



Exploring the Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) on Consumer Purchase Intentions: A Quantitative study for E-Commerce

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Abstract: *This research investigates the relationship between electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and consumer purchasing intention on e-commerce websites. To achieve this objective, the study synthesizes insights from established marketing literature on user-generated content and purchase intention to develop a novel conceptual framework. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected through surveys administered to visitors of e-commerce platforms. The findings from path analysis reveal that key dimensions of eWOM, such as information quality, information credibility, and information adoption, significantly influence purchase intention.*

Key Words: *eWOM; e-commerce; purchase intention; IAM model, user generated content.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) is pivotal in influencing consumer purchasing behavior in the contemporary digital landscape. eWOM encompasses exchanging information and opinions about products, services, or brands through online platforms. With the proliferation of social media, online reviews, and recommendations, eWOM has emerged as a formidable force shaping consumer decisions (López & Sicilia, 2014). In contrast to traditional advertising or company-provided information, eWOM is notably more impactful due to its extensive reach and dissemination (López & Sicilia, 2014).

The internet has been instrumental in amplifying the influence of eWOM, often surpassing the effects of direct company communication on consumer decision-making processes (Pourabedin & Migin, 2015). This impact is particularly pronounced in the tourism and hospitality sectors where intangible qualities and interpersonal interactions characterize offerings. Within these industries, eWOM heavily relies on personal experiences to shape consumer behavior (Litvin et al., 2008; Wu, 2013).

The emergence of social media platforms has revolutionized eWOM by fostering communication and opinion-sharing within user networks. This heightened connectivity reduces anonymity and enhances the credibility and reliability of shared information. Discussions about specific brands on social media platforms naturally affect consumers' purchase intentions (Chu & Kim, 2011; Wallace et al., 2009). However, the overwhelming quantity of information presents a challenge, as consumers must critically assess and filter the eWOM they encounter. Investigating the nuanced interplay between eWOM and consumer purchase intentions, especially within the context of social media, remains a vital area for further exploration (Erkan & Evans, 2016).

This research aims to analyze the effect of eWOM on the purchase intentions of Moroccan customers using an e-commerce platform. The study utilizes the Information Adoption Model (IAM) to explore the linkage between eWOM and purchase intentions within the e-commerce environment.

2. THEORETICAL CONTEXT AND RESEARCH

HYPOTHESIS

2.1. The Electronic Word of Mouth (Ewom) And Its Effects

The emergence of the internet has brought about a transformative shift in how communication and information are shared, marking a progression from the

traditional concept of word-of-mouth (WOM) advertising (Torlak et al., 2014). This transformation has given rise to the electronic form of word of mouth (eWOM), which encompasses customer-generated statements that are readily accessible online (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

eWOM has revolutionized content creation, with online communities producing various formats such as photos, videos, and text across multiple platforms (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; C. M. K. Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Research has consistently highlighted eWOM's critical influence on shaping customer preferences and behavioral intentions (Pedersen et al., 2014; Severi et al., 2014; Torlak et al., 2014).

In the past, customers primarily depended on information from family and close acquaintances to purchase. However, the advent of the internet and its diverse platforms now enables customers to seek opinions from a broader audience, including individuals they do not personally know. Online reviews and feedback play a crucial role in shaping customer attitudes and significantly influence their purchase intentions (Mehyar et al., 2020).

2.2. Online Purchase Intention

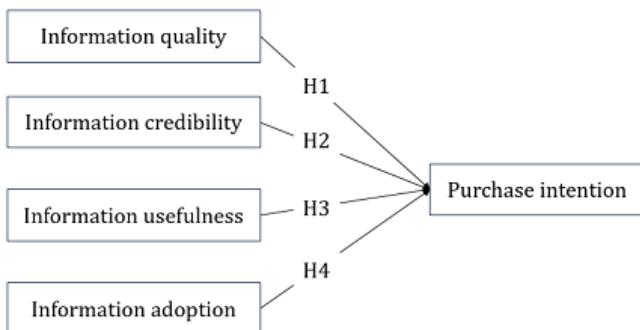
Purchase intention refers to the likelihood that customers will decide to buy a particular product or service (Tien et al., 2019). The rapid growth of the internet has empowered customers with access to extensive electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), allowing them to share experiences and opinions, thereby influencing others' purchase intentions and bridging information gaps (Liaw et al., 2022). eWOM has been widely recognized as a critical factor in shaping product and service choices (Brown & Reingen, 1987; Herr et al., 1991). Therefore, understanding customer purchase intention is a key priority for companies, as it significantly influences consumer behavior (Kudesha & Kumar, 2017).

