

Shaping Clicks into Carts: The Role of Ewom in E-Commerce Decisions

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Abstract

With the quick growth of e-commerce platforms, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) has become a key element in influencing consumer choice in the digital marketplace. This study looks into how electronic word-of-mouth, or eWOM, affects e-commerce customers' purchasing decisions. Utilizing a sample of 100 respondents for demographic analysis, the study investigated the effects of psychological (emotional, social, cognitive, and moral) and informational (quality, quantity, type, and source credibility) factors on the adoption of eWOM. According to the results, 60 percent of respondents have been regular online shoppers, and 91 percent of respondents have digital experience. The adoption of eWOM was most strongly predicted by source credibility, with informational influences exhibiting high mean values. While emotional and social influences were closely related, psychological influences showed that moral factors were the most important. Correlation analysis validated robust positive associations between variables, especially between brand loyalty and demographics and between source credibility and the number of reviews. Based on trust, social resonance, and ethical considerations, eWOM influences consumer behavior; demographic factors moderate this relationship, the study concludes. According to these results, companies should concentrate on eWOM tactics that are genuine, believable, and socially interesting in order to increase customer trust and boost online sales.

Key Words : Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), Online Consumer Behavior, Source Credibility, E-commerce Marketing, Brand Loyalty

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Consumer decision-making in the digital marketplace is greatly influenced by Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), particularly in light of the explosive growth of e-commerce platforms. In contrast to traditional word-of-mouth, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) reaches a large audience across a variety of digital platforms such as social media, online forums, and review websites. Because of this change in how consumers look for, assess, and eventually buy products, eWOM is now a crucial field of study. Customers are continuously exposed to user-generated reviews, comments, and ratings in the digital world. These user ratings and reviews indicate how reliable and trustworthy a product is and provide you with information about it. There have been numerous studies discussing how these information and psychological factors influence the people's purchase decisions, but the underlying processes continue to change with the developments in technology. In order to comprehend the dynamics further, the current research also focuses on examining the role of the informational aspect of eWOM in influencing consumers' receipt of information and online consumer behavior. Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) also has considerable influence on customers' decisions in the online market, particularly with the extensive growth of e-commerce sites (O'Reilly et al., 2016).

Electronic word-of-mouth or eWOM differs from word-of-mouth in that it is transmitted through several digital media, including social media, online boards, and review websites. This impacts how individuals search for, assess, and purchase products (Verma and Dewani 2021).

Customers are constantly exposed to other customers' ratings, comments, and reviews here. These are information sources and legitimacy indicators (Yan et al. 2018). Because of these traits, eWOM is an important area to study how people act in online markets. Influence information, or how much people think that opinions and reviews are true and correct, is an important factor in how consumers act toward eWOM (O'Reilly et al., 2016). People believe in eWOM because of the reviewer's publisher's credibility, the message's appropriateness, and platform-specific features such verification buyer tags or ratings systems (Verma and Dewani 2021). However, the effectiveness of eWOM differs from platform to platform.

Unstructured systems, such as social media, facilitate heuristic processing of popularity indicators, including likes and shares. Structured platforms such as Amazon advocate for more stringent reviews predicated on the strength of arguments (Yan et al., 2018). The contrast shows how platform design can quickly affect how much people trust eWOM. Literature shows that people prefer to absorb information

step by step, beginning with the reviewer's credibility and trustworthiness, then the quality and clarity of the message (Le et al., 2023).

For costly items like gadgets or travel booking, statistical and in-depth analysis is among the primary reasons why people buy them. The findings indicate that cognitive and technological situational factors are the determinants of eWOM adoption and it is a heterogeneous process. These arguments are established through extensive exploration of how eWOM content impacts customer information assimilation as well as online purchasing behavior. The goal of this study is to explain the roles of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in altering client behavior on e-commerce websites regarding message quality, credibility, and site features.

Objectives:

1. To determine the impact of eWOM adoption for online buying behavior through ecommerce sites
2. To analyse moderating influences of identified variables on relationship between eWOM adoption and online consumer buying behavior with reference to e-commerce sites.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Hussain et al. (2017) discover that perceived risk has a significant role in customers' interpretation and utilization of eWOM. To them, individuals who purchase high-priced items such as luxury goods utilize primarily credible online reviews with a motive to decrease the risk. Economic and social risks associated with purchases are diminished by credible eWOM, giving individuals confidence and evidence. Their research confirms that perceived credibility in eWOM counts, especially in risky purchases as people require credible data in order to help them make a decision.

