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Department of Marketing Management

The Mediating Role of Trust between Message Clarity and Purchase Intent: A Cross-Sectional Study of GPS Car Tracker Advertising via Social Media

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled “THE MEDIATING ROLE OF TRUST BETWEEN MESSAGE CLARITY AND PURCHASE INTENT: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY OF GPS CAR TRACKER ADVERTISING VIA SOCIAL MEDIA “has been carried out by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr.Andinet Woriku.

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “THE MEDIATING ROLE OF TRUST BETWEEN MESSAGE CLARITY AND PURCHASE INTENT: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY OF GPS CAR TRACKER ADVERTISING VIA SOCIAL MEDIA” has been submitted to Addis Ababa University School of Commerce Department of Masters of Science in Digital Marketing and E-Commerce and is a record of bona fide research work carried out by Mrs.Tsiyon Tamirat under our guidance and supervision. Therefore, we hereby declare that no part of this thesis has been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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Board of Examiners

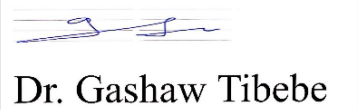
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ACRONYMS / ABBREVIATIONS

AIDA: Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action (A classic consumer response model)

ELM: Elaboration Likelihood Model

GPS: Global Positioning System (used throughout the study regarding GPS car tracking devices)
Ads: Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

Ethiopia's digital market is expanding at an accelerating rate; as a result, business is turning to social media platforms to advertise complex, high-tech involvement products, including GPS car tracking devices. However, there is still ambiguity over the effectiveness of these digital strategies, particularly within an environment where consumer distrust is common. This study investigates how message clarity and consumer trust combines to influence consumers' purchase intent, focusing specifically on the marketing strategies of Walta Technology Plc. The primary objective of the study was to examine whether trust acts as a psychological bridge connecting message clarity to a consumer's purchase intent. Adopting a quantitative, cross-sectional research design, this study collected data from 400 respondents in Ethiopia who had engaged with Walta technology's digital advertisement. To investigate the proposed connections and mediation effects, the analysis employed multiple regression, Pearson's correlation, and Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4). The results reveal a strong positive correlation between message clarity and purchase intent. Furthermore, the analysis confirms that trust serves as a significant partial mediator. While purchase intent is directly influenced by message clarity, the trust pathway accounts for about 42% of its total effect. This indicates that clear messages do not simply inform; they also function as a crucial signal of credibility in a low-trust market. Despite these strong statistical relationships, descriptive statistics indicated that current perceptions of message clarity are only moderate, suggesting considerable room for improvement in Walta's current strategies. The study concludes that for companies operating in emerging markets like Ethiopia, simply maintaining a digital presence is not enough. To be effective, businesses must improve message clarity in order to effectively create trust, which is essential to transform customers attention into actual purchase decisions. These results provide a useful insight for businesses working to manage the complex nature of digital persuasion in skeptical situations.

Keywords: Message Clarity, Trust, Purchase Intent, Mediation Analysis, GPS car Tracker, Social Media Marketing, Ethiopia.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Effective communication approaches are important for achieving commercial success in current digital market place, especially when advertising high-tech involvement items (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). The most effective approach to reaching more customers is through an online advertisement, such as social media platforms and search engine optimization (SEO) (Ryan, 2016; Strauss & Frost, 2014). It is undeniable that in African countries like Ethiopia, where most of the population is still covered by the digital divide, digital adoption is on the rise (UNCTAD, 2021; World Bank, 2020). Especially young people are leading the charge. However, the presence of uneven infrastructure in the rural regions and the presence of the digital divide between urban and rural people present very big problems (Van Dijk, 2020; James, 2011).

Walta Technology Plc, an Ethiopian tech company, promotes GPS car tracking solutions through digital platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. Despite making large investments in digital channels, there was a lack of deep knowledge concerning how effective these efforts are in engaging consumers and influencing their purchasing decisions (Belch & Belch, 2021; Solomon, 2018). In particular, there is limited understanding of how the clarity and perceived trustworthiness of digital advertisements influenced consumers' willingness to purchase high-tech products like GPS car trackers (Gefen et al., 2003; Pavlou & Gefen, 2004).

This study aimed to examine how Walta Technology Plc's digital communication strategies particularly the clarity and perceived trustworthiness of its messages influence consumer trust and purchase intent for GPS car tracking devices. Specifically, it examined the effect of message clarity on purchase intent is mediated by trust. By focusing on these psychological and communication factors, the study contributed strengthen the knowledge of the role of clear digital message in promoting high-involvement technology purchasing processes in emerging market contexts such as Ethiopia. The study connected the digital communication theory, Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), the AIDA model and Consumer behavior in emerging markets together to establish the framework for the analysis of the promotional effectiveness of digital in Ethiopia (Kotler & Armstrong, 2020; Percy, 2014; Strong, 1925; Solomon, 2018). The study helps in understanding the specific psychological factors of

message clarity and trust (Cialdini, 2009; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Sheth, 2020) in low-trust, emerging market situations, in order to better understand digital persuasion.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In current market, many businesses are now turning to digital communication to promote their products. However, there is insufficient specific data concerning the impact of particular message attributes, especially in message clarity and trust, on consumer decision-making, as well as purchase intent, especially for specialized technology products such as GPS car trackers (Belch & Belch, 2021; Pavlou & Gefen, 2004). Walta Technology Plc Has invested heavily in digital platforms, but is unsure if this will result into a change in customer behavior or profitable returns. More precisely, it is still unclear whether customers consider Walta's digital messages as sufficiently clear and reliable to influence their intent to purchase (Gefen et al., 2003; Solomon, 2018).

Previous studies have often examined digital marketing at an aggregate level, failing to address how specific message attributes particularly clarity and trustworthiness influence consumer reactions in environments characterized by technological skepticism and low institutional trust, such as Ethiopia, missed its application in specific industries or developing countries (Hofacker et al., 2016; Sheth, 2020). Companies like Walta technology finds it difficult to improve their approaches on how to attract customers in the absence of sufficient local data and information. This could result in losing market opportunities and resource waste. According to Kotler et al. (2021) and Cialdini (2009), there is a critical gap in understanding how persuasive digital Ads influence high-tech involvement purchasing decisions, such as GPS car trackers.

The study identified the following specific problems:

1. There is a lack of empirical evidence regarding how the verbal and visual clarity of online advertisements affects consumer trust when marketing advanced high-tech products like GPS trackers.
2. It remained unclear to what extent trust acts as the critical psychological bridge required to convert a consumer's initial interest into a concrete purchase intent in high technology products
3. More importantly, there is a significant research void regarding the mediating influence of trust; specifically, we do not know if high message clarity fails to drive sales because it lacks the power to first establish consumer trust

1.3 Objectives of the Study

General Research Objective:

To evaluate the influence of message clarity and

trust in digital communication on consumers' intent to purchase GPS tracking devices promoted via social media in Ethiopia.

Specific Objectives:

1. To assess the relationship between message clarity and consumer trust in the context of digital advertisements for GPS trackers.
2. To evaluate the impact of trust in digital content on consumer purchase intent.
3. To examine the effect of message clarity on consumer purchase intent.
4. To investigate whether trust mediates the effect of message clarity on purchase intent.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How the clarity of digital marketing messages influence consumer trust in GPS tracker advertisements?
2. How does a consumer's trust in digital content influence their inclination to make a purchase?
3. To what extent did message clarity directly influence purchase intent for GPS trackers in Ethiopia?
4. To what extent did consumer trust mediate the relationship between message clarity and purchase intent?

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.5.1 Practical Significance:

1. It has provided Walta Technology plc with evidence-based strategies for optimizing digital campaigns.
2. It supported marketing professionals to find effective digital tools for marketing tech products in new emerging markets.