Positive eWOM, known for its impact on purchase intention (Erkan & Evans, 2016), becomes influential when customers perceive it as credible, valuable, and acceptable and subsequently adopt it (Al-Haddad et al., 2022). Research has consistently demonstrated a strong link between word-of-mouth (WOM) and purchase intention across various social media platforms (Al-Haddad et al., 2022; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Tien et al., 2019; Yaseen & Mat Jusoh, 2021) as well as in specific contexts such as the cosmetics industry (Fathima Nushra & Mubarak, 2022) and the restaurant sector (Yan et al., 2018).

2.3. The Information Adoption Model (IAM): A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Information Processing in Digital Environments

Sussman and Siegal's Information Adoption Model (IAM) (2003) describes how individuals integrate information in digital communication contexts. It combines the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) into a framework that discusses the cognitive and behavioral elements of information evaluation. The ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) proposes two routes to persuasion. Firstly, the Central route, which is the route that carefully assesses the quality of an argument and involves both motivation and thinking. Secondly, the peripheral route, which represents a superficial approach where persuasion is based on cues such as the source's credibility or the number of arguments, without requiring much cognitive effort from the recipient.

FIGURE 1. THE THEOREICAL FRAMEWORK PROPOSED FOR THE STUDY



These paths correspond to the IAM's argument quality-central route and source credibility peripheral route. The model also incorporates TAM's perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use to explain the technological factors that influence information adoption.

IAM has also been widely applied in the study of electronic word-of-mouth, which researched how online information shapes behavior (Cheung et al., 2008; Shu & Scott, 2014). Against this backdrop, critics have argued that IAM emphasizes information quality and credibility too much. To overcome the limitation of IAM, several scholars such as Erkan and Evans (2016), incorporated the Theory of Reasoned Action, TRA, into their models to better account for behavioral responses and purchase intentions.

2.4. Research Hypothesis

The current literature provides extensive evidence of the relationship between electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and purchase intention. Research works (e.g., Al-Haddad et al., 2022; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Fathima Nushra & Mubarak, 2022; Mehyar et al., 2020; Tien et al., 2019) highlight a direct relationship between eWOM and purchase intention.

Building on these insights, this study proposes a series of hypotheses, as depicted in Figure 1. These hypotheses address various facets of participation, such as seeking information, sharing information, demonstrating responsible behavior, and engaging in personal involvement interactions.

H1: Purchase intention is significantly influenced by the credibility of the information.

H2: Purchase intention is significantly influenced by the quality of the information.

H3: Purchase intention is significantly influenced by the utility of the information.

H4: Purchase intention is significantly influenced by the adoption of the information.

3. METHOD

3.1. Research Design

The structural equation model (SEM) was utilized as the primary methodology to evaluate the research hypotheses. This quantitative technique involved collecting data through a survey (Appendix 1), which was subsequently analyzed using path analysis. Path analysis is a statistical method designed to estimate the strength of relationships between variables and uncover causal links (Lleras, 2005). This approach has been extensively adopted in prior research on electronic word-of-mouth (e.g., Al-Haddad et al., 2022; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Fathima Nushra & Mubarak, 2022; Mehyar et al., 2020; Tien et al., 2019). In the present study, SEM was employed to investigate the proposed relationships, focusing on the role of eWOM in shaping purchase intentions.

3.2. Measurement Development

The measurement tools used in this study were adapted from well-established and validated scales cited in previous research. These instruments were customized to suit the Moroccan context and were exclusively designed for this investigation. A five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5) was utilized to measure the constructs.

