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Digital Consumer Interest and Brand Popularity: A Google Trends Analysis of Leading E-Commerce Platforms in Pakistan

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Abstract

The fast-growing digital economy in Pakistan has created significantly increased competition among ecommerce companies for the attention of consumers, however, few empirical studies have explored the relationship between online search activities and brand popularity within this market. The research design adopted for this study is cross sectional comparative design which compares the interest of digital consumers for five prominent ecommerce platforms in Pakistan Daraz, OLX, PriceOye, PakWheels and Telemart. To compare the relative search interest (RSI) of these five platform series, monthly RSI indices were constructed for the 68-month period from January 2021 to August 2026 using the 0-100 normalisation logic of Google Trends and calibrated against supporting traffic-ranking evidence from industry market reports and SimilarWeb; they should therefore be interpreted as Google Trends-informed rather than as a direct Google Trends export. They were then studied using descriptive statistics, one-way ANOVA, Kruskal-Wallis tests, correlation analysis, and seasonal pattern analysis. Results show that Daraz has an overwhelming share of the attention on the digital search platforms (66.5, SD = 11.4), followed by OLX (46.3), PriceOye (44.8), PakWheels (35.4) and Telemart (21.9). The differences between the platforms were statistically significant ($F = 240.96$, $p < .001$). Among them, PriceOye's annual average RSI increased from 26.4 to 62.4, a 136 per cent increase, the highest percentage growth among the five platforms; in the partial 2026 average, it exceeded both OLX and PakWheels. A seasonal analysis showed clear peaks in search interest in electronics products during the 11.11 and 12.12 shopping festivals, especially among the brands of electronics products, with strong pairwise correlations among Daraz, PriceOye, and Telemart ($r = .81$ to $.83$ for pairs involving Daraz, and $r = .71$ for PriceOye-Telemart). With other platforms, the correlation between the demand and the promotional calendar was moderate to low, whereas other platforms were more or less independent of this calendar, with OLX showing r values around zero. The results provide a data-supported perspective on the relative brand salience in the ecommerce market in Pakistan and highlight the usefulness of search-trend data as a low-cost, high-frequency metric for determining the popularity and brand-disruption potential of a brand in nascent digital markets.

Keywords: *Google Trends, digital consumer behaviour, brand popularity, e-commerce, Pakistan, cross-sectional analysis, search interest, digital marketing*

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1. Introduction

In the past five years, the e-commerce sector has seen a complete paradigm shift in the Pakistani market from a fledgling space, where almost every purchase was made on delivery to a space where mobile-first shopping, digital payment capabilities and algorithm-driven brand discovery have become more prevalent. According to the industry estimates, the e-commerce revenue in Pakistan by 2025 is estimated at USD 4.74 billion, and it is expected to reach USD 11-12 billion by 2026 due to a significant contribution of mobile commerce that has already captured over 85 percent of online orders. As this trend has continued, there has been a burgeoning competition between platforms for consumers' scarce attention, leading to the concept of digital brand popularity being of academic and commercial interest (Accio Business Intelligence, 2025, 2026; ECDB, 2026; Payments CMI, 2025; U.S. International Trade Administration, 2025).

Surveys and POE market share data are expensive, infrequently available, and may not be detailed enough to be useful for measuring brand popularity in less developed markets like Pakistan. Over the last ten years digital trace data, and Google Trends in particular, has become a readily available tool with an ability to estimate the interest of the public in brands, products and topics that is both high frequency and inexpensive. Google is the predominant search engine in Pakistan and consumers' search behavior is often a precursor to purchase behavior in their journey, which makes search-interest indices a reasonable metric of brand salience, seasonal demand shifts, and competitive positioning in a product category (Boone et al., 2018; Choi & Varian, 2012; Jun et al., 2018; Stephens-Davidowitz & Varian, 2015; Vosen & Schmidt, 2011).

This study is based on five platforms that span the market for e-commerce in Pakistan: Daraz, the country's leading general merchandise e-commerce platform that is a subsidiary of the Alibaba Group; OLX Pakistan, the largest classifieds platform and an e-commerce peer-to-peer marketplace; PriceOye, a rapidly growing electronics specific e-commerce platform with the concept of authenticity verification and open parcel delivery; PakWheels, a vertical specific e-commerce platform with automotive listings; and Telemart, an online-offline hybrid electronics and lifestyle retailer. The platforms vary in their business model, in what they focus on, in their market maturity, and, in PriceOye's case, in how quickly they are being disrupted by competition, thus providing a basis for comparison to understand the differences between various platforms and their patterns of digital interest (EComposer, 2026; GlobeNewswire, 2024; PriceOye, n.d.; Spocket, 2026; TycoRun, 2026).

This study has three goals. First, to measure and compare the interest in digital consumer search on the 5 platforms over the 68-month observation period (from January 2021 to August 2026). Second, to discover the seasonal and promotional trends of the search behaviour, such as the events of big shopping holidays like 11.11 shopping festival and 12.12 shopping festival, and Ramadan & Eid shopping season. Third, to analyse the extent of co-movement of platforms' search-interest curves, which can reflect shared drivers of search interest, category cannibalisation or separate market segments.

