

The Relationship between Electronic Word of Mouth in Social Media Websites and Consumers' Purchase Intention

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Abstract: The effect of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) on the purchase intentions of customers has long been acknowledged. But with the introduction of the social media website, eWOM has become a new dimension. Individuals were able to talk to numerous people on the Internet before this new development. The social media website allows users to talk on the Internet with friends and acquaintances. This new eWOM approach might be stronger when it comes to purchasing intentions. The change of word of mouth to eWOM seeks less understanding for the consumers on purchase intention. This study aims to discuss the eWOM within the context of social media website. Particularly, this study examines the relationship between eWOM in social media website and consumers' purchase intentions. Quantitative method was used to accumulate data by using questionnaire. A total of 100 respondents from Johor Bahru using convenience sampling had been collected in this study. The findings showed that eWOM in social media websites had a significant and strong correlation on consumers' purchase intention. This findings might give marketers with useful information for establishing their long-term connections with customers within social media websites and for promoting selected items by using favourable eWOM.

Keywords: Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), Social Media Website, Consumer Purchase Intention.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of Study

Online purchasing offers consumers a wide range of items and services, whereby customers can also compare them to other sales partners and pick one of the finest offers to them (Sivanesan, 2017). With respect to online purchasing, there is no face-to-face interactions between seller and buyer which do not make it socialised (George *et al.*, 2015). Converting potential customers into actual customers is important in the e-commerce industry (Daroch *et al.*, 2020). Its relevance comes in the fact that intentions are regarded to be the main predictor of current behaviour (Montaño and Kasprzyk, 2015); their research is therefore crucial to the success of all online retailers. Researchers such as Lim *et al.* (2016) noted that online purchasing intent and online buying behaviour must be further investigated, however, the lack of intention to buy the product online has been shown to be the first hurdle to growth of e-commerce (He *et al.*, 2008).

The emergence of new technologies in the social media such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter have altered the development in online shopping in recent years and have also had an effect on the online shopping. This comprises the network that has enhanced buyers' possibilities to stop having the most efficient connection with members of their pre-present social group. Social media is culturally important since it is the major arena for many people to get huge quantities of information, exchange contents and elements of their life with others and get information from the world around them (even though that information might be of questionable accuracy) (Appel *et al.*, 2019). Since the social media has changed significantly, now it is different from a decade ago, and social media will probably change a year from now (Appel *et al.*, 2019). This stems both from the ongoing technological innovation and from the user-consumer (Appel *et al.*, 2019).

The social character of the social media sites and websites of Internet groups (e.g. the discussion board) have led to the manifestation of brand-related client to purchaser talks called electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Chu and Kim, 2011). EWOM (hereafter - eWOM) has been expanding considerably since buyers are ready to search for peer shopper views and experiences before opting to buy a service or product. Many firms have started considering online customer reviews to be a key instrument for selling items, building consumer confidence and handling online reviews in an effort to influence client buy intentions and choices (Orus *et al.*, 2019; Yan *et al.* 2016). EWOM communications influence the entire understanding of the firm, according to Helversen *et al.* (2018), since they demonstrate the direct link between eWOM and the entire know-how information disseminated online. Online recommendations effect on the choice of customers to acquire online items according to Zhu *et al.* (2018), however not all sources of recommendations have the same effect on customers (Orus *et al.*, 2019; Zhu *et al.*, 2018).

Moreover, EWOM has been brought a new feature of social media websites that are relatively new eWOM platforms by enabling users to connect with their current networks. People may now share views and experiences with friends and acquaintances regarding products or services through social media (Chu & Kim, 2011; Kozinets *et al.*, 2010). It does not surprise entrepreneurs make substantial investments now in fantastic eWOM which encouraging their buyer to make friends with the emblem through their logo profile pages (i.e. Facebook brand communities and Twitter brand communities) (Morrissey, 2007).