Therefore, eWOM does not just compel a person to buy an item; it also enables it.

Lee and Youn (2009) examine the use of eWOM sites to shape consumer decision-making.

They show that platform structure affects information processed in terms of both quantity and type. They discover that lengthy text judgments elicit more advanced analytic judgments, while review sites with star ratings elicit decisions based on heuristics. Their findings also exhibit a negativity bias, revealing that negative eWOM will be more likely to have an effect than positive feedback because individuals are more attentive to prospective evils. Their findings indicate that platform affordances affect consumers' psychological processing of different types of information, especially negative information, and consumption of eWOM. Wang (2016) discusses the IAM, where it declares consumers would adopt eWOM on their own when they find the information helpful and credible. The model predicts that the degree to which information quality and source credibility would influence adoption would vary with the amount of information available and willing and capable the consumer is. Such consumers would be more concerned with what they post and would consider reviewer expertise and argument quality. Wang's work has confirmed that IAM is an appropriate theoretical model in decision-making eWOM research. This means that when individuals are required to make a decision based on information, they decide on the basis of ease of use and utility. Erkan and Evans (2016) utilize the IAM in social media to indicate how source legitimacy and information quality heavily drive purchase intentions.

They describe how their results show that reviews will influence buyers who feel that they trust the site and what is written and have an opinion that it is sufficient for them. They refer to relational ties and peer recommendation as the main basis for which eWOM is the superior alternative, and operate as social influence too. This integrated approach lays as much emphasis on relational trust and social context of the virtual community, particularly in highly immersive digital environments, to the argumentative character of eWOM and its informative function. Verma et al. (2023) empirically examine IAM constructs in eWOM research with a meta-analytic structural equation modeling strategy. They confirm that information use and source credibility are the most reliable predictors of eWOM use. They identify which type of factors enhance or degrade these connections, for instance, product category and client engagement.

People will apply eWOM to influence experience products like restaurants more than to influence search products like computers. This situational context deepens understanding of eWOM influence mechanisms in general by an elucidation of eWOM adoption variation as a function of product context and degree of engagement. Moradi and Zihagh (2022) apply the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) to describe eWOM processing, with central and peripheral routes. They suggest that consumers subjectively analyze eWOM using the central route by creating source credibility and argument quality within involvement contexts. In other instances, peripheral cues such as popularity, good looks, or short-term acceptance can convince individuals when they are less engaged. Their study finds that the level of

consumer informational effort determines the informative influence level. In doing so, it points out the inter-active two-way nature of eWOM, demonstrating how consumer opinions and resultant buying decisions arise as an outcome of superficial cues and complete rational deliberation.

Theoretical Background

Psychological Theories Relevant to Persuasion

- Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) posits two routes of persuasion: central (logic and facts) and peripheral (cues such as attractiveness or credibility) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).
- Social Proof Theory suggests that people look to others to determine appropriate behavior, especially in uncertain situations (Cialdini, 2001).
- Source Credibility Theory emphasizes the influence of the communicator's trustworthiness and expertise on the message's persuasiveness (Hovland et al., 1953).

Analysis of the literature reveals that eWOM is not a new concept and has evolved from conventional word of mouth to eWOM to further social media word of mouth impacting the intention to purchase of the potential buyer. The data points out theoretical background towards motivating the users towards becoming the buyers. Several factors contribute to generating purchase intentions and finally conscious buying.

The **theory of reasoned action** is one of them which is based upon human behavior with attitude as a focal point, eWOM creates favorable or unfavorable belief of an individual towards the goods or services and thus changing their attitude and hence influencing their primary belief (Abedi et al., 2019; Yusuf et al., 2018). Technology has also played a main role in shaping the behavior of the customers and **technology acceptance model** (TAM) has enriched the usefulness of information acceptance in electronic word of mouth mode (Qiang Yan et al., 2016; Zhang, 2010).

