

THE TRIANGULATED INFLUENCE OF ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH (eWOM) INFORMATION ON CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTION: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary of digital era, consumer decision-making processes have evolved significantly in response to the proliferation of information sources. This conceptual paper explores the intricate nexus between information credibility, valence information, information quality, and resultant consumer purchase intention across diverse industry domains. Recognizing the pivotal role of consumer perceptions in shaping buying decisions, this paper aims to elucidate the conceptual framework governing these variables. Through a comprehensive literature synthesis and theoretical analysis, this paper endeavours to delineate the interconnections among information credibility, valence content, and information quality, elucidating their collective influence on consumer decision-making. By proposing a conceptual framework that integrates these variables, this paper aims to offer a conceptual roadmap for understanding how consumers perceive and evaluate information credibility, react to valence content, and assess information quality, culminating in their purchasing behaviours across industry sectors. This conceptual exploration aims to lay the foundation for future empirical investigations and strategic business approaches, facilitating a deeper comprehension of the intricate dynamics guiding consumer behaviour in the digital age.

Keywords: eWOM, Information credibility, Information quality, Valence information

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Recently, organizations and companies have influenced the changes in communication and information of consumers towards products and services (Fatma et al., 2020; Putri, 2023). According to Semrush article, 83% of marketers used electronic word-of-mouth marketing to increase brand awareness (Semrush, 2021). Although consumers have a lot of access to eWOM information in social media with various platforms available (Sugiran et al., 2022; Musa et al., 2023; Putri, 2023), trustworthy information in social media has become more crucial and critical nowadays. According to the Deputy Minister of Communication and Digital, losses due to social media scams through Facebook and Instagram platforms in Malaysia recorded up to RM302 million in the last three years until June 2023. Based on the report, losses from the

Facebook platform are RM232 Million, and the Instagram platform is RM70 million (Ahmad, 2023).

The influence of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) on consumer purchase intention is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses various variables such as information quality, information valence, and information credibility (Mehmet et al., 2018). The impact of eWOM on consumer behavior is influenced by sender characteristics, information characteristics, and receiver characteristics, with trust and involvement playing intermediary and moderating roles (Ye & Zheng, 2017). Additionally, the adoption of eWOM information in social media and shopping websites could have different influences on consumers' purchase intentions (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Furthermore, the quality, timeliness, and expertise of eWOM are crucial factors that influence consumers' purchase intentions (Wei & Leng, 2017).

The credibility of eWOM information is also a significant determinant of its influence on purchase intention. Studies have shown that the credibility of eWOM information, including source credibility and social media credibility, plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Leong et al., 2021). Moreover, the valence of eWOM, whether positive or negative, has been found to impact consumer purchase intention, with positive eWOM via social media affecting brand attitude and subsequently influencing purchase intention (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). Furthermore, the influence of eWOM on purchase intention is not limited to specific product types or sources of information. It extends to various industries, including the fast-food industry, wellness offers, cross-border e-commerce, and the low-cost airline industry (Afandi & Marsasi, 2023; Xiao et al., 2019; Ruangkanjanases et al., 2021; Yodpram & Intalar, 2020). Additionally, the influence of eWOM on purchase intention is not confined to a particular demographic, as evidenced by comparative studies between different consumer groups in different countries (Ruangkanjanases et al., 2021).

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 eWOM Information

The rise of new media channels has enabled consumers to share their experiences and opinions with other consumers through online platforms to engage in electronic word-of-mouth marketing (eWOM) (Cheung & Thadani., 2012). Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) defined eWOM communication as any communication of positive or negative statements made by potential, actual and or former consumers towards a product or company, made available to many people via the Internet. The interaction is expressed through various social media mechanisms, forums, websites, chat groups, corporate blogs and social networking sites (Torres et. al., 2018 ;Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). As social network website has become more powerful, the systematic structure provides people with a new way of communicating and sharing content (Majlesirad & Haji pour Shousthari, 2020). The potential of eWOM in social media helps consumers gain more information from other consumers and exchange information with the organization. Park et al. (2021) in their study stated that consumers who rely on social media need information and opinions from others, potentially increasing their awareness of the brand as they enjoy sharing their information and experience. eWOM on social media attracts consumers to get more information and communicate with others. eWOM spreading in social media has become critical in shaping consumer behavior and attitude characteristics (Fazrin & Fatthi, 2018).