1.5.2 Theoretical Significance:

1. The study contributed to the literature on digital marketing and consumer behavior in emerging economies like Ethiopia.
2. The study has applied and tested classical marketing frameworks like AIDA within a developing country context.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study was geographically focused on urban and peri-urban areas in Ethiopia where internet access and digital platform usage were highest. It concentrates on Walta Technology Plc's GPS car tracker product and its digital communication strategies, included Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube.

The scope was further delimited to:

1. Data collection from a convenience sample of 400 consumers who had interacted with Walta Technology's digital platforms.
2. Use of descriptive and inferential statistical analysis; no advanced inferential techniques are employed.

1.7 Limitation of the Study

This study had a limitation that could affect how widely its findings apply. The study has only looked at urban and peri-urban areas of Ethiopia, excluding rural areas that struggled with access to the internet. This made it hard to apply the findings to everyone. Another issue is the sample size; with just 400 Walta technology customers it did not cover the full range of consumer behavior. That means the insights we get could have been pretty basic. The focus on Walta Technology Plc allowed for a deep knowledge, but it has also limited the findings to just one company. Finally, there were time and budget restrictions, which we only had two months, and it has made it hard to gather and analyze more data.

1.8 Organization of the study

This thesis research is organized into five chapters to study the digital communication strategies, focusing on Walta Technology Plc in Ethiopia. Chapter 1 (Introduction) discussed the digital marketing's background, statement of problem, and laying out research questions and objectives, explaining why this study matters in Ethiopia's growing digital market. Chapter 2 explains a

comprehensive literature review to establish the study's foundation. It starts with a theoretical review of message clarity, trust, and purchase intent, drawing on Digital Communication Theory and the AIDA framework. An empirical review then investigates prior research on these connections, focusing on emerging markets such as Ethiopia. The chapter ends with a conceptual framework, supported by four research hypotheses, that views trust as a mediator between purchase intent and message clarity. Chapter 3 (Research Methodology) explains the research design and empirical approach used for this study, outlining a sampling strategy that targets 400 customers of Walta Technology Plc. It describes the data collection instruments, measurement scales, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 (Data Analysis and Findings) presents the empirical results, utilizing descriptive statistics and inferential data from the customer survey to answer the core research questions. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes with a summary of the key findings, theoretical implications, limitations, and actionable recommendations for professional practice.

1.9 Definition of Concepts

1. Digital Communication: The procedure of delivering promotional messages through digital channels such as social media, websites, search engines, and email with the purpose of capturing the attention of the target public and changing their behavior (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).
2. Trust: Within digital marketing contexts, trust reflects consumers' confidence that a brand's online communications are truthful, dependable, and transparent. This belief system acts as a psychological buffer against the inherent uncertainties of digital marketplaces, where physical product examination remains impossible (Gefen et al., 2003; Pavlou & Gefen, 2004).
3. Purchase Intent: A consumer’s self-reported likelihood or willingness to buy a specific product after exposure to marketing stimuli (Kotler & Keller, 2016).
4. Mediation (Trust): The process by which trust explains the relationship between message clarity and purchase intent, indicating that clarity influences intent indirectly through trust (Pavlou & Gefen, 2004).
5. Digital Marketing: The use of digital technologies and online platforms to promote products and services through interactive, measurable, and targeted communication

channels, including social media, websites, search engines, and mobile applications (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

6. Perceived Risk: A consumer's subjective expectation of potential loss or negative outcomes associated with purchasing a product online, including financial, functional, and performance risks (Pavlou & Gefen, 2004).
7. High-Involvement Product: A product that requires extensive information search and cognitive effort from consumers due to its complexity, cost, or perceived risk before purchase (Solomon, 2018).
8. Consumer Skepticism: A tendency of consumers to doubt the credibility and truthfulness of marketing claims, particularly in online and digital advertising environments (Sheth, 2020).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid growth of the use of digital technology has completely changed how companies communicate with their customers. In high technology-based markets, especially in developing countries like Ethiopia, online marketing strategies are very important to inform, persuade, and change viewers into actual buyers. This chapter explains the key variables, previous studies, and conceptual framework that support the research of how trust and message clarity influence consumers' purchase intent. The main focus is on advertising GPS car trackers through different social media platforms.

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Message clarity in digital communication

Message clarity is an essential element in digital communication, it determines whether an audience instantly understands a brand's value or scrolls past in confusion. Fundamentally, message clarity refers to how easily and accurately a digital ad, social media post, or promotional content converts its intended meaning to consumers (Strauss & Frost, 2014). This goes beyond just using simple words, it involves structuring information logically, maintaining visual consistency, and adapting explanations to the audience's existing knowledge. When messages are ambiguous or over complex, even the simplest products could fail to capture audience attention especially in tech markets where consumers may feel intimidated by new terms.

This challenge is particularly spotted in emerging countries like Ethiopia, where digital literacy levels are not stable and trust in new technologies must be carefully developed. For products like GPS car trackers which might be entirely new to many consumers message clarity becomes a very essential. Not clearly explained feature or a jargon-filled social media advertisement can lead to skepticism, whereas a well-structured message with intuitive visuals can clarify the technology and create interest. Research supports this, showing that clear, well-organized messaging not only builds consumer trust but also directly influences purchase decisions (Pavlou & Gefen, 2004; Gefen et al., 2003).

2.1.2 Trust in Digital Marketing

Trust in digital marketing refers to a consumer's belief that a brand and its online communications are credible, honest, and reliable, and that the business will fulfill its promises

as advertised through digital platforms (Gefen et al., 2003). Trust serves as a risk-reduction mechanism in digital marketplaces, addressing the inherent uncertainty consumers face when unable to physically examine products before purchase (Gefen et al., 2003; Pavlou & Gefen, 2004). From a theoretical aspect, trust functions as a critical mechanism that enables consumers to engage with digital marketing messages by alleviating concerns related to misinformation and potential post-purchase dissatisfaction.

In low-trust environments, particularly within emerging economies, trust is assumed as an even more influential role in changing consumer behavior. Digital marketplaces involved in tech products are often characterized by prior encounters with dishonest internet schemes and insufficient consumer protection measures. As a result, consumers tend to approach digital advertising with more doubt. In these conditions, trust operates as a psychological bridge. Without sufficient trust, even well-structured, informative, and persuasive digital messages may fail to convert into purchase intentions (Pavlou & Gefen, 2004). Trust therefore mediates the relationship between message clarity and consumer response by determining whether marketing information is accepted or rejected.

The development of trust in digital marketing is influenced by several related factors. Consistent and clear messaging over time indicates reliability, while transparent information regarding product features, pricing, delivery, and after-sales service reduces thoughts of fraud. Additionally, social media proof such as customer reviews, testimonials, endorsements, and visible engagement on social media platforms plays a significant role in supporting credibility by influencing positive experiences of other consumers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

2.1.3 Purchase Intent in Digital Marketing

The AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action) was first introduced in advertising and shows the stages that a consumer undergoes in response to digital marketing messages (Kotler et al., 2015). Purchase intent refers to a consumer's plan, readiness, or willingness to buy a specific product or service after being exposed to the digital message (Kotler & Keller, 2016). It represents a critical psychological outcome that bridges marketing communication and actual purchasing behavior. Within consumer behavior theory, purchase intent is often stated as a strong predictor of actual purchase, as it reflects the consumer's evaluation formed through information processing, attitude development, and perceived value assessment (Bettman, J. R. 1979). In

digital marketing contexts, purchase intent is shaped by how effectively online messages communicate product value while reducing uncertainty and perceived risk (Bauer, R. A. ,1960).

Consumer purchasing intent in digital contexts is influenced by both emotional and practical factors. Quality of the product, real-world benefits, reasonable prices, and the value of the information provided in digital advertisements are examples of practical factors. However, emotional and psychological elements like fear of risk, brand credibility, and trust are vital in determining whether or not consumers feel comfortable making a purchase. (Solomon, 2018). Because digital transactions lack physical interaction and immediate verification, consumers rely heavily on their psychological evaluations of the brand and the message, making trust and emotional reassurance essential components of purchase intention formation.