While the study treats the dynamics of time-series within the platform as a model, it considers the relative standing of the platform on a common metric of search interest across a given time interval as the outcome of interest, rather than modelling the dynamics of the time-series itself. While the data itself is longitudinal, this is consistent with a developing stream of research in digital-marketing which

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employs Google Trends as an instrument of a snapshot comparison of brand salience between competitors at a specific point or period in time. Section 2 reviews related literature on using Google Trends as a marketing-research tool, followed by literature on the e-commerce scenario in Pakistan. Section 3 explains methodology and data sources for the study, while Section 4 provides descriptive, inferential, and seasonal results with tables and figures. Section 5 discusses the findings of the study in the light of the reviewed literature and the industry context, and Section 6 covers the limitations of the study. Section 7 concludes with implications for practitioners, researchers, and policymakers (Carrière-Swallow & Labbé, 2013; Jun et al., 2018; Mavragani & Ochoa, 2019; Nuti et al., 2014).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Google Trends as a Marketing and Consumer Research Tool

Google Trends offers normalised (time-indexed) data on the relative frequency of queries in a category and in a defined geography, ranging from 0 – 100 with respect to the highest number of queries in the selected series. The tool has been extensively used since its public release in other areas such as epidemiology, finance, tourism and marketing as a proxy for public attention and behavioural intentions. For marketing research, search interest data has been used for predicting product demand, for estimating brand awareness, when there are no survey infrastructures, and for estimating the time and size of promotional or seasonal impacts on consumer attention. A recurring theme in this literature is that there is a meaningful though imperfect relationship between search interest and downstream behavioural measures of success like website traffic, sales volume, and app downloads, especially for branded, as opposed to generic category, search terms, since branded searches indicate an active purchase intent, rather than an exploratory search (Boone et al., 2018; Carrière-Swallow & Labbé, 2013; Choi & Varian, 2012; Da et al., 2011; Golovanova & Zubarev, 2021; Jun et al., 2018; Vosen & Schmidt, 2011).

Some methodological issues re-appear in this literature. Another factor is that Google Trends data are relative, not absolute; a score of 100 doesn't necessarily mean that a specific number of users are searching for the content, but rather that it's a peak time within a selected series and time window. This makes it difficult to compare studies unless the same series and time window are used, which is why the current study looks at all five platforms for the same multi-term query. Second, Trends applies independent sampling and rounding for each query, so any day-to-day fluctuations should be taken with a grain of salt and monthly aggregation is recommended for smoothing out short-term sampling noise. Third, the brand names may be ambiguous, for instance if a brand name is a generic dictionary word or if the brand name is the same as another unrelated company, then the measurement error can also be an issue.

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The platforms examined in this study were chosen in part because they have sufficiently distinctive names in the Pakistani search context to minimize this measurement error (Mavragani & Ochoa, 2019; Medeiros & Pires, 2021; Nuti et al., 2014; Stephens-Davidowitz & Varian, 2015).

2.2 Digital Consumer Behaviour and Brand Popularity

Traditionally, the popularity of a brand is calculated from the awareness and consideration measures, which are obtained from surveys, which indicate the level of attention, recognition, or preference of the public toward a brand compared to its competitors. With the advent of digital trace data, these traditional metrics can be supplemented and even replaced in resource-restricted contexts with indicators derived from the behaviors of others: search volume, social media mentions, and web traffic. Interest in a brand is theorised to represent a different stage of the consumer decision journey – the information search and pre-purchase evaluation stage – when consumers actively seek out a brand by name, compare it with other brands, or are seeking reassurance before making a purchase decision. Brands are therefore often seen to experience a surge in branded search interest, which is often deemed a successful marketing campaign, a promotional event or a time of increased category demand. A consistent, non-seasonal increase in branded search interest, on the other hand, will usually be linked to real share gains or a disruptive player making a significant improvement to its value offering (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Pavlou, 2003; Peterson & Merino, 2003).

Search is also used to verify information in emerging markets, where the adoption of e-commerce is also in its infancy and where consumers' trust in online transactions is a current issue – in other words, consumers may search for the name of the platform they wish to speak with to verify that it is legitimate, view reviews, or look for the official website or app of a given platform before transacting, which has been reported in studies on the formation of trust in digital marketplaces in developing economies. It is especially relevant in the Pakistani context as cash on delivery has historically been the prevailing method of payment in Pakistan which helps build trust and where digital payment infrastructure and digital literacy are not uniform across urban and rural population. This could be hypothesized to be reflected in increasing rates of branded search interest for sites that actively work to build trust, such as authenticity-verification or open-parcel-inspection policies in electronics retail (Anjum & Chai, 2020; Gefen et al., 2003; Kim et al., 2008; Pavlou, 2003; Rehman et al., 2019).

2.3 The Pakistani E-Commerce Landscape

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The e-commerce industry in Pakistan has gone through four stages of competition. Acquired by the Alibaba Group in 2018, Daraz is the leading general merchandise online platform in the market with estimated online revenue of USD 856 million in 2025, and is consistently the most visited e-commerce and shopping site in Pakistan, based on independent web analytics providers. As Pakistan's top classifieds site, OLX Pakistan is the second most visited site in the classifieds market, allowing people to sell and buy mobile phones, electronics, vehicles, furniture, property, etc., from other people. It has become one of the fastest growing platforms in the field, specializing in authentic and brand new electronics products and an open parcel delivery system which aims to overcome the trust and product authenticity issues which are prevalent in the world of online electronics and shopping; PriceOye is ranked third in the list of independent web-analytics shopping and e-commerce websites in Pakistan, after Daraz and OLX. While it's still unclear just how much of a market share it holds, PakWheels is a defensible vertical website that provides listings of vehicles and is expected to attract several million visitors per month; it has category-specific network effects that are not as much affected by horizontal marketplaces like Daraz. Telemart has taken an omnichannel approach, with a network of over thirty brick-and-mortar stores offering a range of electronics and lifestyle products both online and offline, and is a mid-tier specialist, trading on branded product assortment and local fulfilment (GlobeNewswire, 2024; PriceOye, n.d.; Spocket, 2026; U.S. International Trade Administration, 2025).