1.2 Problem Statements

In many past research studies, the traditional word of mouth is considered one of the powerful tools for face-to-face communication. However, the use of e-commerce and its spread has increased considerably during the last decade. Social media websites, relatively new eWOM platforms, nevertheless brought a new aspect to eWOM, by allowing users to communicate with their current

networks (Erkan & Evan, 2016). As websites in a social network have become strong tools for developing the technical element of the corporate world today, they are reinforcing eWOM marketing and are fast affecting the purchasing attitude of their customers.

eWOM has been a major marketing weapon for a long time (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Kumar & Benbasat, 2006; Zhang *et al.*, 2010). The Internet offers numerous suitable platforms for eWOM, such as blogs, websites for customer reviews, forums, shopping and new social media websites (Cheung and Thadani, 2012). Researcher studies have previously conducted study on the impacts of eWOM on bloggers (Chu and Kamal, 2008; Lin *et al.*, 2012), websites for the customer review (Cheung *et al.*, 2008; Gauri *et al.*, 2008), and also discussion forums (Chiou and Cheng, 2003; Huang and Chen, 2006). In addition, the influence of those platforms on customer purchasing intentions also have been compared (Lee and Youn, 2009).

But as it is relatively new, eWOM has received far less attention in social media (Cheung and Thadani, 2012), although several current studies exist (See-To and Ho, 2014; Wang *et al.*, 2012). Because social media interactions often relate to companies (Wolny & Mueller, 2013), they naturally affect customer purchase intentions (Wang *et al.*, 2012). All eWOM information is, however, hard to foresee as influential in the purchase intentions of customers. Because customers are exposed to a wide range of information, they must criticise and screen the information before it is used. Even if research previously described shown the influence of eWOM on social media, the mechanism between eWOM and consumer intention was not explicated. There is a lack of research on the impact eWOM has on social media, especially in Malaysia, with customers' purchasing intentions. The influence of eWOM in social media on Malaysian customers' purchasing intentions therefore needs to be further validated.

1.3 Research Questions

What is the relationship between electronic word of mouth in social media websites and customer purchase intention?

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to examine the relationship between electronic word of mouth in social media websites and customer purchase intention.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The present research seeks to give a theoretical explanation on the link between eWOM in social media and consumer purchases intention. Understanding of the social link factors that impact consumer mouth word behaviour, might assist marketers discover important persons on social media websites and develop and manage positive eWOM. At the same time, the results might be useful for marketers to create long-term connections with customers on websites in the social media and to promote selected items through the usage of positive eWOM.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focus to investigate the relationship between eWOM in social media websites for purchase intention among consumers. The population of this study is consumers located in Johor Bahru area. Data information collected through questionnaire surveys from 100 respondents of online purchasing experience influenced for electronic word of mouth through social media websites. The statistical Package for Social Science Software (SPSS) version 20 was used to analyze the data. Data analysis methods include the descriptive analysis (mean, standard deviation), reliability analysis and Pearson correlation analysis.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Consumer Purchase Intention

Purchase intention refers to a customer's anticipated behaviour about a future purchase decision (Espejel *et al.*, 2008). Purchasing intention is described as a customer's online purchase intention for a product or service based on their biased judgement and overall judgments (Shin & Biocca, 2017). Purchase intention, according to Herr *et al.* (1991), should be the psychological barometer of consumers buying items to meet their required requirements and anticipate their consuming behaviours. Online shopping has unquestionably become an important, useful, and appealing activity on social networking platforms (Wang & Zhang, 2012; Gan, 2017).

2.2 Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

(a) Concept of eWOM

Companies started to pay attention to consumer evaluations on their goods, particularly e-recommendations as Internet users could communicate their thoughts via websites, social media, online forums and blogs (Helvesen *et al.*, 2018; Erkan and Evans, 2016, Kudeshia and Kumar, 2017; Orus *et al.*, 2019; Zhu *et al.*, 2018). EWOM through the internet may be defined as online material published by consumers regarding items or services, and that information is utilised by other users to make purchase decisions (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004). The main advantage of eWOM is effectively accessible and accessible to all those who can use the Internet (Evans & Erkan, 2014). In addition, the internet offers an optimal combination of user population information, enabling buyers to draw conclusions to assist them develop their thinking about a product or service (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004; Litvin *et al.*, 2008).

EWOM are diagnosed as a major marketing method in embodiment communications from a management perspective. Goldsmith and Horowitz (2006) also have a significant role to play in today's e-commerce online interpersonal or verbal electronics. The companies are especially keen in creating brands and establishing symbol loyalty packages with eWOM. The customization features, including customised network records, also provide marketers the opportunity to implement digital words as their chat strategy to develop and influence customer connections (Dellarocas, 2003). Viral ads that rely on provocative communications to encourage an unpaid oral exchange of advertising information by recognised advertisers clearly show the attempts of marketers to aggressively capitalise eWOM as a promotional and marketing instrument (Porter and Golan, 2006). As a result, many companies are now making huge efforts to instill wonderful eWOM and to enhance its dissemination (Goldenberg *et al.*, 2001) and to include mouth phrases such as "viral and marketing" or "buzz advertising and marketing" (Stephen and Lehmann, 2008).