The AIDA model (Attention–Interest–Desire–Action) provides a useful theoretical framework for explaining how purchase intent develops through sequential levels of consumer response to marketing communication. According to this model, marketing messages must first capture consumer attention, then generate interest by presenting relevant and understandable information, and subsequently stimulate desire by highlighting value and credibility before leading to purchase action (Kotler et al., 2015). Message clarity enhances consumers' movement from attention to interest by facilitating comprehension, while trust strengthens the transition from interest to desire by reducing skepticism and perceived risk. If clarity or trust is lacking at any stage, the formation of purchase intent may be weakened or disrupted.

Message clarity enhances consumers' journey from attention to interest by facilitating comprehension, while trust strengthens the transition from interest to purchase intent by reducing skepticism and perceived risk. If clarity or trust is lacking at any stage, the formation of purchase intent may be weakened or disrupted. In the context of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), message clarity serves as a crucial factor for consumers processing information via the central route, ensuring that technical specifications of high-involvement products like GPS trackers are easily evaluated, while established brand trust acts as a stabilizing cue that reduces perceived risk.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Message Clarity and Trust

Empirical studies indicate a positive relationship between message clarity and trust in digital marketing contexts. Clear and transparent communication reduces information imbalance between businesses and consumers, by enhancing perceptions of honesty and reliability. When marketing messages are advertised in simple, structured, and clear language, it's better for consumers to evaluate product claims and are more likely to believe that the firm is acting honestly. As a result, message clarity acts as an important predecessor of trust building in online environments where direct verification of product quality is limited.

In their seminal study on online consumer trust, Gefen et al. (2003) found that clear product descriptions, transparent pricing, and straightforward transactional terms will significantly increase consumer trust in e-commerce platforms. Their study suggests that clarity in digital communication indicates credibility and reduces uncertainty, which in turn promotes trust in both the seller and the online system. Similarly, Pavlou and Gefen (2004) empirically indicates that ambiguous, overly technical, or complex digital advertisements negatively affect trust, particularly in the case of high-involvement and technology-relates products. Consumers exposed to unclear messages were more likely to perceive higher risk and lower reliability, leading to eliminate trust in the advertised brand.

Evidence from emerging and African markets further reinforces the importance of message clarity in building trust. Mpinganjira (2018), in a study examining digital advertising effectiveness in African contexts, found that localized messages delivered in simple and familiar language significantly improved credibility and trust among consumers with different levels of digital literacy. The study highlights that when digital content aligns with consumers' capacity of understanding, it reduces skepticism and increases confidence in the brand. This finding is particularly relevant in contexts where consumers may already be cautious toward digital marketing due to prior exposure to misleading or deceptive online practices.

2.2.2 Trust and Purchase Intent

Research provides strong evidence of a positive and significant relationship between trust and consumer purchase intent in digital marketing environments. Trust plays a vital role in reducing uncertainty and perceived risk which are common in online transactions, and thereby increases

consumers to purchase intent Jarvenpaa, S. L., Tractinsky, N., & Vitale, M. (2000). When consumers perceive digital content and the associated brand as honest, they are more likely to form favorable evaluations and progress from consideration to purchase intention. Therefore, trust is widely recognized as a key predictor of purchase intent across various digital platforms and product categories.

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019) empirically demonstrated that trusted digital marketing content leads to higher conversion rates compared to content perceived as unreliable or misleading. Their findings indicate that trust increases consumers' confidence in marketing claims, reduces hesitation, and strengthens purchase intent. This relationship is particularly pronounced in digital contexts where consumers rely heavily on brand credibility and message reliability due to the absence of physical interaction and immediate product verification.

Empirical evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa further supports the trust-purchase intent relationship. A report by Deloitte (2022) revealed that WhatsApp-based promotional campaigns with high levels of trust generated greater purchase consideration and stronger purchase intent among consumers. The study indicates that personalized communication, credible brand presence, and transparent information shared through trusted social media platforms significantly influenced consumers' readiness to buy. This finding highlights the growing importance of trust in mobile-based and social media platforms within emerging markets.

Additionally, Gefen et al. (2003) confirmed through empirical analysis that trust directly reduces consumers' perceived risk in online transactions, which in return strengthens purchase intent. Their study showed that when consumers trust a digital content, concerns related to payment security, product quality, and post-purchase services are decreased, making consumers more interested to proceed with a purchase decision.

2.2.3 Message Clarity and Purchase Intent

Studies regularly indicate that message clarity has a direct and positive impact on consumers purchase intent. Clear, honest, and well-structured marketing messages increases understanding, reduce mental stress, and minimize uncertainty, enabling consumers to make informed evaluations of a product. In digital marketing contexts, clarity allows consumers to quickly understand key benefits, product features, and value propositions, which in return increases their readiness to consider and purchase the product.

Strauss and Frost (2014) study states that marketing messages containing clear calls-to-action, simple language, and well-organized information significantly increased consumers probability of purchase. Their research highlights that clarity not only helps understanding but also directly motivates consumers to act on marketing messages by reducing ambiguity and the effort required to process information. Similarly, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) indicates that in technology product marketing, simplified explanations of complex features and step-by-step guidance increases both engagement and purchase intent. Their findings suggest that when consumers are presented with clear and structured information about complex products such as GPS car trackers, they are more likely to develop strong purchase intentions.

2.2.4 The Mediating Role of Trust

The mediating role of trust in the relationship between message clarity and purchase intent has been widely recognized in digital marketing research. Trust functions as a psychological bridge that connects consumers understanding of a message to their intention to act, ensuring that even clear and well-structured communication converts into behavioral outcomes. Pavlou and Gefen (2004) states that in digital marketing environments, trust fully mediated the effect of website clarity on purchase intention, indicating that clarity alone was insufficient to drive intent unless it was accompanied by confidence in the brand and its messages. This finding underscores that message clarity facilitates understanding, but trust is required to transform understanding into actual buying decisions.

In social media marketing contexts, Mangold and Faulds (2009) found that clear and consistent brand communication increase trust, which in return increased consumers purchase intent. These studies suggest that trust enhances the effect of message clarity by reducing perceived risk, enhancing confidence in product claims, and strengthening the credibility of the brand. Without trust, even highly transparent and understandable digital messages may fail to persuade, particularly in markets where consumers are cautious or unfamiliar with the products.

The mediating role of trust is particularly relevant in low-trust and emerging market contexts such as Ethiopia, where consumers often approach digital marketing with skepticism due to concerns about fraud, counterfeit products, or unreliable after-sales service. Mpinganjira (2018) highlighted that in such markets, message clarity alone is not sufficient to drive purchase intent; it must be accompanied by strategies that actively build trust, such as transparent information, social proof, and consistent messaging. This evidence indicates that trust acts as a crucial

intermediary that enables clarity to influence consumer behavior effectively, bridging the gap between understanding a message and acting upon it.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

This study employs a mediation model to examine the psychological pathway through which message clarity influences purchase intent in digital advertising with trust as the mediating variable. The framework is theoretically grounded in digital communication theory (Strauss & Frost, 2014) and trust theory (Gefen et al., 2003; Pavlou & Gefen, 2004), and aligns directly with the research objectives and hypotheses. The model approach implies that clear digital communication performs two functions: it physically informs consumers about product benefits, as well as establishing credibility by creating trust. This trust, in return, influences purchasing decisions.

2.3.1 Theoretical Foundations

The framework connects two complementary theoretical points. First, digital communication theory states that clear, unambiguous messaging enhances information processing and reduces mental stress, which is especially important for complex technology products like GPS car trackers (Strauss & Frost, 2014). Second, trust theory highlights that in digital environments where physical product inspection is not possible, trust serves as a psychological bridge that reduces perceived risk and uncertainty influencing purchase decisions (Gefen et al., 2003). The ideas of these perspectives suggest that message clarity functions not only as an informational tool but also as a credibility signal that builds trust, which subsequently strengthens purchase intent.