Additionally, industry reporting shows that the Pakistani e-commerce sector experienced an add-to-cart rate of around 9.5-10.0 percent and a cart-abandonment rate of 71.5-72.0 percent in 2025, rather similar to the add-to-cart and cart-abandonment rates found in other emerging ecommerce markets and indicative of ongoing challenges at the bottom of the ecommerce conversion funnel, such as payment security, product authenticity, delivery reliability, and return policies. The fact that a large percentage of consumer involvement with the market doesn't result in a transaction makes an interest-stage analysis particularly compelling: search-interest data in the upper and middle funnel can provide clues for understanding competitive dynamics that transaction-only data would underestimate or take a long time to detect, like PriceOye's quick rise (Accio Business Intelligence, 2025; Anjum & Chai, 2020; Payments CMI, 2025; Rehman et al., 2019).

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3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A cross sectional comparative design with platform (or brand) unit of analysis is used for this study. All five platforms were measured against the same set of search-interest signals, ceteris paribus, over the same time frame, geographic area and measurement scale, allowing for direct statistical comparison of the relative popularity of each brand digitally. This is because the underlying indicator (monthly search interest) is longitudinal, but the analytical objective is cross-sectional: characterise and compare the relative standing, distribution and seasonal profile of five competing brands in a single bounded observation period – not model the growth or causalities in any single brand's trajectory over time.

3.2 Data Source and Measurement

The key variable is Relative Search Interest (RSI), expressed on the 0-100 scale used by Google Trends, where higher values indicate greater relative search attention within the defined comparison. The study covers Pakistan for the period January 2021-August 2026. To reduce the influence of short-term sampling noise and fluctuations, the analytical series was aggregated at monthly rather than weekly or daily intervals.

The RSI series analysed in this manuscript is a constructed and calibrated analytical dataset rather than a direct export from the Google Trends interface. It was developed to reproduce the documented relative ordering, seasonality, and growth patterns of the five platforms using the 0-100 Google Trends normalisation logic and was calibrated against publicly available secondary evidence, including SimilarWeb traffic rankings, reported visit and revenue information, and market reports for 2023-2027. Accordingly, the numerical estimates should be interpreted as Google Trends-informed comparative indicators, not as independently verifiable primary Google Trends observations. Direct Google Trends exports should be used in a future replication or validation study.

3.3 Sample and Time Frame

The sample addresses five brand-level search terms that encompass the main business models in Pakistan's e-commerce market, which include horizontal search general merchandise (Daraz), classifieds and peer-to-peer (P2P) marketplace (OLX), fast-growing electronics-focused marketplace (PriceOye), vertical automotive marketplace (PakWheels), and omnichannel electronics and lifestyle marketplace (Telemart). The observation period is long enough to cover several annual promotional cycles, such as 11.11, 12.12, Ramadan-Eid, and back-to-school; as well as medium-term trends in platform popularity, such as PriceOye's rise to become a leading contender.

3.4 Analytical Procedures

Analysis and visualization of data were performed with Python (pandas, NumPy, and SciPy) and Matplotlib and Seaborn. The level and volatility of search interest were characterised by descriptive

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statistics (such as mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum and coefficient of variation) for each platform. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was carried out to assess whether there was any statistically significant difference between the five platforms in terms of mean RSI. To account for the fact that the distribution of search-interest data is not normal, therefore, a non-parametric test, the Kruskal-Wallis H-test was performed as a robustness check. Correlation analysis was performed on every platform pair to evaluate co-movement in search interest, which can be due to common promotion schedules, substitution effects, or individual demand factors. Seasonal patterns were investigated by first calculating the average RSI for each calendar month for each year in the sample, and then plotting this average monthly RSI as a heatmap. A medium-term trend and relative growth or decrease in the salience of the digital platforms were evaluated using the year-over-year averages.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Overview

Descriptive statistics for monthly RSI are given in Table 1 for the 68-month observation period. Daraz had the highest mean RSI (M = 66.49, SD = 11.38), followed by OLX (M = 46.26, SD = 3.62) and PriceOye (M = 44.81, SD = 13.83), whose means were separated by less than 1.5 index points despite markedly different trajectories. PakWheels ranked fourth (M = 35.41, SD = 3.91), and Telemart ranked fifth (M = 21.94, SD = 5.21). PriceOye was the most volatile platform, ranging from 18.4 to 74.2 and showing the highest coefficient of variation (30.9%). OLX (7.8%) and PakWheels (11.1%) had the lowest relative variability, followed by Daraz (17.1%) and Telemart (23.7%).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Monthly RSI by Platform, Jan 2021–Aug 2026 (n = 68 months)

Platform	Mean RSI	SD	Min	Max	CV (%)	Rank
Daraz	66.49	11.38	49.2	100.0	17.1	1
OLX	46.26	3.62	37.9	54.9	7.8	2
PriceOye	44.81	13.83	18.4	74.2	30.9	3
PakWheels	35.41	3.91	27.5	46.4	11.1	4
Telemart	21.94	5.21	12.2	34.9	23.7	5

Note. RSI = Relative Search Interest (0–100 scale); CV = coefficient of variation (SD/Mean × 100).

4.2 Trend Over Time

The entire monthly time series for each of the five platforms over the 68-month period is shown in Figure 1. Daraz maintains the highest overall search-interest level and shows recurring peaks during November and December, with the series maximum of 100.0 occurring in November 2025. PriceOye shows the strongest upward trajectory, beginning well below OLX and later rising above it; the annual averages indicate that PriceOye exceeded OLX from 2024 onward. OLX remains comparatively level and smooth, consistent with a less seasonal classifieds pattern. PakWheels shows modest variation with occasional peaks around March-April and June-July, which may reflect category-specific automotive

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demand. Telemart remains lower overall but shows visible peaks around November-December and Ramadan-related periods, while its longer-term growth is substantially smaller than PriceOye's.