The Elaborated Likelihood Model (ELM) and the **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)** (Davis, 1989) are combined to create the **Information Adoption Model**. which prevails in the e- environment where the individuals are free to express their feelings, experiences, opinions, which the user trusts for acceptance or rejection as per their subjective norms (Gunawan et al., 2015).

Mahmud et al., (2020) highlighted the theory of social exchange to the relationship created between two individuals based upon cost benefit analysis. **SET** (Social Exchange Theory) fits in the context of positive/negative comments of the customers and the trust on the brand can influence the customers intention to buy.

The TAM and **ELM** serve as the foundation for the IAM - Information Adoption Model (Sussman et al., 2003). Two comparatively diverse paths to persuasion are identified by the ELM - Elaboration Likelihood Model (Cacioppo, 1986). First, there is the core path, which is persuasion brought about by a person carefully and thoughtfully evaluating the genuine merits of the data offered in support of a notion or viewpoint. The second route, also known as the peripheral route, does not need close examination of the material supplied and is typically the outcome of a straightforward signal (for example, source trustworthiness).

These theories shape up the behavior of the consumer and will be taken up in the study as together, these theoretical perspectives offer a comprehensive framework for examining the factors that influence consumer behavior with reference to eWOM adoption, the effectiveness of technological acceptance and the overall impact of information adoption on purchasing behaviors.

The current research emphasizes the necessity for additional theoretical advancement in comprehending how psychological factors of user-generated content (UGC) promote eWOM adoption. Current frameworks, including the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), primarily view persuasion as a sequential and person-focused procedure. Future studies need to focus on comprehensive frameworks that reflect the interaction between psychological factors (e.g., trust, credibility, emotional connection) and technological facilitators like platform architecture and algorithmic suggestions, employing models such as Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) to enhance the understanding of consumer choices in online settings. Additionally, theoretical progress is necessary to create dynamic and iterative persuasion models that consider repeated exposure, reinforcement, and possible fatigue effects over time (Berger, 2020). Development tailored to specific contexts is also vital, as many persuasion theories are based in Western consumer environments and may not completely reflect the influence of collectivist cultural values and social conformity pressures present in emerging markets like India

(Hofstede, 2011; Shavitt et al., 2006). Moreover, upcoming frameworks need to formalize the relationship between emotional and cognitive processing pathways, enhancing ELM by illustrating how the valence of UGC influences central and peripheral route persuasion (Babić Rosario et al., 2020). Ultimately, a networked persuasion theory that examines the cross-platform consumption of UGC and its overall influence on eWOM adoption would offer a more comprehensive insight into online consumer behavior.

Research Gap

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has been the subject of much research, but there are still a number of unanswered questions that merit more investigation. Previous studies have demonstrated how crucial informational cues like platform structure, message quality, and source credibility are in influencing consumer perceptions. Nevertheless, the majority of research has looked at these aspects separately, paying little attention to the ways in which psychological and informational factors combine to promote eWOM adoption in actual e-commerce settings. Additionally, although models like “IAM and ELM describe heuristic and systematic processing”, there is not enough empirical data to support the idea that these mechanisms work simultaneously on both structured and unstructured platforms. The moderating effect of consumer-specific variables like risk perception, product type, and degree of involvement is another neglected area. The current study fills these gaps by examining the psychological and informational factors that affect e-commerce customers' purchasing decisions.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The impact of eWOM on consumer purchasing behavior in e-commerce is investigated in this study using a quantitative research design. The main instrument for gathering data was a structured questionnaire that focused on psychological aspects, informational influences, online shopping habits, and consumer engagement with eWOM. Both closed-ended and multiple-choice questions were included in the questionnaire to guarantee consistency in answers and to make statistical analysis easier. Convenience sampling was used to select a sample of 100 respondents with a focus on students, working professionals, and stay-at-home moms who frequently shop online.

There is diversity in consumer perspectives because the respondents come from a range of age groups, genders, occupations, income brackets, and educational backgrounds. Google Forms was employed to conduct the survey online, ensuring accessibility and ease of use.

