

THE IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH ON CONSUMERS PURCHASING INTENTION

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ABSTRACT

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has become an important communication tool in the online environment. Limited studies in the Middle East have identified what makes certain online reviews more influential than others, accordingly the main purpose of this study is to identify the impact of eWOM dimensions including (Quality, Quantity, and Credibility) on consumer's purchase intention. The study proposed a model and data has been gathered using questionnaire. The sample consists of al Karak governante citizens. The data analysis results provided that eWOM quality, and eWOM quantity; are significantly impact on purchase intention, however on the contrary eWOM credibility had no significant impact on purchase intention.

Keywords: *eWOM (Quality, Quantity, and Credibility), purchase intention, Middle East, Al Karak, Online Environment.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketers always attempts to detect the consumers purchasing intention due to its importance in understand how consumers think, feel and choose from different options. There are an essential factors that influence consumer's buying intention such as: cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. Hence, consumers can be affected by what they hear (WOM) from others in their surrounding environment (friends, peers, family) etc. The emergence of web 2.0 and social networking sites raised the influence of groups and individuals, and led to the advent of eWOM which is expected to affect consumer's intention in both marketplace and marketspace. The Arab community is considered as rich community to investigate in, thus, the current study examines the impact of eWOM dimensions (Quality, Quantity, Credibility) on consumer's purchasing intention. Correspondingly problem statement, research conclusion, recommendations and future research are also discussed.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Even though there are several studies and substantial volume of literature on WOM, it is significant to notify that eWOM is still under-researched domain and needs further inquiry as

there is a lack of studies on this subject in the Middle East. However, past studies rarely focused on the issue whether eWOM can have an impact on buying Intention.

Due to the extensive usage of social media in society, the concept of social media marketing has emerged. According to this, traditional WOM has moved from the real world to virtual world as "eWOM", and it becomes very important to investigate how eWOM could impact the consumer purchasing intention. Based on this, the current study will attempt to answer the following main research question:

What is the impact of eWOM on consumers purchasing intention?

3. RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to identify the impact of eWOM dimensions on consumers purchasing intention. Additionally the research seeks the achievement of the following objectives:

- A review of the available literature to develop a research model.
- Verifying the impact of each dimension (credibility, quality, and quantity) on consumer's purchasing intention.

•Providing recommendations for academic and practitioners in the field.

4. RESEARCH MODEL

Through an in-depth review and study of the eWOM literature, a conceptual model has been proposed as shown in figure (1), which consists of independent variables (eWOM credibility, eWOM quality, and eWOM quantity), and the dependent variable (purchasing Intention).

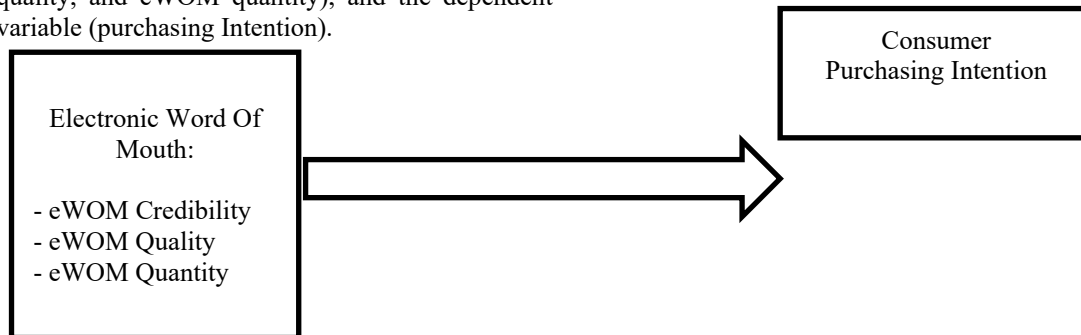


Figure (1): Conceptual Model Of The Study: Proposed By Researchers

5. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Consumers discern interpersonal arguments about product and services as more trustworthy source of information than marketer-generated content [1]. The receiver's judgment of the information credibility consider as a key of early stage of information persuasion process [2]. The credibility of eWOM refers to the extent to which an individual considers a recommendation from a particular source person/organization to be trustworthy [3]. If the consumers regard the products/services reviews/comments as reliable source, they might consider it to shape their purchasing intention. The eWOM credibility in this research points to the reliance of consumers on their friends and relatives or peers. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: The eWOM credibility has a significant statistical impact on the consumer's purchasing intention.