Information quality was assessed using scales developed by Bailey and Pearson (1983) and Park et al. (2007), while information credibility was evaluated using the framework established by Prendergast et al. (2010). Similarly, the measurement of information usefulness was based on the scales provided by Bailey and Pearson (1983) and Sánchez-Torres et al. (2018). The dimensions of information adoption were measured using instruments developed by Cheung et al. (2008) and Fang (2014), with respondents rating these dimensions on a 5-point scale.

Purchase intention was assessed using the scales proposed by Prendergast et al. (2010). The use of a 5-point scale was chosen deliberately to align with prior research (e.g., Al-Haddad et al., 2022; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Fathima Nushra & Mubarak, 2022). Additionally, Revilla et al. (2014) highlight that 5-point scales tend to generate higher quality data compared to those with more response options, further supporting this choice.

3.3. Sample and data collection

The study focused on individuals with prior online shopping experience. To ensure the questionnaire was clear and comprehensible, it was initially tested with a small sample of 60 participants. Following edits, the finalized survey was distributed online over 9 weeks using a convenience sampling method. To enhance data accuracy, screening questions based on recommendations by Lee and Kim (2010) were included at the start of the survey. These questions were designed to identify participants who had previously made online purchases and engaged with product reviews or comments. Only those meeting these criteria were included in the analysis.

The final version of the survey remained accessible on online platforms for 9 weeks, from July 19, 2024, to September 21, 2024. A total of 302 responses were gathered; however, 15 were excluded due to incomplete or missing information. This resulted in a final sample size of 287 respondents, achieving a response rate of 95.03%.

3.4. Data Analysis

For the analysis of the data, this study utilized IBM SPSS version 25 to conduct exploratory analysis, focusing on principal component analysis (PCA). PCA is a widely applied technique for managing extensive datasets, and it is often recommended by scholars as an essential tool for the initial purification of data. It assists in identifying underlying latent factors within scales, thereby ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the measurement instruments (Gerbing & Hamilton, 1996). This step is crucial for refining the data by simplifying its structure and uncovering the factors that contribute to the observed variance.

After completing the exploratory analysis, the study used a structural equation model (SEM) to assess the measurement and structural models. SEM is an advanced statistical method that enables the simultaneous evaluation of complex relationships between observable and unobservable variables. This analysis was carried out using Amos version 25, a tool well-suited for conducting path analysis and validating models. This combination of methods allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of the proposed hypotheses, reinforcing the goodness of the results.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Demographic Information

The demographic profile of the study's sample, comprising 287 respondents, revealed that 39% were male (112 participants), while 61% were female (175 participants). The largest age group represented was

between 18 and 24 years, accounting for 67% of the sample, followed by 23% in the 25 to 34-year range. In terms of educational attainment, approximately 18% of respondents had a baccalaureate degree, 28% held a bachelor's degree, and the majority, 51%, had completed a master's degree.

Regarding employment status, most participants were students (51%), followed by employees (44%), officials (4%), and freelancers (1%). Additionally, 72% of the respondents reported making at least three online purchases. For further details, refer to Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents (n=287).

Item	frequency	percentage
Sexe		
male	112	39
female	175	61
Age		
18-24	192	67
25-34	66	23
35-44	29	10
Education		
Baccalaureate	52	18
License/bachelor	83	28
Masters	146	51
Ph.D.	6	2
Occupation		
Student	146	51
Employee	126	44
Official	12	4
Freelancer	3	1
Online purchase frequency		
1	33	11
2	49	17
3	78	27
More than 3	127	44

4.2. The Measurement Model

The data analysis process began with an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to identify the underlying factors within the dataset. This step was followed by a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to validate the measurement model and evaluate the estimated correlations among the constructs. Following these initial analyses, the study's hypotheses were tested using IBM SPSS Amos, a statistical software designed for structural equation modeling and hypothesis validation.

4.2.1. Adjustment Of the Measurement Model and The Index

To ensure the unidimensionality and internal consistency of the constructs, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was carried out. This step was essential as the items for each construct were adapted from prior studies to suit the specific context of this research. Subsequently, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to test the predefined assumptions about the relationships between observed indicators and their corresponding latent constructs. This procedure aimed to refine the measurement model and achieve acceptable goodness-of-fit indices.