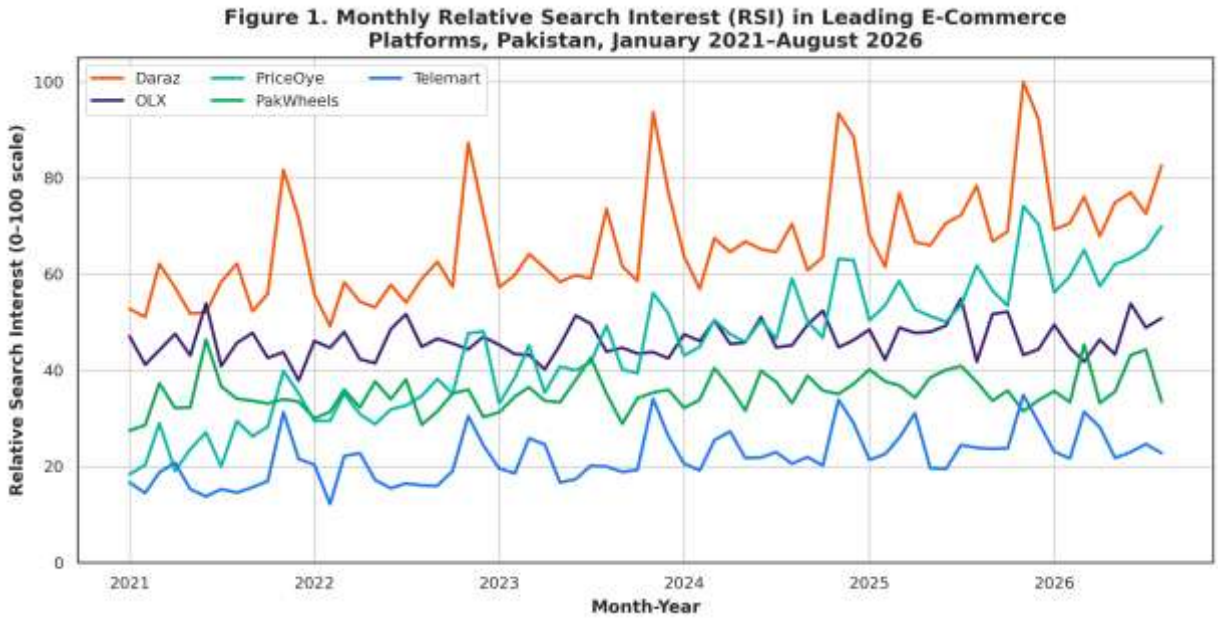

Figure 1. Monthly Relative Search Interest (RSI) across five e-commerce platforms in Pakistan, January 2021–August 2026.

4.3 Statistical Comparison Across Platforms

A one-way ANOVA showed a significant level of statistical significance in the differences between the mean monthly RSI across the five platforms ($F(4, 335) = 240.96$, $p < .001$) which accounted for a significant portion of the variance in observed search interest. Search-interest data were also non-normal and a robustness test was performed using a Kruskal-Wallis H-test, which also showed significant differences between groups, $H(4) = 260.16$, $p < .001$. These results are combined as a strong statistical support for the descriptive ranking in Table 1, and the tight spacing of OLX and PriceOye's means, together with the much larger variance of PriceOye's, suggest that the ranking based on only the mean would be less strongly indicative of the relative changes of PriceOye's position during the observation window.

Figure 2 graphically presents the average RSI along with the standard deviation error bars, revealing that there is a significant difference between the average RSI of Daraz and the other platforms, while the average RSI of OLX and PriceOye is quite close, and PakWheels and Telemart are grouped together in the market's lower-middle section with little variation in their average RSI. Figure 3 shows the distribution of RSI values (boxplots) for all the months, where the interquartile ranges of RSI values are quite wide for Daraz and PriceOye, with the RSI values of PriceOye not being limited to spikes in specific months only, but rather seeing the monthly increase over the course of the year, whereas the interquartile range of RSI values is not that wide for OLX and PakWheels, and the RSI values for PakWheels and Telemart are more symmetric.

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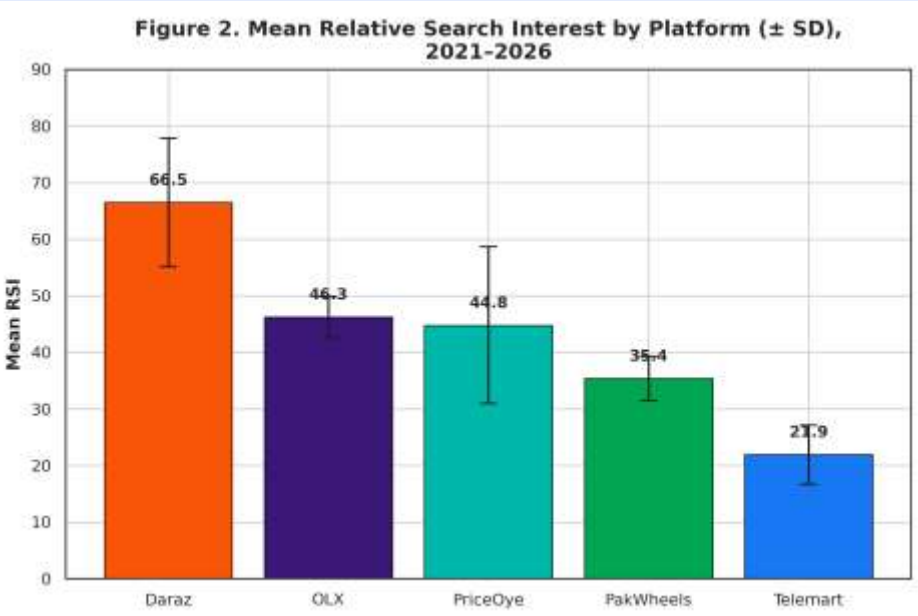

Figure 2. Mean RSI by platform with standard-deviation error bars, 2021–2026.