Employing descriptive statistics to examine the data collected, it was easy to condense the responses and attitudes of the respondents towards eWOM and online purchasing behavior. Graphical displays such as pie charts and bar charts were used to display trends and patterns. Quantitative findings were displayed in a clear and comprehensible way using tables. Because it makes it possible to identify consumer patterns, preferences, and behaviors regarding the adoption of eWOM, this methodology is appropriate for the current research. It also offers a basis for investigating the connection between online purchasing behavior and eWOM informational influences. The study guarantees controllable data analysis while obtaining pertinent consumer insights that are pertinent to the goals by restricting the sample size to 100.

4.0 Data Analysis

4.1 Basic Queries

4.1.1 Duration of using the Internet

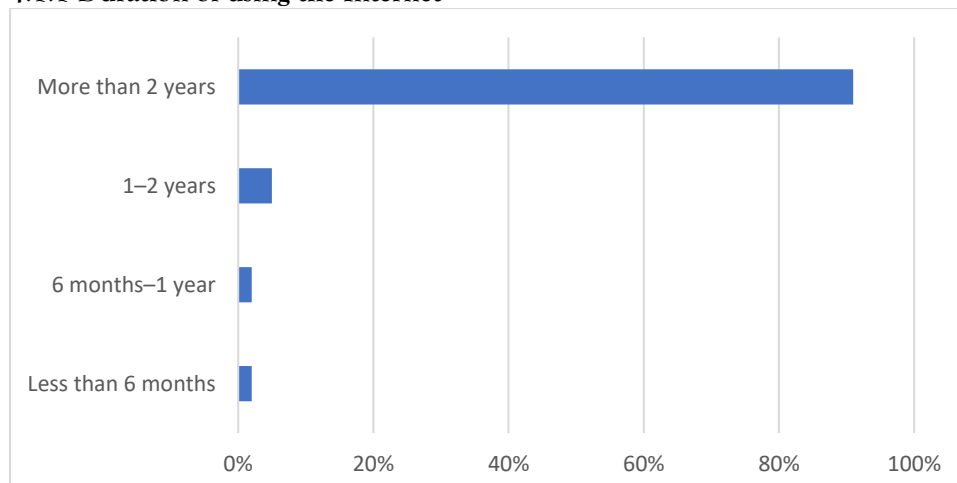


Figure 4.1: Duration of using the Internet

Table 4.1: Duration of using the Internet

Duration	Frequency	Percent
Less than 6 months	2	2%
6 months-1 year	2	2%
1-2 years	5	5%
More than 2 years	91	91%
Total	100	100%

The majority (91%) of respondents have been using the internet for more than two years, indicating a digitally experienced population with strong familiarity in navigating e-commerce platforms.

4.1.2 Daily Internet Usage

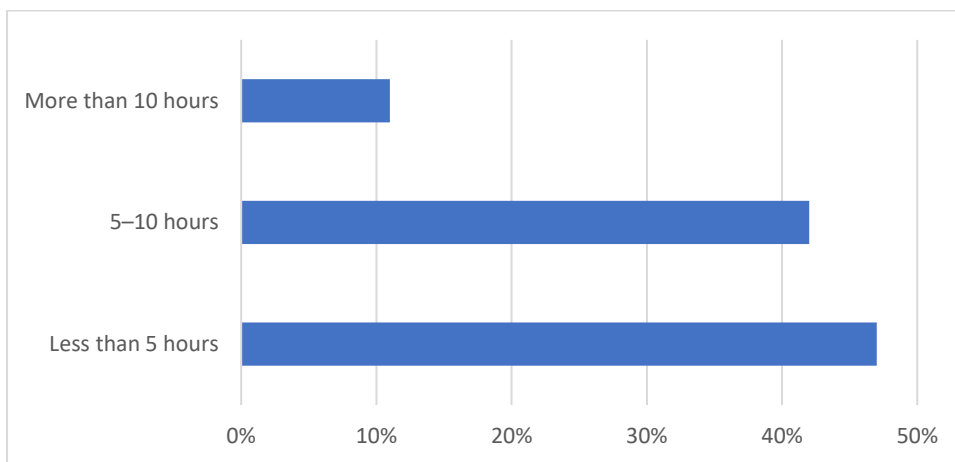


Figure 4.2: Daily Internet Usage

Table 4.2: Duration of hours spent on the internet daily

Hours	Frequency	Percent
Less than 5 hours	47	47%
5-10 hours	42	42%
More than 10 hours	11	11%
Total	100	100%

Nearly half (47%) spend less than 5 hours online, while 53% spend more, indicating moderate to high internet engagement, relevant for frequent exposure to eWOM.