2.3.2 Why Mediation Matters

When people browse online, they often see digital advertisements with a mix of curiosity and doubt. Because of common worries like internet scams, misleading ads, and fake products, consumers stay on guard even when an online message is incredibly clear and easy to understand. This is why simply making an advertisement clear is not enough to influence purchase intent. While a message clarity helps a customer understand the product, it does not

automatically turn an audience into a purchaser. Trust is the actual bridge that connects understanding an advertisement and to develop purchase intention.

When a consumer believes a brand is honest, they feel safe enough to purchase. Without this feeling of safety, even the most straightforward ad will fail because consumer will simply doubt the claims. Therefore, trust is the essential middle step. It works together with clear messaging to turn looking into purchase intention, especially in newer online markets where consumers must rely heavily on their perceived trustworthiness about the providers honesty.

Hypotheses

H1: Higher perceived message clarity positively influences purchase intent.

Studies consistently show that clear and well-structured digital messages improve consumer understanding and reduce decision difficulty, leading to stronger purchase intentions (Strauss & Frost, 2014; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

H2: Higher trust in digital content positively influences purchase intent.

Prior research consistently demonstrates that trust reduces perceived risk and uncertainty in online environments, thereby increasing consumers' willingness to purchase advertised products (Gefen et al., 2003; Pavlou & Gefen, 2004).

H3: Higher message clarity positively influences trust

Consumer trust in digital advertising is increased when communications are clear, transparent, and consistent because they reflect professionalism and integrity (Pavlou & Gefen, 2004; Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

H4: Trust mediates the relationship between message clarity and purchase intent

Empirical evidence suggests that message clarity strengthens trust, which in turn increases purchase intent, indicating a mediating effect of trust in digital decision-making processes (Gefen et al., 2003; Pavlou & Gefen, 2004).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FIGURE

As illustrated in Figure 1, the conceptual framework posits three direct paths: message clarity → purchase intent, message clarity → trust, and trust → purchase intent.

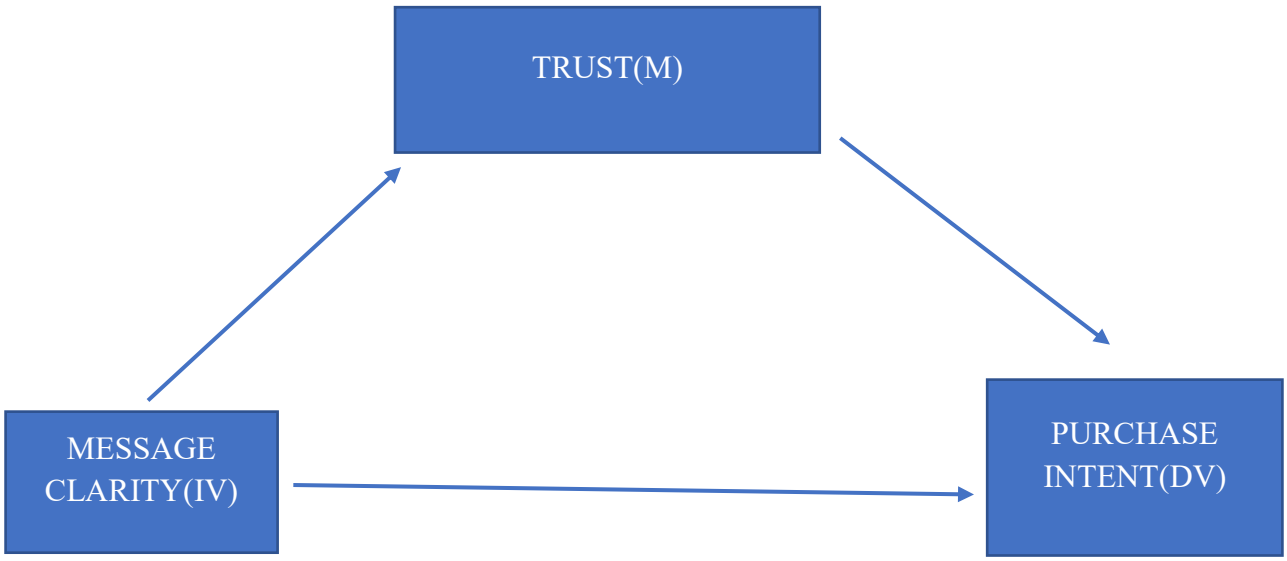


Figure 1 Dependent and Independent Variables

Source: own research 2026

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methodology and approaches used to evaluate the effectiveness of Walta Technology Plc's digital communication strategies for marketing its GPS tracking devices for cars in Ethiopia. The methodology was designed to use quantitative research techniques to offer thorough insights on the effect of message clarity on purchase intent and how this relationship was mediated by trust.

3.1 Research Approach

This study employed a quantitative research approach to examine the relationships between message clarity, trust, and purchase intent. A quantitative approach was deemed appropriate as it allowed for the testing of the specific hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework, particularly regarding the mediating role of trust. Data were collected through structured surveys, focusing on Likert-scale items that measure perceived clarity, trust, and intent to purchase. This approach facilitates the use of statistical analysis to draw objective conclusions about the causal links between variables in the context of Walta Technology Plc’s digital marketing efforts.

3.2 Type/Design of Research

The design of the research was descriptive and explanatory:

1. **Descriptive**: The research described the current state of Walta Technology’s digital communication strategies and customer engagement in the Ethiopian market. This includes mapping out the digital channels used (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube), the nature of the communication, and customer responses to these strategies.
2. **Explanatory**: The study examined the cause-and-effect relationships between the study variables. It seeks to explain how and to what extent message clarity influences purchase intent, and specifically how this effect transmitted through trust. This explanatory aspect was critical for understanding the psychological mechanisms driving consumer behavior toward Walta’s products.

3.3 Sampling Design

1. **Population**

The target population consisted of individuals in Ethiopia who have engaged with Walta Technology's digital platforms (social media, website) or have purchased/inquired about GPS trackers. The estimated population was 600,000, derived from aggregated social media followers, website visitors, and CRM data over the past two years.

2. **Sampling Techniques**

The study targeted a population of approximately 600,000 individuals, representing the estimated reach of Walta Technology's digital platforms and its existing customer base.

1. **Sampling Technique:** A non-probability convenience sampling method was employed to select participants. This approach was chosen due to the lack of an exhaustive, up-to-date national sampling frame for GPS car tracker consumers in Ethiopia.
2. **Sample Selection:** To ensure a wide reach across different customer touchpoints, respondents were recruited through a multi-channel approach.
3. **Digital Outreach:** The primary data collection occurred online, where the survey was distributed across Walta's official social media pages, including Facebook, Telegram, and other digital channels.
4. **In-Person Recruitmen**t: To capture the views of active buyers, customers visiting physical service centers to purchase GPS trackers were invited to complete the questionnaire in person.
5. **Snowballing:** Initial respondents were encouraged to share the survey link with others who had engaged with Walta's advertisements, further expanding the sample.

3. **Sample Size**

Customers: 400 customers surveyed.

Sample Size Justification: Appropriate sampling techniques are essential when researchers aim to generate findings that genuinely represent broader population characteristics. However, creating a complete list of the target population known as a sampling frame is often unrealistic or too costly, especially when the population is spread out over a wide area.

For this research sampling Yamane's formula, $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$ was used, because a statistical formula was used to estimate the sample size needed for a study, given the total population size (N) and a desired margin of error (e). It provides a simple and relatively easy method to calculate sample size.

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size = 600,000 (includes customers who have engaged with Walta's digital platforms (social media platforms, website) or have purchased the GPS car tracker product, and marketing professionals responsible for Walta's digital marketing strategy)

e = margin of error (5% or 95% confidence level)

Calculation: $\boldsymbol{n = \frac{600{,}000}{1+600{,}000*0.05^2}} = 399.73$

Since the sample size must be a whole number, we round it to the nearest whole number: n≈400. Using a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of 0.05, the calculated sample size for a population of 600,000 is approximately 400.