2.2 Information Quality

Information quality can be defined as the overall reliability, accuracy, usefulness, and clarity of information (Martometno et al., 2020; Zárraga-Rodríguez & Álvarez, 2015;). It encompasses various dimensions or attributes that contribute to the quality of information. These dimensions can include intrinsic quality, contextual quality, representational quality, and accessibility quality (Mai, 2013; Yang et al., 2020; Tutty et al., 2023). Intrinsic quality refers to the accuracy, objectivity, believability, and reputation of the information, ensuring that the information is reliable and trustworthy (Lillrank, 2003). Accessibility quality focuses on the ease of access and security of the information, ensuring it is easily accessible to users while maintaining its confidentiality and integrity (Al-Jefri et al., 2018; Lillrank, 2003). Contextual quality considers the relevancy, value-added, timeliness, completeness, and amount of data in the information, which ensures that the information is relevant to the user's needs, up-to-date, and comprehensive (Yang et al., 2020; Lillrank, 2003). Representational quality refers to the interpretability, ease of understanding, concise representation, and consistent representation of the information that ensures the information is presented clearly and understandably (Tao et al., 2017; Lillrank, 2003). Information quality is crucial in ensuring that the information provided is accurate, reliable, and valuable for its intended purpose (Brown et al., 2019). Assessing information quality is vital in various domains, such as healthcare and technology, to ensure that users have access to high-quality and trustworthy information (Tao et al., 2017).

In eWOM, information quality is emphasized due to the rapid growth of online communication platforms such as social media, websites, and blogs (Leong et al., 2022). Word of mouth, including eWOM, is considered one of the most influential factors affecting consumer behavior (Leong et al., 2022). Tonder et al. (2018) investigated the relationships between perceived value, relationship quality, and positive word-of-mouth intentions, and the study found that relationship quality factors, such as competence, trust, continuous commitment and the relationship between perceived value and positive word-of-mouth intentions drive positive word-of-mouth behavior. The literature on information quality in electronic word of mouth (eWOM) highlights its significance in influencing consumer behavior and purchase intention where the guidelines and checklists to design high-quality online information (Diviani et al., 2015). The quality of information in online reviews has been examined, and the information quality of reviews has been measured based on relevance, comprehensibility, adequacy, and objectivity (Zhu et al., 2020). The quality of online reviews and the impact of social media on behavior change are key areas in developing guidelines, improving literacy, and considering contextual factors crucial in enhancing the quality and impact of information in eWOM (Goodyear et al., 2021).

Table 1: Study on information quality and purchase intention

Authors	Years	Journals	Finding
1.Wawan Prahiawana, 2.Mochammad Fahlevib, 3.Juliana Julianac, 4.John Tampil Purbac, 5.Khamaludind, 6.Syahriani Syamd 7.Sri Lestarie	2022	Uncertain Supply Chain Management	positive and significant relationship between information quality and consumer purchase intentions
1. Jungkun Park 2. Hyowon Hyun 3. Toulany Thvisay	2021	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	Social media information increase consumer purchase intention.

2.3 Information credibility

Information credibility refers to the perceived trustworthiness and believability of information or sources (Loh & Chiang, 2022; Lin & Bautista, 2018). According to Song et al. (2021), credibility refers to users' perceptions of information quality. It is a multidimensional concept encompassing various dimensions, such as trustworthiness, expertise, validity, and truthfulness (Balouchi et al., 2017; Loh & Chiang, 2022). Both individual cognitive processes and social interactions can influence credibility assessment. Credibility judgments are not solely based on individual effortful processing but can also be influenced by social cues and heuristics (Metzger et al., 2010). In addition, heuristic evaluative strategies allow individuals to make quick judgments about credibility based on limited information or cues, as individuals may rely on the source's reputation or the consensus of others to determine credibility (Metzger et al., 2010). Furthermore, for example, for advertising, credibility refers to the perceived truthfulness and believability of the information in the advertisement. In contrast, advertiser credibility refers to the perception of a company as a credible source of information (Lin & Bautista, 2018).