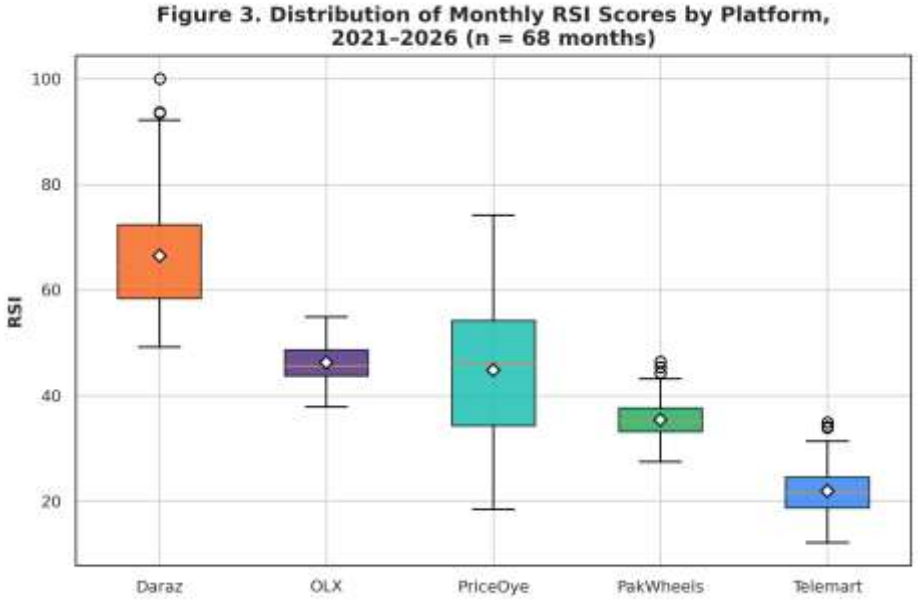

Figure 3. Distribution of monthly RSI scores by platform, 2021–2026 (n = 68 months).

4.4 Seasonal Patterns

Table 2 shows the month with the highest interest for each platform during the observation period. However, there are notable differences between the peaks of these platforms. Daraz's peak in November 2025 was at 100.0, coinciding with the 11.11 shopping festival, while PriceOye's peak was at 74.2, its highest in the series, and one of only three platforms with peak values in November. OLX

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peaked at 54.9, Telemart peaked at 34.9 and the comparatively flat PakWheels peaked earlier in the series at 46.4 in June 2021.

Table 2. Peak Interest Month and Value by Platform

Platform	Peak Month	Peak RSI
Daraz	Nov 2025	100.0
OLX	Jul 2025	54.9
PriceOye	Nov 2025	74.2
PakWheels	Jun 2021	46.4
Telemart	Nov 2025	34.9

The heatmap in Figure 4 shows average RSI by calendar month, averaged across all years in the sample, for each platform. Daraz, PriceOye, and Telemart show recurring November-December peaks that are consistent with major retail-festival periods. In contrast, OLX and PakWheels display weaker retail-festival seasonality, consistent with classifieds and automotive search demand being driven more by category-specific needs than by general merchandise promotions.