3.4 Sources of Data Collection

1. **Primary Data**:

   Surveys were administered to customers to gather quantitative data on perceptions, satisfaction, and engagement with Walta's digital marketing efforts.

2. **Secondary Data**:

   In addition to the primary data collected through surveys, this study utilized secondary data to provide a broader context for the research. Since internal

company analytics were restricted, reputable external reports were used to understand the digital marketing environment in Ethiopia. These sources include: academic journals, industry reports, and case studies related to Message clarity, Trust and Purchase Intent.

3.5 Research Instruments

The measurement items used in this study were adapted from established and peer-reviewed international journals to ensure content validity and construct reliability. Message clarity items were adapted from prior digital marketing and e-commerce studies that emphasize ease of understanding, message structure, and information transparency (Gefen et al., 2003; Pavlou & Gefen, 2004; Strauss & Frost, 2014). Trust was measured using validated trust scales commonly applied in online and digital commerce research, focusing on honesty, credibility, transparency, and reliability of digital communication (Gefen et al., 2003; McKnight et al., 2002; Pavlou & Gefen, 2004). Purchase intent items were adopted from well-established consumer behavior literature measuring consumers' likelihood to purchase, recommend, and prefer a product after exposure to marketing stimuli (Dodds et al., 1991; Spears & Singh, 2004). All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale and were slightly reworded to fit the context of GPS tracker advertising via social media in Ethiopia without altering their original theoretical meaning.

3.6 Method of Data Collection

Surveys: Primary data for this study was gathered using a mixed approach that included both online and paper-based questionnaires. A digital version of the survey was created using Google Forms for online distribution. At the same time, physical copies of the questionnaire were printed to reach customers in person. While both options were made available, the vast majority of the completed surveys came from the physical, paper-based distribution channel.

3.7 Procedures of Data Collection

The data collection process took place over a 60-day period using two distinct strategies to reach participants;

1. **Digital Distribution**: The Google Forms link was shared across Walta Technology's digital platforms and official social media pages for online users to access. However, this method generated a very minimal response rate.
2. **In-Person Paper Distribution**: To maximize data collection, physical paper questionnaires were actively distributed through face-to-face interactions. This was handled in two ways: first, copies were given to walk-in customers who visited the Walta Technology office to ask for more information about the GPS car trackers. Second, Walta field employees and technicians handed out the paper surveys directly to clients at various locations immediately after installing the GPS car tracking devices.
3. **Data Compilation**: Ultimately, nearly all of the final data analyzed in this study was secured through the in-person paper surveys. At the end of the collection period, all physical questionnaires were gathered, checked for completeness, and manually entered into a single spreadsheet alongside the few online responses. This combined dataset was then cleaned and imported into SPSS 26 for final analysis.

3.8 Data Analysis Methods

1. **Quantitative Data Analysis**: Descriptive statistics (mean, frequency) were used to summarize customer responses, identifying trends and patterns in engagement and satisfaction.
2. **Inferential statistics** (e.g., correlation analysis, regression analysis) were applied to understand relationships between message clarity and purchase intent and how this relationship is mediated by customer trust. Specifically, PROCESS MACRO model 4 were used in order to analyze the mediation effect of trust on the relationship between message clarity and purchase intent.
3. **Mediation analysis justification:** PROCESS MACRO Model 4 (Hayes, 2018) was used to test the mediating role of trust. Partial mediation was hypothesized (rather than full mediation) because theory and prior evidence suggest that message clarity can influence purchase intent through both a direct cognitive pathway (clear information reduces uncertainty) and an indirect trust-based pathway (clarity signals credibility). In low-trust environments like Ethiopia, both pathways are expected to operate simultaneously; therefore, full mediation (where clarity would have no direct effect

after controlling for trust) is unlikely. The use of 5,000 bootstrap samples with bias-corrected confidence intervals ensures robust inference.

3.9 Reliability and Validity

To ensure the quality and credibility of the research findings, both validity and reliability were carefully addressed in the design and implementation of the survey instruments. **Validity** was established by developing the instruments based on a thorough review of existing literature related to digital marketing effectiveness. This approach ensures that the questions are aligned with established theories and empirical findings, and that they accurately capture key constructs such as message clarity, trust, and customer engagement. Content validity was further reinforced through expert review, where professionals in digital marketing and academic advisors evaluated the instruments for relevance, clarity, and comprehensiveness. Reliability, on the other hand, refers to the consistency and stability of the measurement tools over time. It ensures that the instruments yield consistent results when administered under similar conditions. Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, a statistical measure that determines how closely related a set of items are as a group. A high Cronbach's alpha value (generally above 0.7) will indicate strong internal reliability. Additionally, composite reliability was examined to assess the overall accuracy and consistency of the constructs measured, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the internal coherence of the instrument. Together, these measures will ensure that the data collected is both accurate and dependable for analysis.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality, consent, and respectful engagement with participants especially those with limited digital literacy were upheld through ethical research practices.

1. **Right to Choose**: Participation were voluntary, with all participants informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.
2. **Right to Safety**: Participants will not face physical or psychological harm. Ethical guidelines were followed to ensure their comfort and well-being throughout the research process.

3. **Right to Privacy**: All personal information were kept confidential. Identifiable data will not be shared with any external parties.
4. **Informed Consent**: Participants were fully informed about the nature of the research and its purpose before providing consent.
5. **Confidentiality**: Data were anonymized, and only aggregated results were presented in the final report.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents findings from a structured questionnaire study that investigated how trust influences the relationship between message clarity and purchase intent among consumers exposed to GPS tracker advertisements on social media platforms in Ethiopia. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics including frequency distributions, percentages, means, and standard deviations to summarize respondent answers.

The chapter also uses more detailed tests, such as correlation and regression, to see how message clarity, trust, and purchase intent are connected. A major focus was looking at trust as a "middle step" (mediator) in this process. These results provide helpful information on how clear ads lead to sales, both directly and by making customers feel more confident in a brand. This information is specifically focused on the current digital marketing environment in Ethiopia

4.1 Response rate and data cleaning

A total of 400 responses were received and considered acceptable for analysis, meeting the sample size requirement set by Yamane's method. The data was checked for missing values and outliers, and no major issues were detected that would jeopardize the research. All 400 cases analyzed were included in the final study.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

Variable	Category	Number	Percent
Age	18-24	69	17.3
	25-34	91	22.8
	35-44	94	23.5
	45-54	77	19.3
	55 and above	69	17.1
Gender	Male	297	74.25
	Female	103	25.75

Education	No formal education / Primary	12	3
	Secondary / Diploma	88	22
	Bachelor's degree	261	65.25
	Master's or higher	39	9.75
Occupation	Student	36	9
	Government Employee	108	27
	Private sector employee	166	41.5
	Business owner / Self-employed	89	22.25
	Unemployed	1	0.25
Location	Addis Ababa	357	89.25
	Oromia	22	5.5
	Amhara	6	1.5
	SNNP	12	3
	Other	3	0.75
Area Type	Urban	369	92.25
	Peri-urban	20	5
	Rural	11	2.75

Source: Survey Data (2026)

From demographic profile we have the following results; the sample is dominantly male which covers 74.25% and well distributed across different age categories, with the highest number in the 35-44-year age interval (23.5%). A large percentage of responders (75%) have a bachelor's degree or above, indicating educated group. Geographically, the majority of respondents live in Addis Ababa (89.25%) and urban areas (92.25%), which is consistent with the study's focus on places with great internet access and digital engagement. In terms of type of occupations, the majority of the respondents are private sector employees (41.5%), followed by government sector employees (27%) and business owners/self-employed individuals (22.25%). This

occupational distribution indicates that respondents are economically stable and capable of making independent purchasing decisions regarding technology products such as GPS car trackers.