The eWOM quality can be defined as the convincing power of reviews/comments embedded in an informational message [4]. When customers are searching for information, the quality of this information might effect on customer's acceptance of it, concerning eWOM communication channels [5]. Thus, the extent to which provided information is useful, obvious, and easy to understand could be a primary request to identify customers perception of information quality as element for evaluating their potential purchasing intention. Therefore, it can be assume that:

H2: The eWOM quality has a significant statistical impact on the consumer's purchasing intention.

When looking into the massive quantity of information that people sharing online, most of them during shopping may need a reference to support their opinions to decrease the feeling of making bad choices, because the online reviews/comments quantity may be a sign of how much the product is popular and worthy. According to Lee [6] the intention of the customer to buy products and services depends on the amount of information obtained for this product or service, as well as based on the product review sites, customers tend to believe negative comments more than positive ones. Sher & Lee [7] conducted a study by presenting product review websites for undergraduate students to read it, to inspect their attitude. The study resulted in; a group of students with less curiosity were easily convinced by the product review website after reading a number of review websites. Moreover the growing number of online blogs, web applications, SNS's, product review websites, online shopping websites became the primary sources of information that most Customers read before deciding to purchase products and services. Therefore, it can be assume that:

H3: The eWOM quantity has a significant statistical impact on the consumer's purchasing intention.

6. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Table 1: Operational Definitions.

WOM	Word of mouth can be defined as communication among people where the person receives some noncommercial messages regarding to brands, products or services .In other words, sharing and exchanging information about consumption experience.	Arndt [8].
Purchasing Intention:	The earliest definition of purchasing intention is the subjective probability that users perform certain behavior .If the users are concerned to get a specific product or service, that means, there is a purchase intention in their mind; they wish to purchase that product or service, either in long term or short term. When consumers have a positive reputation or expression toward brand products or services, purchase intentions mostly going to happen, as they are effected by their positive expression towards the product.	Ajzen & Fishbein [9].
eWOM	eWOM is a statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet.	Hennig-Thurau [10].
Social Networking Sites (SNS):	Social networking sites are described as web-based services which aim to provide internet users an opportunity to create their profiles and personal networks via friend lists while allow them to reach (REF).	boyd, Ellison [11].
Credibility:	The eWOM credibility in this research refers to the dependence degree of people on the contact list such as friends or peers etc.	Bataineh [12].
Quality:	The eWOM quality can be described as the convincing power of comments rooted in an informational message. When customers are looking for information, the quality of information possibly will impact on customer's acceptance of it regarding eWOM communication channels.	Bhattacharjee [13].
Quantity:	When taking into consideration the huge quantity of information that individuals sharing online, most of them during shopping may possibly need a reference to strengthen their confidence to decrease the feeling of making mistakes or risks, because the online reviews, comments quantity possibly be a sign of how much the product is valuable and popular. According to. The amount of information customers received effect on customer's intention to purchase products and services.	Lee [14].

7. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM):

eWOM means any attempt by a previous, potential, or existing customer to display the positive or negative features of a product/service online [15]. Most of people have access to at least single online review, and this is why eWOM is very powerful. An outcome was reached that online consumers' reviews/comments have been applied as a bases for consumers' search for information and that they indeed have an effect on their purchasing intention [16]. As an example, social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter), brands 'websites, product review sites (e.g. shopping.com), forums and blogs are various kinds of eWOM platforms [17]; [18] .see (Table 2).

Table 2: eWOM Platform Examples.

Platform	Example
Social networking sites	Facebook.com, Instagram
Online brand/shopping sites	Amazon.com, Alibaba.com
Online customer review sites	Epinions.com, Shopping.com
Online discussion forums	Wetakeclasses.com
Blogs	Tmz Huffpost

7.1 eWOM Effect:

For most consumers, it is necessary to know what others think about a certain product/service before or during their shopping. As they do this with their relatives and friends in traditional WOM, may gain the opinions they want by being in interaction with the customers who they do not know but with whom they share similar interests in online WOM. Now, every online shopping site provides the opportunity for consumers to express (comment/review) their opinions about a certain product/service. While shaping the purchase intention, many consumers are influenced from these comments and reviews, and adopt a positive or negative attitude for the product.