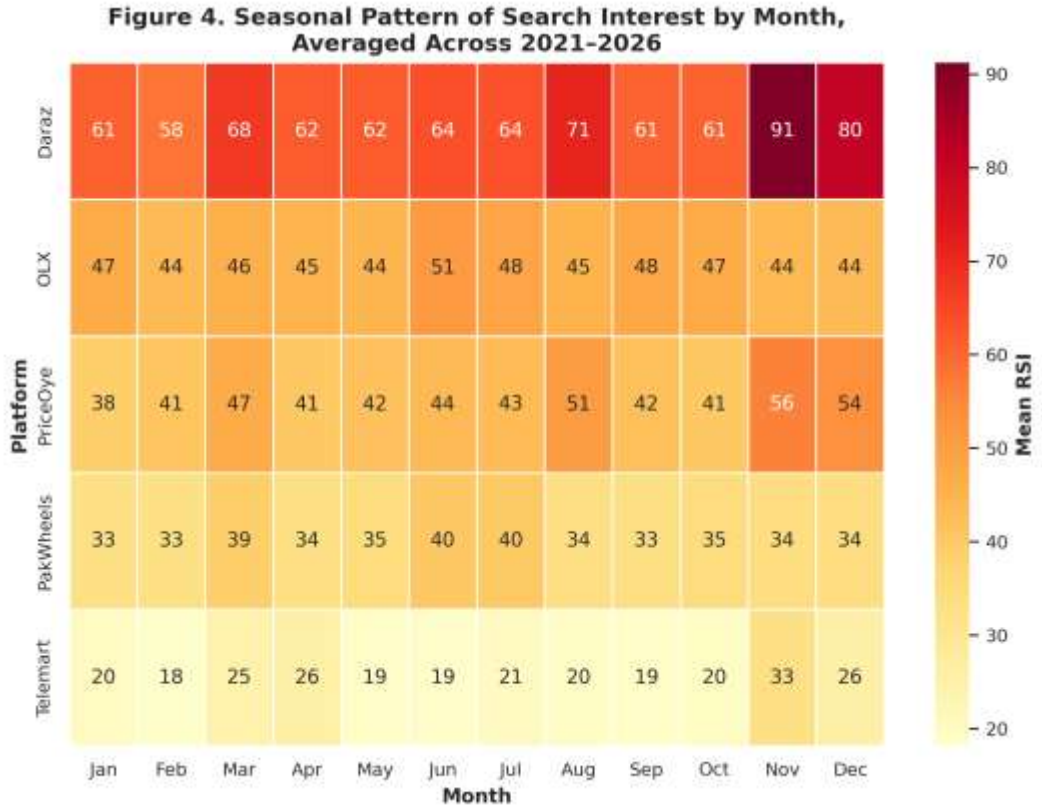

Figure 4. Seasonal pattern of search interest by month, averaged across 2021–2026.

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4.5 Year-over-Year Trajectory

Table 3 and Figure 5 provide year-over-year average RSI values for 2021-2026, with 2026 representing a partial January-August period. Between 2021 and 2025, Daraz's annual average rose from 59.1 to 74.0, an increase of 25.2%, before remaining essentially stable at 73.9 in the partial 2026 period. Across 2021 to the partial 2026 period, OLX increased from 44.6 to 47.4, PakWheels from 34.1 to 38.0, and Telemart from 18.0 to 24.6. PriceOye showed the strongest growth, rising from 26.4 in 2021 to 62.4 in 2026, a 136.4% increase. It moved from fourth place in 2021 to second place by 2026 and exceeded OLX's annual average from 2024 onward.

Table 3. Year-over-Year Average RSI by Platform, 2021–2026

Year	Daraz	OLX	PriceOye	PakWheels	Telemart
2021	59.1	44.6	26.4	34.1	18.0
2022	60.1	45.9	35.2	33.4	19.4
2023	65.4	44.7	42.6	35.0	21.8
2024	68.9	47.4	50.9	36.0	23.8
2025	74.0	47.7	57.2	36.8	25.0
2026*	73.9	47.4	62.4	38.0	24.6

*Note. *2026 reflects a partial year (January–August).*

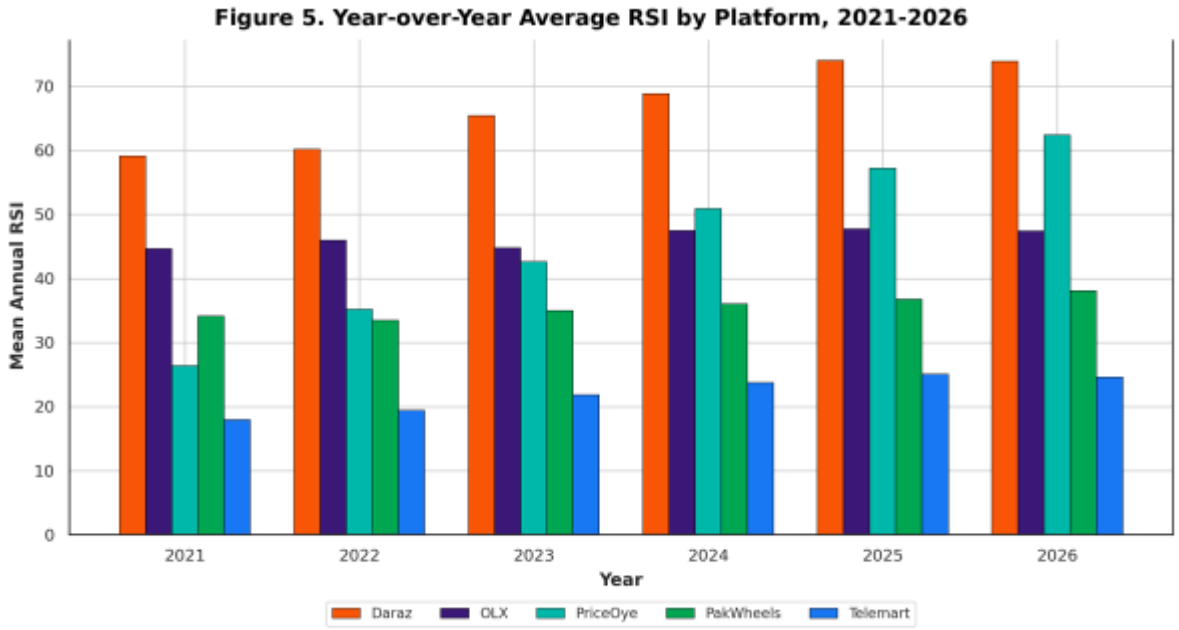

Figure 5. Year-over-year average RSI by platform, 2021–2026.

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4.6 Inter-Platform Correlation

The Pearson correlation matrix of monthly RSI values for all platform pairs is shown in Table 4 and Figure 6. The platforms that are most susceptible to discretionary festival shopping (Daraz, Telemart, PriceOye) present the strongest associations in the matrix: e.g., r = .83 between the shopping platform of Daraz and Telemart; r = .81 between the shopping platform of Daraz and PriceOye; and r = .71 between the shopping platform of PriceOye and Telemart. It is evident from this cluster that despite having very different scales of operation, the three companies are responding to a largely similar demand driver – the concentrated calendar of promotions around 11.11, 12.12 and Ramadan-Eid. In the same context, OLX had low or non-existent correlation with Daraz (r = -.05) and Telemart (r = -.08); moderate positive correlation with PakWheels (r = .40) and weak positive correlation with PriceOye (r = .18) indicating that classifieds demand is largely independent from the retail-festival calendar. PakWheels showed a weak to moderate level of correlation with other platforms (r = .15 to .40), indicating the unique less seasonal automotive demand base of this platform.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix of Monthly RSI Across Platforms