The information credibility also impacts electronic word-of-mouth on e-loyalty and consumers' e-purchase decision-making process. Information credibility describes where individuals perceive recommendations, comments, or reviews as believable and trustworthy. The credibility of the information the online community shares via social networking sites is crucial in influencing consumers' trust and purchase decisions (Perera et al., 2019). In addition, information credibility positively influences perceived usefulness and information sharing on social media (Le, 2023)—the importance of reputation, expertise, and honesty in judging information credibility. Trust in information quality and credibility is crucial, especially in sensitive discussion topics (Savolainen, 2021). As for Croatian adolescents, source attributes such as competence, trustworthiness, expertise, and knowledge in determining information credibility for everyday life decisions (Kolarić, 2022). Other than that, Trust the source enhances the perception of message credibility, enabling individuals to benefit more from the information provided. Source credibility is vital in reducing perceived risk and increasing the value individuals attach to information (Botha, 2023).

Table 2: Study on information credibility and purchase intention

Authors	Years	Journals	Finding
1. Ahmad Daowd 2. Ruaa Hasan 3. Tillal Eldabi 4. Piyya Muhammad Rafi-ul-Shan 5. Dongmei Cao 6. Naphat Kasemsarn	2021	Journal of Enterprise Information Management	the credibility of eWOM has a significant impact on consumer purchasing intention
1. Safdar Hussain 2. Wasim Ahmed 3. Rana Muhammad Sohail Jafar 4. Ambar Rabnawaz	2017	Computer in Human Behavior	eWOM source credibility influence consumer decision making to purchase.

2.3.1 Valence Information

From various perspectives, valence information refers to the positive or negative evaluation or emotional quality associated with a concept, stimulus, or information. It is crucial in different domains, such as affective neuroscience, memory, consumer behavior, and chemistry. Valence information influences the decision either to the positive or negative nature of the affective response, while strength represents the intensity or magnitude of the affective

response (Morris et al., 2003). In cognitive processing, valence information plays a role in various tasks and behaviors (Reggin et al., 2021). Valence information plays a role in the cognitive processing of information variables, reflecting the cognitive effort and searching devotion involved in acquiring valence-related information. (Li et al., 2021). Furthermore, Liu et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of valence in online reviews, as it serves as an indicator of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) information that influences consumers' judgments where the valence information, whether positive or negative, plays a significant role in shaping consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards products or services. Similarly, Shabbir (2022) highlights that negative information, reviews, and stereotypes influence consumer behavior more significantly than positive information.

Valence information is crucial to understanding and measuring electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) online. Researchers have identified valence as one of the critical dimensions of e-WOM, along with volume and content (Gohar et al., 2019). Studies have shown that valence information in e-WOM significantly impacts consumer behavior and purchase intentions. Positive valence e-WOM, which includes positive opinions and recommendations, can enhance trust in products and companies, influencing consumers' online shopping intentions. On the other hand, negative valence e-WOM, which includes negative opinions and criticisms that create doubts and concerns about products, services, or brands, decreases purchase intentions (Hajli, 2022). Valence information in e-WOM is particularly relevant on social media platforms, where users freely generate and disseminate information about brands and products, and social media provides a fast and accessible medium for e-WOM, allowing users to share their opinions and experiences with a broad audience (Zheng, 2023). According to Amatulli et. al., (2020), to evaluate the influence of affective commitment, high-sacrifice commitment, and satisfaction on customers' e-WOM regarding an online retailer, they found that satisfaction and high-sacrifice commitment significantly impact both the volume and valence of e-WOM, while affective commitment only influences e-WOM valence. Understanding valence information in e-WOM is crucial for businesses and marketers; Zheng (2023) and Hall (2018) highlight the importance of social media marketing activities and the differences in responses to brand equity based on gender. It indicates that valence information on social media can influence consumers' perceptions and responses to brands.

Table 3: Study on valence information and purchase intention

Authors	Years	Journals	Finding
1. Nick Hajli	2020	Information Technology & People	Valence Information influence consumers purchase intention.
1. Gobinda roy 2. Biplab Datta 3. Srabanti Mukherjee 4. Rituparna Basu 5. Avinash K. Shrivastava	2021	International Journal Technology Marketing	different types of eWOM valence have different levels of effects on online purchase intention.