Table 2 Digital Behavior and Literacy

Variable	Category	N	Percent
Social Media Use	Daily	339	84.75
	Weekly	53	13.25
	Monthly	5	1.25
	Rarely	3	0.75
Digital Literacy	Low/very low	4	1
	Moderate	107	26.8
	High	143	35.8
	Very high	146	36.5

Source: Survey data (2026)

The result of the analysis of digital behavior data indicates that a majority of respondents (84.75%) engage with social media on a daily basis, indicating that it is effective platform for reaching the audience. Additionally, over 72% of respondents shows strong or very high digital literacy, indicating that their capability to analyze and interact with digital contents. These attributes render the sample suitable for examining the effectiveness of digital advertising, particularly for technology products such as GPS trackers, which require a certain level of digital literacy.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables

This analysis uses descriptive statistics mean, standard deviation, and the range (minimum and maximum), to analyze the collected data. Each of the three variables of the study Message Clarity (MC), Trust (T), and Purchase Intent (PI) was measured using a 5-point Likert scale. On this scale, a score of 1 represents "Strongly Disagree," while a score of 5 represents "Strongly Agree."

To help explain the meaning of the mean scores, this study follows the scoring categories suggested by Nachmias and Nachmias (2008). This system allows the numerical data to be clearly categorized and interpreted based on the levels of agreement provided by the participants.

Table 3 Nachmias & Nachmias (2008) Mean Score Interpretation Range

Mean Range	Interpretation
.00 – 2.33	Low
2.34 – 3.67	Moderate
3.68 – 5.00	High

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Message Clarity	400	1	5	2.9704	0.90299	Moderate
Trust	400	1.25	5	2.8969	0.91304	Moderate
Purchase Intent	400	1	5	2.9400	0.93249	Moderate

Source: SPSS 26 output of the descriptive statistics, 2026.

The mean scores for all of the three main variables fall below the midpoint of 3, placing the variables within the moderate range which is 2.34 – 3.67 based on the criteria by Nachmias and Nachmias (2008). Amomg all the variables Message clarity has the highest mean score M = 2.9704, SD = 0.90299, followed by purchase intent M = 2.9400, SD = 0.93249, and trust M = 2.8969, SD = 0.91304. These results indicate that, respondents detect Walta Technology's digital advertisements to have a moderate level of clarity, trust, and persuasiveness. Despite the fact the results are considered statistically moderate, finding that they fall below of the neutral value of 3 indicates that consumer uncertainty about Ethiopian digital advertising is still present. This findings concern relates with prior research in emerging countries, where consumers often approach online marketing cautiously due to concerns about fraud, hidden costs or differences in the quality of the product (Mpinganjira, 2018; Sheth, 2020). These findings thus point to a key strategic opportunity for Walta Technology Plc to improve its marketing communications, ensuring that it specifically focuses on building trust via its digital advertisements in addition to providing information.

4.4 Reliability Analysis

To check that the survey questions for each category were consistent, Cronbach's alpha scores were calculated for every part of the study. Following the standards mentioned in the methodology (Section 3.9), a score higher than 0.70 is considered a reliable result (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). These specific findings are listed in Table 5.

Table 5 Reliability Analysis result of key variables

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Message Clarity	.945	7
Trust	.953	8
Purchase Intent	.940	6

Source: SPSS 26 output of Reliability Analysis of Measurement Scales, 2026.

All three measurement scales show very high levels of reliability, with scores ranging from 0.940 to 0.953. These results are well above the standard requirement of 0.70, which proves that the questions in each category consistently measure what they are supposed to. These high scores also confirm that the research tools which were originally created for Western online shopping still worked effectively when applied to social media ads for GPS trackers in Ethiopia. Because these measurements were so consistent, the data was considered accurate and ready for further testing, including the main correlation and mediation analyses.

4.5 Correlation Analysis

A correlation analysis was executed in accordance with the approach suggested by Saunders et al. (2009) in order to evaluate the strength and direction of the relationships between the three variables. Specifically, this study used Pearson's correlation coefficient r to measure the connection between message clarity, trust, and purchase intent. To ensure the results were reliable, a significance level of $p < 0.05$ was set. All the analysis were performed using SPSS version 26. To understand the strength of these relationships, the results were compared to the standards established by Weiliang et al. (2011), as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 The Rule of Thumb for Correlation Coefficient

S/No	Coefficient Range	Strength of Association
1	±0.91 - ±1.00	Very strong
2	±0.71 - ±0.90	High
3	±0.41 - ±0.70	Moderate
4	±0.21 - ±0.40	Small but definite relationship
5	±0.01 - ±0.20	Slight, most negligible

Thus, the following findings shows the correlation between the independent variable (message clarity), the mediator (trust), and the dependent variable (purchase intent). These relationships are examined using the interpretation guideline in Table 7, along with the SPSS 26 output of the questionnaire.

Table 7 Correlation analysis result

Variables	Message Clarity	Trust	Purchase Intent
Message Clarity	1	.777*	.806*
Sig.(2-tailed)		< 0.001	< 0.001
Trust	.777*	1	.799*
Sig.(2-tailed)	< 0.001		< 0.001
Purchase Intent	.806*	.799*	1
Sig.(2-tailed)	< 0.001	< 0.001	

Source: SPSS 26 output of Pearson correlation matrix, 2026.

The correlation result reveals strong, positive, and significant relationships between all three variables. Message Clarity and Purchase Intent ($r = .806^*$, $p < .001$); There is a strong positive correlation, indicating that higher perceived message clarity is connected with higher purchase intent. with Message Clarity and Trust ($r = .777^*$, $p < .001$) a very strong positive correlation exists, indicating that clear digital messages are strongly connected to higher levels of consumer trust. lastly, trust and Purchase Intent ($r = .799^*$, $p < .001$) has very strong positive correlation, showing that higher trust is associated with higher purchase intent.

4.6. Testing Assumptions for Multiple Regression (Mediation)

Before testing and interpreting the regression and mediation analysis results, it was necessary to test whether the data met the key assumptions of regression analysis for the mediation model.

Assumption 1: Independence of Errors

To ensure the data was reliable, the study used the Durbin-Watson test to check for the independence of errors. A value close to 2 usually indicates that the errors are independent. For this specific model, the test produced a value of 2.081. Since this number falls between the standard acceptable range of 1.5 and 2.5, it confirms that the residuals are independent. Therefore, the study fulfills the requirement for error independence.

Assumption 2: Normality of Residuals

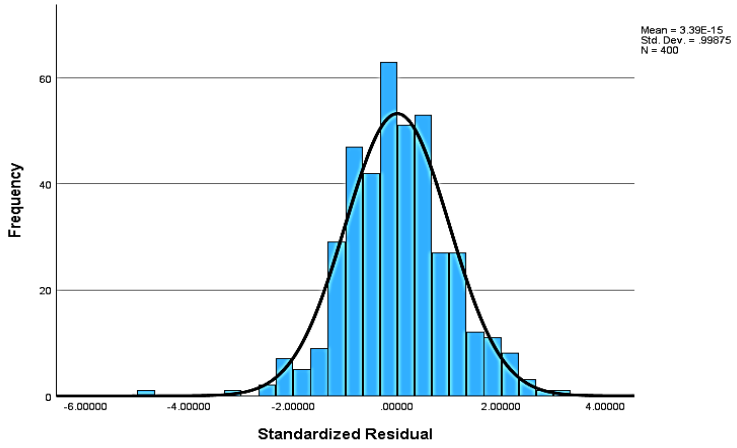


Figure 2 Histogram shows result of Normality of Residuals

Source: SPSS 26 output of the questionnaire survey, 2026.