(b) eWOM in Social Media

Social networking sites are seen as really suitable for word of mouth platforms (Canhoto & Clark, 2013; Erkan & Evans, 2014; Kim *et al.*, 2014). These websites also allow opinion leaders to establish and promote brand-related profiles in addition to everyday interactions amongst customers. People may exchange their opinions with each other by writing messages, photos, videos or even apps. EWOM is more enriched visually and attractive by visual material. Social networks also make it possible to disseminate data to the large number of individuals (Sohn, 2014) on the Internet; and users may even express their views simply by transmitting the postings they agree to (Chu & Kim, 2011). For these reasons, customers increasingly use social media to get brand information (Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Barreda *et al.*, 2015; Naylor *et al.*, 2012). EWOM social media information may occur in a number of ways. Users might deliberately publish information about brands and services. Furthermore, individuals can show their preferences inadvertently to their network, such as a fan of brands, by liking and

comment, interacting with brand postings or sharing material contained in a brand without publicity. Finally, marketers may also publish content on social networking platforms through their official accounts (Alboqami *et al.*, 2015). People who find eWOM on social media therefore need to criticise the information in full in order to accept it for optimal purchasing intentions.

(c) eWOM in Social Media and Consumer Purchase Intention

The emergence as a powerful and trustworthy source of information in electronic media (Shukla, 2011) has considerably enhanced the effect of eWOM on purchasing decisions (Lopez and Sicilia, 2014). Online reviews are strong informants and advisors and affect the intention to buy and to buying actually considerably (Park *et al.*, 2007). While referring to the WOM on different social media platforms, the purchase decisions of customers not only depends on the quality but also the frequency of eWOM (Lin *et al.*, 2013). A significant number of researchers concluded that eWOM played a major role in the purchase intentions of customers (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Chan and Ngai, 2011; Huang, 2010; Kumar and Benbasat, 2006; Park *et al.*, 2007; See-To and Ho, 2014; Zhang *et al.*, 2010). It is also a good approach for customers to alleviate their worries regarding their decisions (Hung and Li, 2007; Lee, *et al.*, 2011; Schau *et al.*, 2009; Wu *et al.*, 2014).

Barton (2006) points out that eWOM generally takes place on web platforms that make purchasing decisions. If eWOM messages are taken into account by customers, it may instantly be purchased on the websites of the firms or through websites for purchasing. This makes eWOM highly effective and lets researchers know how eWOM impacts purchase intention. The more credible the perceived online customer evaluations among prospective buyers, the greater is the purchase intention (Lee *et al.*, 2011). The study also indicated that the purchase intention is influenced positively by online customer reviews supported by confidence in internet dealers. Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) have discovered that an investigation of the effects of online reviews in the tourist sector has an important influence on visitors' choice of location. Yaylı and Bayram (2012) also discovered that reading reviews not only had a favourable impact on online purchase decision but also on their frequency of purchase. The following hypothesis is presented along these lines, in keeping with and in line with the body of prior research:

There is significant relationship between eWOM in social media and customer purchase intention

2.4 Research Conceptual Framework

Based on previous literature employing content analysis and theoretical base, this work developed a conceptual framework to report and identifies objectives. Several number of related studies are gathered and scrutinized to get the elements that have an influence of eWOM in social media websites towards consumer purchase intention. Figure 1 illustrate the research conceptual of this study. There are one independent variables, which is Electronic word of mouth in social media websites, and one dependent variable that is Consumer Purchase intention. The main intention of this study is to identify the relationship between Electronic word of mouth in social media websites and Purchase intention.