7.2 Factors Influencing eWOM:

This study selected three factors to be considered including eWOM quality, quantity, and credibility. The eWOM quality can be defined as the convincing power of reviews/comments embedded in an informational message [19]. According to Lee et al [20] the intention of the customer to buy products and services depends on the amount of information obtained for this product or service, as well as based on the product review sites, customers tend to believe negative comments more than positive ones. The receiver's judgment of the information credibility consider as a key of early stage of information persuasion process [20]. The credibility of eWOM refers to the extent to which an individual considers a recommendation from a particular source person/organization to be trustworthy [22]. The eWOM credibility in this research points to the reliance of consumers on their friends and relatives or peers.

8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is based on an analytical descriptive approach which includes two types of data, primary data and secondary data. For the present study, a questionnaire was used for data collection. Thus, different members from AL Karak governante citizens including both male and female who are familiar with social media sites, and have at least one active account of the following social media sites: (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram), were invited to answer the questionnaire, and that was a major requirement. Convenience and Cluster sampling technique used in data collection; the sample size determined to be (300) citizen. After using traditional channels to distribute the 300 questionnaires, 290

questionnaires were returned. 7 questionnaires were eliminated. The response rate (94%) was relatively high. Consequently, (283) questionnaires were analyzed.

Table (3) below shows the research sample characteristics using frequencies and percentages. To fulfill the essential prerequisite and follow-up in answering the questionnaire, a question was used to find out if the respondent has at least one active account on social media. Descriptive statistical analysis has been used to describe the sample characteristics.

Table 3: Sample Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
The social networking site that used frequently		
Facebook	152	53.7
Twitter	13	4.6
Instagram	67	23.7
YouTube	51	18.0
Total	283	100.0
Average hours visiting social networking sites		
1-2 hours	41	14.5
2-3 hours	43	15.2
3-4 hours	44	15.5
Above 4 hours	155	54.8
Total	283	100.0
The most activity usually respondents do on social networking site		
Chatting	151	53.4
Posting comments	35	12.4
Making new friends	17	6.0
Searching products/services	80	28.3
Total	283	100.0
Gender		
Male	100	35.3
Female	183	64.7
Total	283	100.0
Age		
18-24 years	217	76.7
25-30 years	55	19.4
Above 30 years	11	3.9
Total	283	100.0

The results show that 53.7% of Al Karak governante citizens are using the Facebook most frequently, and Instagram came the second with 23.7%; these results confirm the fact that Facebook still controls the highest share among Jordanian users of social media sites. Furthermore, 54.8% of respondents on average are visiting their favorite social networking site over 4 hours a day, this indicates that they will be more likely to send and receive different types of information and content.

as regards of the most activity respondents usually do on their favorite social networking site is chatting with average of 53.4%, and then searching products/services with average of 28.3%; These results indicates that respondents main interest in social media sites is to connect and communicate with relatives, peers, friends, and colleagues, but they are also concern to search for new products/services from those people they connect with. Finally, the highest percentage of respondents are females representing 64.7% of total sample, while the males were 35.3%; this result is logical because Jordanian females are more interested in chatting with each other's, and to track the latest ads or offers related to finding jobs, clothing, fashion, and so on.

9. PREVIOUS STUDIES

The present study employ the results of previous studies to better understand research topic and specify its parameters to create theoretical framework, and to create the study instrument that will suit the population and sample of the study. so far, a few studies have been conducted in Middle east about this topic, and the researcher hopes from this study to bring a new knowledge to Jordan and specifically Al-Karak governante, to determine the impact of electronic word of mouth on consumer purchasing intention, and to know the impact of credibility, quality and quantity of comments that affect the consumer purchase intention; Table (7) shows the previous studies.