2.3.2 Purchase Intention

Berger (2014) stated that the meaning of purchase intention is Consumer willingness to consider buying, buying intention in the future, decision repurchase, and degree of perceptual conviction of a customer to purchase a product or service. Purchase intention is a combination of consumer interest and the possibility of buying a product (Kim & Ko, 2012). Purchase intention refers to the inclination or likelihood of a consumer to purchase a specific product or brand. It measures consumers' intention to buy a particular product (Davtyan et al., 2020). Purchase intention is influenced by various factors, including self-concept congruency, product attitudes, actual and ideal self-concept, brand memory, brand preference, consumer

attitudes, perceived behavioral control, food neophobia, subjective norms, environmental concern, perceived service quality, trust, and perceived risk (Chang et al., 2019; Putra & Lestari, 2023; Khalid et al., 2018). When a product is described as congruent with viewers' self-concept, it elicits higher purchase intention compared to a similar product that does not match viewers' self-concept, and the closer a product's image matches the buyers' self-concept, the higher the purchase intention for that product (Hong & Zinkhan, 1995). Other factors that influence purchase intention include consumer attitudes and perceived behavioral control. Consumer attitudes and perceived behavioral control have been found to influence purchase intention significantly (Chang et al., 2019). Perceived service quality, trust, and perceived risk also shape purchase intention in online shopping (Putra & Lestari, 2023). Other factors influencing purchase intention include consumer evaluation, functional experience, emotional experience, and product characteristics such as connectivity, interactivity, telepresence, intelligence, convenience, and security (Chang et al., 2014). Consumer evaluation and feelings arising from their experience can influence attitudes, future purchase intention, and the willingness to recommend a product to others (Chang et al., 2014). Sadli (2022) found that consumers' sensory, emotional, and cognitive experience will influence their intention to purchase. Purchase intention is significantly important for businesses and marketers as it directly influences consumer behavior and ultimately affects sales and profitability. Understanding and influencing purchase intention can increase customer acquisition, retention, and brand loyalty (Shaouf et al., 2016). One of the key reasons why purchase intention is important is concerning actual purchase behavior. When consumers have a high purchase intention for a product or brand, they are more likely to follow through and make the purchase (Shaouf et al., 2016). Moreover, Trust towards product or services also may influence consumer purchase as it shapes consumer behavior (Farah et al., 2022).

eWOM shares opinions, experiences, and recommendations about products or services through online platforms. A synthesis of the findings about the Quality and Quantity of eWOM, where the quality and quantity of eWOM information positively impact purchase intention (Park et al., 2007). Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer purchase intention, with several critical factors, including trust and credibility, that influence this dynamic relationship. Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) significantly influences purchase intention (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Consumers tend to trust recommendations from credible sources such as influencers or reputable online platforms, and consistency across multiple sources reinforces trust, positively impacting purchase intention. Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) significantly influences purchase intention, where consumers rely on eWOM information shared on social media platforms to make informed purchase decisions (Cong & Zheng, 2017). The quality of information shared through eWOM channels significantly impacts consumers' decision-making processes. The quality of eWOM information plays a vital role in shaping consumers' perceptions and purchase intentions. High-quality information, characterised by relevance, accuracy, and completeness, positively influences purchase intention. Consumers are more likely to trust and act upon eWOM when the information is of superior quality, providing valuable insights into products or services. The more pertinent and complete the information, the more significant its impact influences consumers' purchase intention. Additionally, information credibility is a crucial factor in the eWOM-consumer purchase intention nexus. Consumers are more inclined to trust and act upon recommendations when the information source is credible. Factors such as the reputation of the reviewer, the platform where the eWOM is shared, and the overall trustworthiness of the information source contribute to the credibility of eWOM. Credible eWOM enhances consumer confidence, positively impacting their intention to purchase. Other than that, Consumer involvement is another critical factor influencing the relationship between the credibility of eWOM and purchase intention. Higher levels of consumer involvement led to greater perceived credibility of eWOM, positively affecting eWOM acceptance and intent to purchase (Cong & Zheng, 2017). Higher consumer involvement led to greater perceived credibility of eWOM, positively affecting eWOM acceptance and intent to purchase. High-involvement