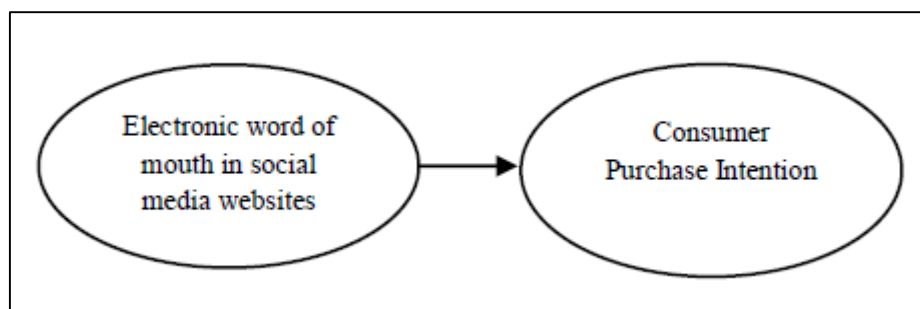


Figure 1: Research framework

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

A quantitative research approach was used to test the relationship between eWOM in social media and customer purchase intention. A survey research approach by using questionnaire instrument was conducted to collect the data. A total of 100 respondents staying and living in Johor Bahru using convenience sampling had been collected in this study.

3.2 Data collection method

Items of questionnaires were developed by adapting and adopting survey instruments from relevant past studies. Information were gathered through self-administered questionnaire containing close-ended questions with scales. In this study, data collection will be conducted by the researchers to get primary data. Questionnaires had been distributed in one way which is as online via zoho survey because researchers want to guarantee the respondents can access the Internet which is a vital condition for achieving the objectives.

The questionnaire consists of two section which section A consisted of demographic elements and section B is questions regarding perception of respondents towards eWOM in social media and consumer purchase intention. For, eWOM in social media, there were 5 measurement items adopted from Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold (2011) and Jalilvand and Samiei (2012). Meanwhile, for customer purchase intention construct, 5 items were adopted from Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) and Yoo *et al.* (2000) and Shukla (2011). This study used the five-point Likert scale anchored through “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5) for both construct.

3.3 Data Analysis

In this study, the data collected would be analysed by using SPSS software. Correlation analysis had been used to test the objective of the study.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1 Reliability Analysis

The reliability test was conducted on each of the components for its consistency. The results found that the Cronbach alpha value for eWOM in social media websites was 0.9044, and for consumer purchase intention, the value indicated 0.904. The two components are satisfied the Cronbach’s Alpha reliability test at the good range. As the alpha is sensitive to the number of items in a test, all the questions in each component did not face the issues of redundant questions or insufficient questions.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

Table 1 shows the significant relationship between eWOM in social media and consumer purchase intention with the correlation value is 0.687 and p-value is 0.000. It indicated that eWOM in social media had strong and significant relationship with consumer purchase Intention variable. Thus, the hypothesis of this study is accepted.

Table 1: Correlation analysis of the relationship between the eWOM in Social Media and Consumer Purchase Intention

		eWOM in social media websites	Consumer Purchase Intention
eWOM in social media websites	Pearson Correlation	1	.687**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	100	100
Consumer Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	.687**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study aims to explore how eWOM interacts with the social media in Johor Bahru, Malaysia, with customer purchase intention. The results showed that in the social media, eWOM has strong and important links with purchase intentions. This conclusion is also consistent to recent research on the link between eWOM and customers’ purchase intention (Bilal *et al.*, 2021; Rahman *et al.*, 2020; Maslim & Pasaribu, 2021; Siddiqui *et al.*, 2021; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Pauline *et al.*, 2020). EWOM is commonly acknowledged to define the attitudes and behaviours of customers towards products or services on platforms of social media. As eWOM is devoid of financial interests in social media platforms, the impacts on consumers' purchase intentions are much higher than traditional advertising. Consumers are free to share their knowledge or experience with others who considered it to be unbiased and reliable information on social media websites. If customers were aware and convinced of the need to collect qualifying information, it would impact the desires and especially stronger if the purchase of complicated, lasting, costly or important products or services were considered (Nakayama et al, 2010).

This research could offers marketers with a reference framework from a management viewpoint that understands the effect of eWOM in social media on the purchase intention of the customer. The websites of social media are crucial to marketers because they have many users; these websites are also regarded as highly suitable eWOM platforms (Canhoto & Clark, 2013). However, the measurement items provided by this study is too general and cannot measure the overall customer’s perception on the influence of eWOM in social media towards purchase intention. Therefore, in the future, the researcher should explore more determinants of eWOM to investigate in depth its effect on purchase intention. Besides, the future researcher also should investigate the eWOM in social media by comparing the different social media websites that may bring new insights especially targeting the Johor Bahru, Malaysia consumers. Hence, the findings may allow marketers to understand the dynamics of eWOM on social media, and thus to develop better marketing strategies.

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