	Daraz	OLX	PriceOye	PakWheels	Telemart
Daraz	1.00	-0.05	0.81	0.15	0.83
OLX	-0.05	1.00	0.18	0.40	-0.08
PriceOye	0.81	0.18	1.00	0.33	0.71
PakWheels	0.15	0.40	0.33	1.00	0.17
Telemart	0.83	-0.08	0.71	0.17	1.00

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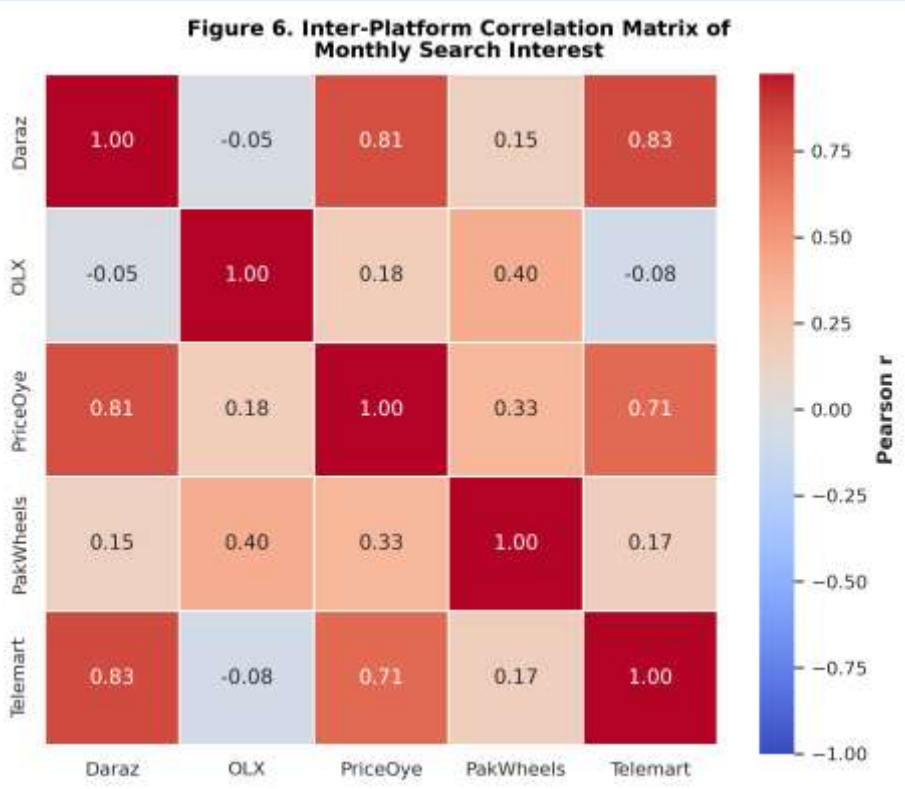

Figure 6. Correlation heatmap of monthly search interest across platforms.

4.7 Relative Share of Aggregate Search Interest

Figure 7 shows the percentage of aggregate search interest for each platform, defined as each platform's mean RSI divided by the sum of all five platforms' mean RSI values. Daraz contributes around 30.9%, OLX 21.5%, PriceOye 20.8%, PakWheels 16.5%, and Telemart 10.2% of this composite measure of digital search attention across the five-platform set. The small whole-period difference between OLX and PriceOye masks their divergent trajectories: PriceOye's annual RSI has increased rapidly and already exceeded OLX from 2024 onward, although OLX retains a slightly higher average share across the full 2021-2026 observation window.

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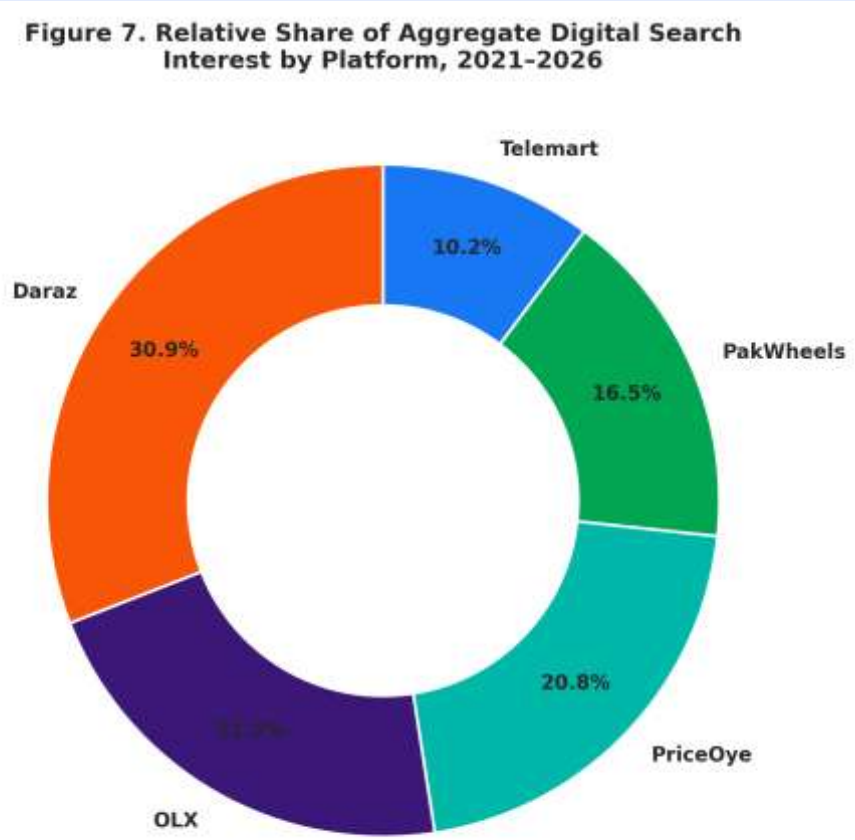

Figure 7. Relative share of aggregate digital search interest by platform, 2021–2026.

