
Tie Strength	TS1	0.832	0.871	0.692
	TS2	0.864		
	TS3	0.798		

Table 3

Discriminant Validity Results Based on Fornell–Larcker Criterion

	ERA	Homo	MT	NI	PI	RSE	SE	TS	II
ERA	0.86								
Homo	0.508	0.855							
PSC	0.948	0.494	0.862						
PI	0.949	0.483	0.917	0.453	0.869				
RSE	0.955	0.503	0.964	0.484	0.908	0.863			
VC	0.839	0.525	0.840	0.466	0.726	0.901	0.841		
TS	0.457	0.627	0.444	0.828	0.414	0.473	0.476	0.832	

Notes: ERA=Electronic Review adoption; Homo=Homophily; PSC=Perceived Source Credibility; NI=Normative influences; PI=Purchase Intention; RSE=Receiver's Search Extent; SE=Valence of comments; TS=Tie Strength;

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was analysed through the one tailed test for the evaluation of hypothesized effect the model. Results of path coefficients are presented in the table IV and indicate that eight out of eleven hypotheses are significant. Hypothesis H1 predicts the positive impact on purchase intention of green product, was supported with t statistics of 3.180 ($p = 0.002$) shows that homophily has significant impact on green purchase intention. Similarly, hypothesis H2 with t statistics of 2.057 ($p = 0.040$) was supported signifying that tie strength influences purchase intention for buying green products. However, H3 and H4 do not predict the positive association with purchase intention with t-statistics of 1.484 and 0.072 ($p = 0.138$, $p = 0.943$), respectively which shows normative and informational influences do not have a significant impact on consumers' green purchase intention. Direct effect of H3 was measured and it shows that valence of comments has significant impact on purchase intention with t-statistics of and 12.924 ($p = 0.000$). Likewise, Direct and indirect effect of H4 was measured and it shows that receivers' search extent has significant impact on both electronic word of mouth and purchase intention with t-statistics of 7.071 and 3.915 ($p = 0.00$, $p = 0.000$), respectively. Also, direct and indirect effect of H5a,b was measured, and it shows that perceived source credibility has significant impact on both electronic word of mouth and purchase intention with t-statistics of 4.706 and 1.962 ($p = 0.000$, $p = 0.050$), respectively. Hypothesis H6 predicts the positive impact on purchase intention of green product, was supported with t statistics of 12.527 ($p = 0.000$) shows that electronic review adoption has significant impact on green purchase intention.

Table 4

Path Estimates for Proposed Model

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	SD	t-value	P Values
Homophily -> PI (H1)	0.055	0.055	0.017	3.180	0.002
Tie Strength -> PI (H2)	-0.055	-0.055	0.027	2.057	0.040
Valence of comments -> PI (H3)	-0.390	-0.391	0.03	12.924	0.000
Receiver's Search Extent -> ERA(H4a)	0.668	0.66	0.094	7.071	0.000
Receiver's Search Extent -> PI (H4b)	0.373	0.376	0.095	3.915	0.000
Perceived Source creadibility -> ERA(H5a)	0.355	0.363	0.076	4.706	0.000
Perceived Source creadibility -> PI (H5b)	0.121	0.121	0.061	1.962	0.050
Electronic Review adoption -> PI (H6)	0.786	0.783	0.063	12.527	0.000

Notes. Original sample implies the original data; sample mean implies the 500 Bootstrapped samples. *** $p < .001$; SD Standard Deviation; PI Purchase Intention; ERA Electronic Review Adoption

Practical Implications

This study has imperative indication for the managers of different organization for the marketing of green products in Pakistan. The research results will provide marketers to understand the intention of young consumers regarding the purchase of green eco-label products which ultimately support in improving the purchase intention of buying the green products. Likewise, EWOM's determinants help managers to improve the purchase intension for buying green products as homophily, Tie strength, sender expertise, message trustworthiness, receivers' search extent and electronic review adoption have significant impact and leads towards purchase intention.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This research has few limitations which can be taken as an opportunity to cater in future research as it was taken from the organizations where people were more aware about green eco-label products and were concerned about their health and environmental sustainability which restricts the generalizability Future study could be done by taking random sample of different cities for improving generalizability and

comparative analysis can be done for evaluating effectiveness and adaption behaviour of green products can be seen in different cities and more improvement can be taken place by in-depth study in this area. Qualitative approach can also be used for identifying the different aspects of green purchase intention in future study.

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Appendix
Measurement Model