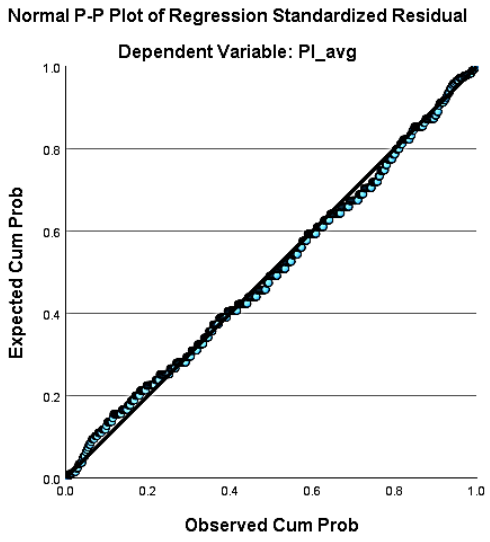


Figure 3 Normal P-P Plot

Source: SPSS 26 output of the questionnaire survey, 2026.

The study examined a histogram and a Normal P-P Plot to determine whether the data was spread out normally. The histogram indicates that the residuals formed a bell-shaped curve centered at zero, which indicates normal distribution. The P-P Plot, that involves the data points maintained very close to the diagonal. The reason that the points closely followed this line indicates that the actual data matched what would be expected in a normal distribution. Based on these results, the requirement for normality in this model has been satisfied.

Assumption 3: Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity test which occurs when independent factors (message clarity and trust) are too closely related to one another was executed, to make sure that the results were accurate. This assumption was tested using Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) scores. the results showed that VIF scores were lower than 10 and tolerance levels were higher than 0.10, these results confirm that the variables are distinct enough, verifying that multicollinearity is not a problem for this model and the findings remain reliable.

Table 8 Multicollinearity result

Predictor	Tolerance	VIF
Message Clarity	0.396	2.525
Trust	0.396	2.525

Source: SPSS 26 output of Multicollinearity result, 2026

4.7 Multiple Linear Regression Analyses

This section aims to analyze multiple linear regression to test the direct relationships proposed in hypotheses H1, H2, and H3. Each regression used one independent variable and one dependent variable.

Model of Regression Line

$Y = b + b1X1 + b2X2 + \ldots\ldots. + bnXn$

Where:

Y is the dependent variable (purchase intent)

b is the constant (y-intercept).

b1, b2, …, bn are the regression coefficients.

X1, X2,…, Xn are the independent variable

Based on the SPSS output, the specific regression model for this study is:

Table 9 Model Summary and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the Regression Result

Model	Predictors	Dep. Var	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	Std. Error	ANOVA Result	SS	df	F (Sig.)
Model 1	MC	PI	.806	.650	.649	.55231	Regression	225.541	1	F = 739.369 p (<.001)
							Residual	121.408	398	
Model 2	T	PI	.799	.638	.637	.56177	Regression	221.345	1	F =

							Residual	125.604	398	701.375 p (<.001)
Model 3	MC	T	.777	.604	.603	.57562	Regression	200.750	1	F = 605.882 p (<.001)
							Residual	131.871	398	

As shown in the above table all three the simple linear regression models indicate strong explanatory power and are statistically significant. Model 1 shows that Message clarity accounts for 65.0% of the variance in Purchase intent (R^2 = .650, F (1, 398) = 739.369, p < .001), while Model 2 shows that Trust explains 63.8% of the change in Purchase intent (R^2 = .638, F (1, 398) = 701.375, p < .001). Model 3 indicates the impact of Message clarity on Trust, capturing 60.4% of the variance (R^2= .604, F (1, 398) = 605.882, p < .001). The high F-statistics and corresponding p-values in each of the three analyses indicate that these relationships are not the result of random chance and that the selected predictors consistently and reliably control the changes of the corresponding dependent variables.

To understand the individual contribution of message clarity and trust on purchase intent, the Coefficients table was examined. This analysis focuses on both the unstandardized coefficients (B values) and standardized beta coefficients (Beta values), along with the t-values and significance levels (p-values) for each predictor variable.

Table 10 Regression Coefficient

Model	Dependent Var	Predictor	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t-statistic	Sig.
1	PI	Constant	.467	.095	-	4.911	<.001
		MC	.833	.031	.806	27.191	<.001
2	PI	Constant	.577	.094	-	6.166	<.001
		T	.816	.031	.799	26.483	<.001
3	T	Constant	.564	.099	-	5.689	<.001
		MC	.786	.032	.777	24.615	<.001

Source: Multiple regression Analysis, 2026.

The coefficient results of the three models prove that each predictor has a positive and significant effect on its dependent variable. In Model 1, a one-unit change in Message clarity leads to a .833 increase in Purchase intent (B = .833, t = 27.191, p < .001), showing it is a strong driver of purchase intention. Model 2 indicates that Trust increases Purchase intent by .816 units for every single-unit change (B = .816, t = 26.483, p < .001). Finally, Model 3 shows that Message clarity positively influences Trust by .786 units (B = .786, t = 24.615, p < .001). Because all t-values are very high and the significance levels are all <.001, these findings support the key role of clarity and trust in the model.

4.8 Mediation Analysis: The Mediating Role of Trust (H4)

To examine Hypothesis H4 which suggests that trust acts as a bridge between message clarity and purchase intent a mediation analysis was conducted. PROCESS Macro (Model 4) for SPSS was used for this specific analysis. This specific method is preferred to look at indirect effects because it uses a bootstrapping technique. Essentially, this method creates 5,000 mini-samples from the data to ensure the results are accurate and reliable.

In this model, Message Clarity was set as the independent variable, Trust was the mediator, and Purchase Intent was the dependent variable. The findings, including the direct, indirect, and total effects, this result is organized and shown in Table 11 below

Table 11 Mediation analysis result using PROCESS Macro model 4

Effect	Path	Coefficient	SE	t	p	95% CI (LLCI, ULCI)
Direct Effect						
	MC → T	0.7855	0.0319	24.615	< .001	0.7228 – 0.8483
	T→PI	0.4440	0.0427	10.401	< .001	0.3601 – 0.5279
	MC→PI	0.4838	0.0432	11.209	< .001	0.3990 – 0.5687
Total Effect						
	MC→PI	0.8326	0.031	27.191	< .001	0.772 – 0.894

Indirect Effect						
	MC → T → PI	0.3488	0.0388	-	-	0.2746 – 0.4263

Source: PROCESS Macro output (Hayes Model 4) of the questionnaire survey, 2026.

4.8.1 The Effect of Message Clarity on Trust (MC → T)

The results show a strong and positive connection between message clarity and trust. Specifically, for every one-point increase in message clarity (measured on a scale of 1 to 5), consumer trust in Walta Technology increases by 0.79 points. This relationship is statistically significant. Statistical testing suggests we can be 95% confident that this effect is consistent and stays within a high range (between 0.72 and 0.85), proving that clear messaging is a powerful way to build trust.

4.8.2 The Effect of Trust on Purchase Intent (T → PI), Controlling for Message Clarity

Even when the direct influence of a clear message is considered, trust remains a very strong predictor of a consumer's purchase intent. For every one-point increase in trust, the purchase intention grows by 0.44 points. This result is statistically significant. This confirms that trust is not simply an added bonus; it is a deciding factor in whether a customer moves forward.

4.8.3 Direct Effect: Message Clarity → Purchase Intent (Controlling for Trust)

The results show that even when trust is not a mediator, message clarity still has a significant direct impact on a consumer's purchase intent. For every one-point increase in message clarity, the purchase intent increases directly by 0.48 points. This indicates a shortcut where straightforward information helps customers quickly understand the product's benefits and reduces any confusion. Because the information is easy to process, consumers often feel ready to make a purchase based on the facts alone, even before they have developed a deep sense of trust in the brand.

4.8.4 Total Effect: Message Clarity → Purchase Intent (Without Mediator)

The study found that the message clarity had a very strong impact on consumers purchase intent ($\beta = 0.833$, $p < .001$). When trust was included in the analysis as a mediator, the direct effect of message clarity decreased to 0.4838. Meanwhile, the indirect effect which is the influence that happens because message clarity builds trust was measured at 0.3488. These results show that

about 42% of the total influence clarity has on a person's intent to buy actually comes from the trust that the clear message creates.