The reliability of all scales was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha, with values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978) and ranging from 0.786 to 0.921. Similarly, the composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs were above the recommended minimum of 0.7 (Fornell et al., 1996), ranging between 0.784 and 0.940. Detailed results can be found in Table 2.

4.2.2. Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity

To confirm convergent validity, the study evaluated the average variance extracted (AVE) alongside each item's contribution to its respective construct.

Table 2. Mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted

Component	Mean	ST.Dev	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE	Square Root of the AVE
Information quality	3.30	1.003	0.786	0.784	0.548	0.740
I think that the review/comment on the web site is clear.	2.23	1.231				
I think that the review/comment on the web site is easy to understand.	3.45	1.124				
In general, I think that the quality of each review/comment on the web site is high.	3.23	1.238				
Information credibility	3.53	1.116	0.910	0.911	0.719	0.848
I think that the reviews/comments on the web site are convincing.	3.5	1.232				
I think that the reviews/comments on the web site are strong.	3.43	1.205				
I think that the reviews/comments on the web site are credible.	3.64	1.216				
I think that the reviews/comments on the web site are accurate	3.55	1.370				
Information usefulness	3.87	1.025	0.887	0.889	0.729	0.854
I think that the reviews/comments on the web site are generally useful.	3.73	1.089				
I think that the reviews/comments on the web site are generally informative	4.12	1.076				
I think that the reviews/comments on the web site provide valuable information.	3.76	1.233				
Information adoption	3.98	0.906	0.886	0.932	0.775	0.880
I think that the review on the web site contributed to my knowledge of the product discussed.	4.01	1.054				
I think that the review on the web site made it easier for me to make my purchase decision.	3.90	0.977				
I think that online reviews/comments improve my efficiency in making a purchasing decision	4.07	1.066				
I think that the review on the web site motivated me to take purchasing action.	3.93	1,096				
Purchase Intention	3.72	1.018	0.891	0.889	0.728	0.853
I think that it is very likely that I will buy the product.	3.74	1.099				
I think that I will purchase the product next time I need a product.	3.73	1.101				
I think that I will definitely try the product.	3.68	1.168				

As shown in Table 2, the AVE for all constructs surpassed the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.50, thereby affirming convergent validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). This indicates that the constructs effectively capture the variance shared with their indicators.

Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the square root of the AVE for each construct with its correlation values. The results revealed that the square root of the AVE for each construct was greater than its correlations with other constructs, fulfilling the criteria for discriminant validity (Fornell et al., 1996). Thus, discriminant validity was successfully established for all constructs.

4.3. Structural Model

4.3.1. Structural Model Fit Index and Correlati

Several model fit indices were employed to assess the measurement model and its relationships, including chi-square (χ^2), degrees of freedom (DF), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), goodness of fit index (GFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and root mean residual (RMR). The results indicated a satisfactory model fit, as evidenced by a reasonable chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (201.103). Both AGFI (0.912) and GFI (0.935) exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.9, affirming the model's adequacy. The RMSEA value (0.043) suggested a good fit, as values below 0.05 are considered ideal. Furthermore, the CFI (0.957) and TLI (0.962) values further validated the model's fit.

Correlation analysis (refer to Table 3) revealed statistically significant relationships ($r > 0.05$) among variables. The strongest correlation was observed between "information usefulness" and "information credibility" (0.811), while the weakest correlations were identified between "information adoption" and "information quality" (0.399) and between "Information quality" and "Information credibility" (0.407) (see Table 4 for details).

Table 3. Goodness-of-fit measures.

χ^2	201.103
DF	186
AGFI	0.912
GFI	0.935
RMSEA	0.043
CFI	0.957
TLI	0.962
RMR	0.042

4.3.2. Hypothesis Testing

The measurement model was converted into a structural model to examine the hypotheses provided in this study.

The conceptual model depicted in Figure 1 delineates the interrelationships among various constructs, including "information quality," "information credibility," "information usefulness," "information adoption," and "purchase intention." Additionally, the model elucidates the nexus between electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) components and purchase intention, mediated by trust.

In the study's final phase, hypotheses were tested utilizing Amos and SPSS (see Table 5). Regression analysis results revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between "information quality" and "purchase intention" ($\beta = 0.169$, $t = 2.127$), providing support for H1a. Moreover, the findings indicated a positive and significant link between "information credibility" and "purchase intention" ($\beta = 0.389$, $t = 4.288$), supporting H1b.