consumers are influenced by the quality of eWOM, while low-involvement consumers are more influenced by the quantity of eWOM (Park et al., 2007). Valence information, which conveys the positive or negative sentiment expressed in eWOM, is another significant determinant of consumer purchase intention. Positive valence information stimulates favourable attitudes and intentions towards a product or service, influencing consumers to purchase. Aligning with Cong and Zheng (2017), Positive eWOM information conveying authentic and reliable evaluation of products or services can generate a positive attitude toward the brand and increase purchase intention. Positive eWOM information perceived as reliable and trustworthy can generate a positive attitude toward the brand and increase purchase intention (Park et al., 2007). Conversely, negative valence information may deter consumers from engaging in a transaction. The emotional tone conveyed through eWOM plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' perceptions and, consequently, their purchase intentions. Social influence is another factor where positive eWOM serves as social proof, indicating that a product or service is well-received by peers. The viral nature of eWOM amplifies its impact, reaching a broader audience and influencing purchase intention. To optimise the impact of eWOM on consumer purchase intention, businesses should focus on fostering high information quality, building credibility in their online presence, and actively managing the valence of the information shared. Positive eWOM and social media activities can, directly and indirectly, improve purchase intention by enhancing brand image (Solihin & Ahyani, 2022). A favourable brand image can influence consumers' purchase intention (Solihin & Ahyani, 2022). Second is a Brand image, which mediates eWOM and purchase intention (Solihin & Ahyani, 2022). Encouraging satisfied customers to share positive experiences can enhance the overall positive valence associated with a brand, while promptly addressing and resolving negative feedback can mitigate potential adverse effects on purchase intention. eWOM's influence on purchase intention is complex, encompassing trust, credibility, information quality, valence, social influence, and emotional connections. Businesses that actively manage and cultivate positive eWOM while constructively addressing negative feedback can leverage this influential communication channel to drive consumer purchasing decisions. The interplay between eWOM and consumer purchase intention is intricate, with information quality, credibility, and valence information as critical factors. Businesses that strategically manage these elements can leverage the power of eWOM to influence consumers' purchasing decisions positively.

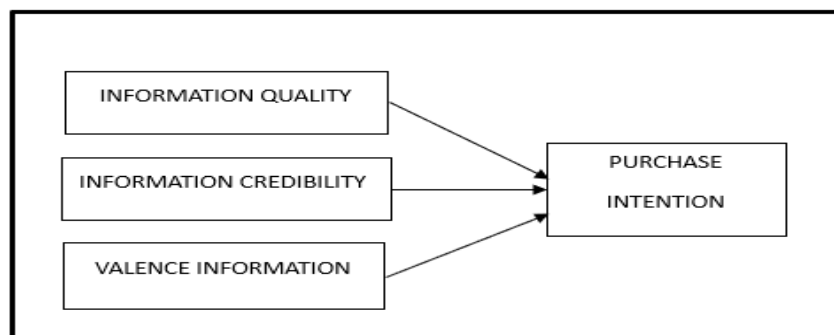


Fig 1: Conceptualization of eWOM information consumer purchase intention

3 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this conceptual paper has endeavoured to elucidate the intricate relationships between information credibility, valence information, information quality, and their collective impact on consumer purchase behaviours across diverse industry landscapes. Through an extensive review and theoretical synthesis, this paper has underscored the paramount significance of these variables in shaping consumer decision-making processes. The synthesis of existing literature has illuminated the complexities inherent in how consumers perceive and evaluate information, respond to valence content, and subsequently translate

these perceptions into purchase behaviours within different sectors. This strategy serves as a stepping stone towards a more comprehensive understanding of the nuanced interactions among information credibility, valence information, information quality, and consumer behaviour. It underscores the imperative for businesses to adapt and optimize their information strategies in response to evolving consumer perceptions and preferences, fostering enhanced consumer engagement and driving favourable purchase outcomes across diverse industry landscapes.

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