4.1.3 Duration of Online Shopping

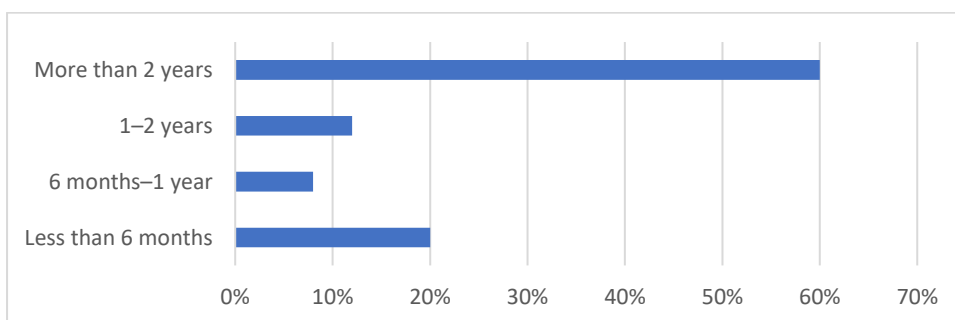


Figure 4.3: Duration of Online Shopping

Table 4.3: Frequency Distribution of Online Shopping

Duration	Frequency	Percent
Less than 6 months	20	20%
6 months-1 year	8	8%
1-2 years	12	12%
More than 2 years	60	60%
Total	100	100%

A majority (60%) are long-term online shoppers, reflecting strong adaptation to digital shopping, while 20% represent new adopters.

4.1.4 Reasons for Reading eWOM

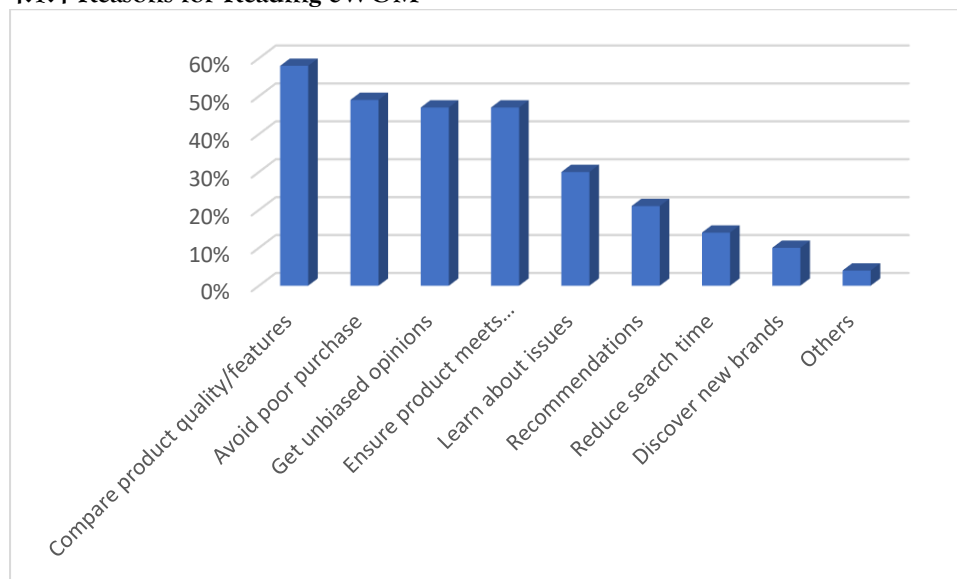


Figure 4.4: Reasons for Reading eWOM

Table 4.4: Reasons consumers read eWOM before purchase

Reason	Frequency	Percent
Compare product quality/features	58	58%
Avoid poor purchase	49	49%
Get unbiased opinions	47	47%
Ensure product meets expectations	47	47%
Learn about issues	30	30%
Recommendations	21	21%
Reduce search time	14	14%
Discover new brands	10	10%
Others	4	4%

The top reasons for reading eWOM are comparing product quality (58%) and avoiding poor purchases (49%), reflecting reliance on reviews for decision-making support.