However, the analysis unveiled a non-significant relationship between "information usefulness" and "purchase intention" ($\beta = 0.157$, $t = 1.441$), contradicting H1c. Furthermore, the path between "information adoption" and "purchase intention" was significant ($\beta = 0.405$, $t = 4.875$), supporting H1d.

Table 4. Results of correlation

	Information quality	Information credibility	Information usefulness	Information adoption	Purchase Intention
Information quality	1				
Information credibility	0.407	1			
Information usefulness	0.500	0.811	1		
Information adoption	0.419	0.510	0.694	1	
Purchase Intention	0.428	0.553	0.230	0.587	1

Table 5. Hypotheses test					
Hypotheses	Hypotheses paths	β	T-value	P-value	Results
H1	IQ→PI	0.169	2.127	0.033	Supported
H2	IC→ PI	0.389	4.288	***	Supported
H3	IU→ PI	0.157	1.441	0.15	Not Supported
H4	IA→ PI	0.405	4.875	***	Supported
***P < .001					

IQ= Information quality; IC= Information credibility; IU= Information usefulness; IA= Information adoption; PI= Purchase intention

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The primary objective of this research was to examine the influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on purchase intention within the e-commerce sector in Morocco. The study contributes to the existing knowledge regarding user-generated content in the e-commerce industry. Drawing from the empirical findings presented earlier, this study offers distinct theoretical and managerial implications, which are outlined below.

5.1. Implications For Theoretical Researches

Previous studies (e.g., Al-Haddad et al., 2022; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Fathima Nushra & Mubarak, 2022; Mahmud et al., 2020; Tien et al., 2019) have highlighted the influence of online word-of-mouth (eWOM) on customer purchase intention. However, our study specifically focused on examining the outcomes of eWOM within an e-commerce website. We empirically identified the consequences of eWOM and illustrated them in a conceptual model. The measurement model received support from the empirical data, and the analysis demonstrated the strong performance of the structural model.

The results of our study confirmed the positive direct impact of information quality, information credibility, and information adoption on purchase intention. These findings align with previous research in the eWOM literature (Al-Haddad et al., 2022; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Tien et al., 2019), emphasizing the significant influence of eWOM on purchase intention. However, it is worth noting that information usefulness was the only component that did not show a significant impact on purchase intention.

Despite the importance of providing useful information to consumers in driving purchase intention, various factors such as information overload, lack of trust in the source, different priorities, emotional factors, and competing information sources can hinder its effectiveness. Consequently, e-commerce platforms and sellers should be aware of these potential barriers and address them in their marketing strategies.

5.2. Implications For Managers

The influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on purchase intention offers essential managerial insights for enhancing customer acquisition and loyalty. Businesses can foster positive eWOM by prioritizing exceptional customer service, delivering high-quality products, and actively engaging with consumers on digital platforms (Tien et al., 2019).

Establishing a proactive online presence, addressing customer feedback promptly, and utilizing social media to highlight positive experiences can build trust and strengthen purchase intention. Encouraging customers to share their experiences through loyalty rewards or recognition programs and promoting user-generated content can further amplify the impact of eWOM.

Additionally, leveraging data analytics to interpret customer feedback enables businesses to refine products and services and align marketing strategies with favorable eWOM narratives. By integrating these efforts into customer relationship management systems, companies can consistently drive positive eWOM, ensuring a sustainable competitive advantage.

6. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Firstly, the study's sample size and population representativeness may present constraints. For example, the sample may be skewed toward specific age groups or geographic regions, potentially limiting the applicability of the findings to broader populations. Secondly, the research model was exclusively tested on e-commerce websites, leaving room for further investigation on other platforms such as social media or brand websites to expand its applicability. Lastly, the study does not fully address contextual factors that might

influence the interplay between eWOM, and purchase intention. Variables such as the nature of the product or service, customer involvement levels, and the competitive market environment could alter the impact of eWOM on purchase behaviors.

Addressing these limitations in future studies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of eWOM across different contexts and platforms.

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