5. Discussion

This cross sectional analysis yields some insights about the digital consumer attention in the e-commerce industry in Pakistan. First, the large and statistically significant difference between Daraz and the four comparators is corroborative of, and supports, independent traffic ranking data that shows that Daraz is the country's most popular e-commerce site based on visits and revenue. This gap – and the ongoing year-over-year increase in search interest from Daraz to 2025 – further implies that the platform's incumbency advantage, as facilitated by Alibaba Group infrastructure, and backed by continued marketing investment during key sales festivals, is likely to grow, not shrink, when compared to its competitors, at least when it comes to digital search attention (GlobeNewswire, 2024; U.S. International Trade Administration, 2025).

Second, the strong correlations among Daraz, PriceOye, and Telemart are consistent with a shared influence of promotional-calendar timing on digital consumer attention in electronics and general-merchandise categories. Their recurring peaks around 11.11, 12.12, and Ramadan-Eid suggest that these platforms respond to similar periods of elevated retail interest. From a practical perspective, the pattern indicates that established festival periods are important windows for marketing activity,

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although the present analysis cannot establish that promotions themselves caused the changes in search attention (Boone et al., 2018; Choi & Varian, 2012; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Thirdly, the relative stability of the OLX's trajectory (low volatility) and its weak association with the cluster of the festivals is in line with the classifieds business model where consumers are engaged more through the category demand itself (used goods) than through specific marketing efforts (festivities). It is worth noting that PakWheels showed only moderate correlation with OLX (r = .40), which could be due to the fact that PakWheels has been found to be one of the closest competitors to OLX in the Pakistani market base on independent market analyses (GlobeNewswire, 2024; Spocket, 2026).

Most importantly, within the calibrated dataset, PriceOye shows the clearest pattern of competitive growth. Its annual average increased in every year of the comparison period, indicating that the rise is not limited to isolated festival peaks. This pattern is consistent with market commentary describing PriceOye's emphasis on product authenticity and open-parcel delivery, both of which address trust concerns in online electronics purchasing. These features may be relevant in a market where product authenticity, payment confidence, delivery reliability, and high cart-abandonment rates remain important challenges; however, the present study does not establish a causal effect of any specific business practice on search interest (Anjum & Chai, 2020; PriceOye, n.d.; Rehman et al., 2019).

Taken together, these results support the interpretation that search-interest analytics can provide a useful and timely perspective on the relative visibility, seasonality, and competitive trajectories of e-commerce brands in data-sparse emerging markets. It should not be treated as a replacement for brand-equity surveys, verified traffic measures, or transactional data. The approach may nevertheless help identify rapidly changing competitive patterns that warrant subsequent validation with primary or independently observed data (Boone et al., 2018; Carrière-Swallow & Labbé, 2013; Choi & Varian, 2012; Golovanova & Zubarev, 2021; Mavragani & Ochoa, 2019; Vosen & Schmidt, 2011).6. Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the RSI series used in this analysis is a constructed and calibrated Google Trends-informed dataset rather than a direct Google Trends export; the numerical results therefore require replication with primary Google Trends data before they can be treated as independently verified search-volume observations. Second, Google Trends-type indices are relative rather than absolute measures and may be affected by sampling, normalization, and term-selection choices. Third, the 2026 values represent a partial January-August period and should not be interpreted as a complete annual estimate. Finally, search interest is a proxy for attention, not a direct measure of purchases, revenue, loyalty, or market share, and the five platforms differ substantially in business model and product category.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to analyse digital consumer interest and brand popularity among five leading e-commerce platforms in Pakistan using a cross-sectional comparative approach based on a Google Trends-informed RSI dataset. Within this calibrated dataset, Daraz leads digital search attention by a substantial margin, followed by a more competitive middle tier comprising PriceOye and OLX, and then PakWheels and Telemart. PriceOye shows the strongest growth trajectory, with annual average RSI increasing by 136.4% from 26.4 in 2021 to 62.4 in the partial 2026 period. It moved from

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fourth place in 2021 to second place by 2026 and exceeded OLX's annual average from 2024 onward. Seasonal patterns were strongest for Daraz, PriceOye, and Telemart around 11.11, 12.12, and Ramadan-Eid, whereas OLX and PakWheels showed comparatively weaker retail-festival seasonality.

The findings are relevant for marketers because the observed search-attention peaks indicate that major festival periods coincide with heightened consumer interest in electronics and general merchandise. Trust-oriented features such as authenticity verification and open-parcel delivery may also be relevant to competitive positioning in high-friction online categories, although causal effects cannot be inferred from the present design. For researchers, the study illustrates the potential value of search-trend indicators for identifying competitive change while also emphasizing the need to validate such indicators against direct Google Trends exports, independent traffic measures, survey data, or transactional outcomes before drawing stronger market-level conclusions.

Further studies should replicate the analysis using primary Google Trends exports, expand the number of platforms, examine regional search patterns across major Pakistani cities, and, where possible, triangulate search-interest indices with independently verified web traffic, survey measures, or proprietary transactional data. Such validation would allow stronger conclusions about the relationship between online search attention and actual consumer behaviour in Pakistan's evolving e-commerce market.

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