4.2. Correlation Analysis

Table 4.5: Correlation Matrix for Informational Influences

	Quality	Quantity	Source Credibility	Type
Quality	1	0.444**	0.475**	0.538**
Quantity	0.444**	1	0.614**	0.577**
Source Credibility	0.475**	0.614**	1	0.594**

Type	0.538**	0.577**	0.594**	1
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($p < 0.01$, 2-tailed)

Correlations are all positive and significant, strongest between Source Credibility and Quantity ($r = 0.614$) and weakest between Quality and Quantity ($r = 0.444$). This highlights that credibility, type, and quantity of eWOM content strongly reinforce each other in shaping informational influence.

Table 4.6: Correlation Matrix for Psychological Influences

	Emotional Context	Socially	Cognitive	Moral
Emotional Context	1	0.659**	0.392**	0.309**
Socially	0.659**	1	0.567**	0.357**
Cognitive	0.392**	0.567**	1	0.639**
Moral	0.309**	0.357**	0.639**	1

** ($p < 0.01$, 2-tailed)

Correlations are all significant, strongest between Emotional Context and Socially ($r = 0.659$), and weakest between Emotional Context and Moral ($r = 0.309$). These findings suggest emotional and social influences are more closely linked compared to moral influences.

Table 4.7 Correlation Matrix for eWOM

	Price Product	Brand Loyalty	Demographics
Price Product	1	0.632**	0.535**
Brand Loyalty	0.632**	1	0.705**
Demographics	0.535**	0.705**	1

** ($p < 0.01$, 2-tailed)

Correlations are significant and positive, strongest between Brand Loyalty and Demographics ($r = 0.705$) and weakest between Price Product and Demographics ($r = 0.535$). This indicates eWOM factors are interconnected, with brand loyalty strongly linked to demographic characteristics.

4.3 DISCUSSION

With more than ninety percent of respondents having used the internet for more than two years, the study's findings demonstrate that respondents are technologically savvy. This implies that people are capable of interacting with and assessing eWOM content on e-commerce platforms. Most people spend less than five hours a day on the internet, but a sizable percentage spend more time there, giving eWOM plenty of exposure. The fact that three-fourths of them had been purchasing online for over two years indicates that they had a great deal of knowledge regarding how individuals utilize digital goods. Informational factors were the most powerful predictors of eWOM adoption, with source credibility as the most significant variable. That is, if consumers purchase products online, the first thing on their mind of what to search for is authenticity and believability of information. The links further indicate that the quantity, quality, and form of eWOM information all play a role in influencing consumer thinking. Moral concerns received the highest psychological influence score, indicating that people's perception of eWOM being moral and ethical is crucial in deciding if they use it or not. Furthermore, social and emotional contexts were highly intercorrelated with each other, highlighting the strength of emotional connection and peer influence in decision-making. The findings also show that there is a strong link between demographics and brand loyalty, and it is therefore implied that consumer attributes are important in establishing whether online shopping and the use of eWOM correlate. The study points out that consumer consumption of eWOM is influenced by information and psychological factors, and the two most important determinants are credibility and moral influence.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The research concludes that eWOM, having psychological (moral, social, cognitive, and emotional) and informational (credibility, quality, kind, and quantity) bases, is the primary driver of consumer buying behavior in online shopping. Credibility generates trust, while moral and social aspects cause people to make value-based decisions. If you put all of these elements together, they will make people more probable to use eWOM in deciding what to purchase. Consumer personality characteristics, for example,

demographics and brand commitment, all have a significant impact on eWOM and consumer purchasing behavior. Results suggest that organizations must work to create unique, helpful, and trustworthy eWOM material if they need to reframe the way individuals think. In making credible and authentic eWOM, organizations need to get authentic consumer opinions and allow people to talk to each other.

The websites should consider the number and the quality of the reviews in order to get this information. Marketers have a significant impact on people's morals and values of society, so their advertisements should be performed in a way that people would value. Brand loyalty can make eWOM critical once more if made specific to certain groups of individuals. Websites of online stores need to implement socially interactive, ethical, and sincere approaches in an effort to increase the effect of eWOM on customer purchasing behavior.

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Conflicts of Interest / Competing Interests

The author(s) declare that there are no conflicts of interest or competing interests related to this work.

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