10. INSTRUMENT VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In this research, researchers resorted to use two types of validity; the face validity and content validity. Face validity was evaluated through experts in the field, where content validity were assessed statistically using SPSS package. The instrument's reliability has been assessed by testing the coefficient of Cronbach's alpha. As demonstrated in table (4) the reliability coefficients

for all identified variables, which ranged between (0.725 to 0.831). Consequently, the research instrument and variables have a reasonable internal reliability coefficient. eWOM: (eWOM Quality, eWOM Quantity, eWOM Credibility), Purchase Intention.

Table 4: Cronbach's Alpha Values

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
eWOM Credibility	3	0.725
eWOM Quality	3	0.831
eWOM Quantity	3	0.827
Purchase Intention	4	0.791

11. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

In order to test the research hypotheses, multiple regression analysis has been used to examine the impact of independent variables eWOM credibility, eWOM quality, and eWOM quantity on the dependent variable purchasing intention.

Table 5: a. Predictors: (Constant), QUN, CR, And QUL

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	0.545 ^a	0.297	0.290	0.60825

The overall findings point out that there is a significant statistical impact of eWOM credibility, eWOM quality, and eWOM quantity on purchasing intention with a value of R²= 0.297 which means that (29.7%) of the variation in purchase intention can be explained by the independent variables. as shown in table (5) above. As shown in table (6) below, the findings point out that there is a significant and positive impact of, eWOM quality, and eWOM quantity on purchase intention, accordingly eWOM quality (beta is 0.241, significant at 0.000), and eWOM quantity (beta is 0.403, significant at 0.000) Thus, the overall findings offer support to accept H2 and H3, while the results indicates that there is no significant statistical impact of eWOM credibility on purchase intention, eWOM credibility (beta is 0.015, significant at 0.776) Thus, the overall results offer support to reject H1.

Table 6: Dependent Variable: INT

Coefficients						
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	0.912	0.148		6.156	0.000
	CR	0.013	0.046	0.015	0.285	0.776
	QUL	0.228	0.053	0.241	4.305	0.000
	QUN	0.319	0.043	0.403	7.353	0.000

Table 7: Previous Studies

Research Topic	Author	Variables	Results & Conclusions
1- The Impact of eWOM in Social Media on Consumer Purchase Decisions	Poturak and Turkyilmaz [23].	Familiarity bidirectional communication Expertise Popularity On purchase decision.	Significant and positive impact. Significant and positive impact. Significant and positive impact. Significant and positive impact.
2- Investigation on the Impact of eWOM on Social Media towards the Purchase Intention of Consumers in Retail Industry in Sri Lanka	Dasuni Naynthara Jayarathne [24].	Trustworthy Credibility Message Relevance Informative on purchase intention	Positive impact. Positive impact. Positive and significant influence. Positive and significant.
3- Impact of Electronic Word of Mouth on Brand Image and Purchase Intention towards Lifestyle Products in India	Kala & Chaubey [25].	eWOM Brand Image Purchase Intention	Significant impact. Significant impact. Significant impact.
4-Effects of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Consumers' Purchase Intentions Through Brand Association in Iran Perspective	Sharifpour, Khan, Mardani, Azizi [26].	Electronic word-of-mouth Brand association On Students purchase intention	Positive and significant relationship. Significant relationship. Positive and significant relationship.

5-The influence of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) towards Consumers purchase decision at Bakso Boedjangan, Bandung	Dwi Apriani1, Mahir Pradana [27].	Electronic Word of Mouth On Purchase Decision	Significant effect. Significantly effects.
6- Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Purchase Intention of Fashion Products on Social Networking Websites	Abida Ellahi [28].	eWOM involvement Homophile eWOM Involvement mediates Expertness eWOM Involvement mediates Trustworthiness eWOM mediates Informational influence eWOM involvement mediates High Fashion involvement eWOM involvement mediates Facebook usage intensity moderates On Purchase Intention	All hypothesis accepted and have significant and positive effect on Purchase Intention
7- The effect of eWOM on purchase intention: evidence from e-commerce sites	DURMAZ, YÜKSEL [29].	eWOM willingness to pay purchase intention	Significant and positive effect. Significant effect.
8- The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth in Social Media on Consumers' Purchase Intentions	Erkan [30].	Information Quality Information Credibility Needs of Information Attitude towards Information Information Usefulness Information Adoption On Purchase Intention	Positive and significant impact. Positive and significant impact. Positive and significant impact. No significant impact. Positive and significant impact. Positive and significant impact. Purchase Intention supported, since the relationship between information adoption and purchase intention was found significant
9- The Impact of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Online Impulse Buying Behavior: The Moderating role of Big 5 Personality Traits	Husnain [31].	Extraversion Agreeableness Openness Neuroticism Conscientiousness On Impulsive buying	Significant effect. Significant effect. Significant effect. Significant effect. Significant effect. Significant effect.