4.8.5 Indirect Effect: The Mediation Pathway (MC → T → PI)

The analysis shows that the indirect effect (0.3488) represents the part of message clarity's impact that moves through the trust pathway. Since the statistical test results (the confidence interval) do not include zero, we can be certain that trust acts as a link between these two factors.

To put it simply: when a customer finds an advertisement easy to understand, that clarity causes them to have more faith in the brand. This higher level of trust then leads to a stronger desire to buy the product. This is not just a guess; it is a sequence of events proven by the data.

The proportion of the total effect mediated by trust is calculated as follows (How Much of the Effect Goes Through Trust?):

Proportion Mediated = Indirect Effect / Total Effect = 0.3488 / 0.8326 = 0.4189
(or approximately 42%)

The data shows that approximately **42%** of the influence that clear messaging has on purchase intent is due to the trust those messages create. The remaining 58% represents a direct connection, where clarity convinces the consumer to buy without needing trust as an intermediary.

While some might assume that trust is the only way a message works, these findings show that both paths are important. However, a 42% impact is significant. If a company like Walta Technology is focused only on making their advertisements clearer but ignored the trust-building aspect, they would fail to use nearly half of the potential power of their communication. To be most effective, marketing strategies should aim to both inform the customer and build their confidence at the same time.

Nature of Mediation: Partial

As the result shown above, the direct impact (0.4838) stays significant even when trust is added to the analysis, it is clear that trust partially explains the connection. This means that both the direct and indirect paths work at the same time to influence the final result.

4.9 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 12 Summary of Hypotheses and Findings

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Message clarity positively influences purchase intent.	Supported
H2	Trust positively influences purchase intent.	Supported
H3	Message clarity positively influences trust.	Supported
H4	Trust mediates the relationship between message clarity and purchase intent.	Supported (Partial Mediation)

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

This study proves that when Walta Technology's online advertisements for its GPS car trackers are easy to understand and free of confusing tech jargon, customers are much more likely to buy the product and trust the brand. Clear communication yields dual benefits: approximately 58% of its impact directly enhances consumer comprehension of product value, while the remaining 42% establishes consumer confidence, which accounts for nearly half of a customer's purchase intention. However, the data reveals a major roadblock in the Ethiopian market: average scores for advertisement clarity sat at a lukewarm 2.97 out of 5, and overall customer trust was even lower at 2.90. Because local consumers are naturally skeptical of online scams and misleading advertisements, they lean toward distrust by default. Since a confused or doubtful customer will not buy, Walta has a massive opportunity to unlock its full sales potential by rewriting its marketing in simple, transparent terms that make shoppers feel both well-informed and secure.

5.2 Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that while clear messaging is essential, it is not enough on its own to motivate a purchase. Currently, the digital advertisements for Walta achieve only moderate levels of clarity, suggesting a significant opportunity for improvement. Trust appears to be the critical missing element in the Ethiopian digital marketing landscape. The low average trust scores confirm that consumers view online advertisements with a high degree of skepticism. Furthermore, the strong link between trust and purchase intent proves that establishing credibility is a direct way to increase sales, rather than just a general branding goal.

The finding that trust acts as a mediator change how we should measure advertising success. It shows that trust explains much of why a clear message leads to a purchase. In practice, this means clarity and trust are inseparable: a clear message that is not trusted will be ignored, while a trusted message that lacks clarity will fail to convince the audience. Traditional marketing frameworks, such as the AIDA model, need to include a specific focus on trust. In the Ethiopian digital market, interest does not lead to desire unless trust is present; without it, consumers will not act because they do not believe the company will fulfill its promises. Ultimately, the

Ethiopian digital consumer is well-informed and discerning. Because these consumers have high levels of education and digital skills, they are a critical audience that expects both transparency and reliability.

5.3 Recommendation

The main goal of this research is to give Walta Technology real, everyday solutions to improve their marketing and boost their sales. Based on the data collected from the 400 respondents, Walta Technology needs to upgrade how they communicate with the public by focusing on two main areas: simplifying their social media messages and actively building consumer trust. Since the study showed that many people find the current ads too technical, the company should stop using heavy engineering jargon in their social media posts. Instead, they should focus on clear, real-life benefits by answering basic customer questions, such as how the device prevents theft, and use clean graphics or short videos to make the information easier to understand. Furthermore, because trust is the critical bridge that turns an ad viewer into a paying buyer, Walta Technology must actively show they are reliable by sharing screenshots of happy customer reviews, video testimonials from real car owners, and photos of their technicians installing the trackers. Finally, since the bulk of the data came from walk-in office visitors and installation sites, Walta Technology should print small, easy-to-read brochures that explain how the GPS car tracker and mobile app work. Handing these out during office visits or right after a technician finishes an installation will reduce confusion, prove the company's authenticity, and easily turn casual social media browsers into actual, paying customers.

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Survey Questionnaire

This survey is part of a master's thesis research examining how digital advertising messages influence consumer trust and purchase decisions for car GPS trackers. Your responses will help improve digital marketing strategies for tech products in the Ethiopian market.

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1.Age:

○18–24 years

○25–34 years

○35–44 years

○45–54 years

○ 55 years and above

2. Gender

○ Male

○ Female

3. Educational Level

○ No formal education

○ Primary school

○ Secondary school

○ Diploma/Technical certificate

○ Bachelor's degree

○ Master's degree or higher

4. Occupation

○ Student

○ Government employee

○ Private sector employee

○ Business owner/Self-employed

○ Unemployed

○ Other

5. Location (Region/City):

○ Addis Ababa

○ Oromia

○ Amhara

○ SNNP

○ Other

6. Type of area you live in:

○ Urban

○ Peri-urban

○ Rural

SECTION 2: DIGITAL BEHAVIOR AND EXPERIENCE

7. How often do you use social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok?

○ Daily

○ Weekly

○ Monthly

○ Rarely

○ Never

8. How would you rate your comfort level with using digital technology (e.g., smartphones, online shopping)?

○ Very Low

○ Low

○ Moderate

○ High

○ Very High

SECTION 3: MESSAGE CLARITY

Please indicate your level of engagement with the following statements regarding Walta Technology's digital advertisements for GPS trackers (e.g., on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok or YouTube).

Scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

NO	QUESTIONNAIRES	SD	D	N	A	SA
9	Walta Technology’s social media ads for GPS car trackers are easy to understand.					
10	The language used in Walta’s digital ads is simple and clear.					
11	The visuals (images/videos) in Walta’s ads help me understand the product features.					
12	The benefits of the GPS tracker are clearly communicated in Walta’s ads.					
13	I find Walta’s digital advertisements free from confusing technical terms.					
14	The call-to-action (e.g., "Buy now," "Learn more") in Walta’s ads is clear and noticeable.					
15	Overall, Walta’s digital messages are well-structured and logically presented.					

SECTION 4: TRUST

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about your trust in Walta Technology and its digital advertising.

16	I believe Walta Technology's digital ads are honest and truthful.					
17	I trust that Walta will deliver the GPS tracker as advertised.					
18	Walta's social media presence seems credible and reliable.					
19	I feel confident that Walta's product claims are accurate.					
20	Walta's digital content appears transparent about product pricing and features.					
21	Customer reviews/testimonials shown in Walta's ads increase my trust in the brand.					
22	I perceive Walta as a trustworthy brand in the Ethiopian tech market.					
23	I believe Walta would provide good after-sales service if I purchased the GPS tracker.					

SECTION 5: PURCHASE INTENT

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your intention to purchase a GPS tracker from Walta Technology.

24	After seeing Walta's digital ads, I am considering buying their GPS tracker.					
25	I am likely to purchase a GPS tracker from Walta in the next 6					

	months.					
26	I would recommend Walta's GPS tracker to a friend or family member.					
27	I feel willing to pay the advertised price for Walta's GPS tracker.					
28	I intend to seek more information about the GPS tracker (eg., visit their website or store)					
29	I would choose Walta's GPS tracker over competing brands.					

Thank You for Filling the Questionnaires Honestly and Completely!!!