10- The Effect of Involvement and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) on Brand Image and Its Impact on Consumers Brand Switching of Mamypoko.	Gunawan, Diana, Garda, Muchardie, and Sitinjak [32].	Involvement, eWOM Brand Image Brand Switching On Consumers Brand Switching of Mamypoko.	Significant effects. Significant effects.
11- Analyzing the impact of electronic word of mouth on purchase intention and willingness to pay for tourism related products	Lizbeth Marie J. Lim [33].	eWOM willingness to pay purchase intention	Significant and positive effect. No significant effect.
12- The Impact of Perceived eWOM on Purchase Intention	Bataineh, [34].	eWOM Credibility eWOM Quality eWOM Quantity Corporate Image On Purchase Intention	Significant and positive impact. Significant and positive impact. Significant and positive impact. Significant and positive impact.
13- The Influence of Social Media Intensity and eWOM on Conspicuous Consumption	Thoumrungroje [35].	Social Media Intensity (SMI) Conspicuous Consumption (CSC) Reliance of eWOM (eWOM)	Positive and significant impact. Positive and significant impact. Positive and significant impact.
14- eWOM as Source of Influence	L'opez and Sicilia, [36].	opinion seeking behavior opinion giving behavior perceived source trustworthiness as intervening variable on decision making	Positive effect. Not significant. Positive impact. Significant positive effect.
15- The Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Brand Image and Purchase Intention	Torlak, Ozkara, Tiltay, Cengiz, Dulger [37].	Electronic Word of Mouth Brand Image On Purchase Intention	Positive and significant impact. No significant impact. Positive and significant impact.

12. DISCUSSION

The impact of traditional WOM on consumer intention have been studied formerly in many researches, according to the huge evolution of electronic word of mouth in last decade, marketers need to better understand and realize how eWOM could influence their potential buyers or customers. The multiple regression analysis point out that there is a significant and positive impact of the independent variables (eWOM quality, and eWOM quantity) on the dependent variable (purchase intention). The findings provide support for the eWOM literature [38], which advocate that the easiness of understanding the message (reviews/comments) (eWOM Quality), and the volume of the message through social networking sites (eWOM Quantity) would be able to attract and influence the purchasing intention of prospects customers. Moreover, based on beta values and significance; the findings indicated that eWOM credibility has no impact on purchasing intention; Furthermore, this result is new to the eWOM literature, and might be tested by other researchers in the future. Thus, online reviews/comments through eWOM might be useful for citizens as it can improve their perception and further validate their purchasing intention. Furthermore, understandable, helpful, and convincing reviews/comments (as quality measures) about the product can possibly have a powerful impact on the citizens purchasing intention.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Considering the research empirical results; it appears that the use of social media in frequent basis for different purposes is comparatively high between Jordanian citizens. Therefore, marketers need to find the most clients-active platforms, where their potential buyers are interacting, so they need to collect more data and patterns about their prospects, to build and design distinctive competitive advantage that affects the consumers purchasing intention in the future. Finally, the research in this area may use another sample in the future, or to expand the research scope based on latest literature in order to enrich this growing area of research. Moreover, future researchers may study the citizen's attitudes toward using social media sites in order to get more information as well as to predict their buying intention.

14. CONCLUSION

eWOM have an outstanding influence comparing with other various marketing strategies and advertisements methods. When this form of marketing strategies is used on social media sites a significant increase in its effect is clearly visible [39]. However, the current study made several theoretical contributions as the study showed that consumers' purchasing intention toward products may vary depending on online review quality, credibility, and quantity, which would yield different behaviors in purchasing intentions. Moreover, based on beta values and significance; the findings indicated that eWOM quantity is the most influential dimension (predictor) on purchasing intention followed by eWOM quality.

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