NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

BUSINESS ADMINISTRAION PROGRAM

THE EFFECT OF eWOM ON CONSUMER TRUST AND PURCHASING INTENTION ONLINE

LAVAN ABDULLAH

MASTER'S THESIS

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I LAVAN ABDULLAH hereby declare that this dissertation entitled 'EFFECT OF eWOM ON CONSUMER TRUST AND PURCHASING INTENTION ONLINE' has been prepared myself under the guidance and supervision of '**Asst Prof Dr Ahmet Ertugan'** in partial fulfilment of the Near East University, Graduate School of Social Sciences regulations and does not to the best of my knowledge breach and Law of Copyrights and has been tested for plagiarism and a copy of the result can be found in the Thesis.

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DEDICATION

To my family and the one and only Zand

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

The effect of eWOM on consumer trust and purchasing intention online

Many researchers have been focusing on the influence of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and consumer purchasing intention online. This research aimed to understand the effect of eWOM on customer purchasing intention online as well as the effect of eWOM on consumer trust and the effect of consumer trust on customer purchasing intention online. A conceptual model was constructed from the literature and hypotheses were developed from the model. The hypotheses were tested through a survey method design which comprised a questionnaire where the concepts involved were measured through attitude statements. Respondents were drawn out a convenient sample of 200 male and female undergraduate students studying at the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Near East University, North Cyprus. The data collected were analysed using a statistical software program IBM SPSS 24. The results revealed that consumer trust has a mediating effect between eWOM and consumer purchasing intention online.

ŐZ

EWOM'un tüketici güveni ve çevrimiçi satın alma niyetine etkisi

Birçok araştırmacı internet üzerindeki söylentilerin (eWOM) internet alışverilerindeki müşteri satın alma niyeti üzerindeki etkisini araştırmaya odaklanmıştır. Bu araştırma da hem bu ilişkiyi hem de bu iki kavram arasındaki müşteri güven kavramının aracı değişken olarak rolünü anlamaya çalışmıştır. Yazın taramasından elde edilen bilgilerle bir kavramsal model geliştirilip hipotezler formüle edilmiştir. Anket yöntemi kullanılarak kavramlar arasındaki ilişki tavır beyanları olarak ölçülmüştür. Ankete katılan Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesiden gelen 200 öğrenci kolaylık örnekleme yöntemiyle seçilmişlerdir. Toplanan veriler IBM SPSS24 statistik proğramı kullanılarak incelenmiştir. Alınan sonuçlara gore müşteri güveninin eWOM ile internette müşteri satın alma niyeti kavtramları arasında aracı etkisi olduğu gözlemlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: eWOM, tüketici güveni, çevrimiçi satın alma, sosyal medya

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to briefly introduce the subject matter of this study and also the background information leading to this particular focus of study. Furthermore, this chapter seeks to enlighten the reader to the problem statement that guides this research and in particular the hypotheses made at the beginning of the study. The purpose of these is to seek and resolve the estimates included in this assertion and formulate a foundational basis upon the gathered information guiding the study. It also presents the research model which will function as the framework of the research and brings to light the relationships between the dependent and independent variables which are the primary guideline assumptions of this project. As with any particular work of literature.

1.2 Research background

Traditionally, before the case of technology and media growth, there were means of communication and study, but the issue then was that the system was associated with various difficulties and loopholes, making it hard to communicate freely and make individual decisions. As human beings grow and countries grow, these challenges or issues become increasingly complex and complicated until contemporary techniques, as in this age, social media

networks and eWOM are involved (Hudson and Thal, 2013). This research seeks to investigate the effect of eWOM (word of mouth online) on customer purchasing intention online with the concept of consumer trust as the moderator. The investigations will be quantitative and survey type.

Whenever buying decisions are made, consumers are always looking for interpersonal sources of data about the item or service called word of mouth (WOM) or electronic word of mouth (eWOM) when online. Whether electronic or not, WOM is understood to be information about a product from a source not paid for or linked to the organization offers. Social network sites have changed the face of marketing as consumers can now easily compare different brand offering with support to each other through the other users of social networks as reviews. These reviews are named at word of mouth online, or in other words, eWOM which is also defined as oral communications between the individuals involved in the receiver and the communicator form for which the receiver is a non-commercial in relation to a product, brand or even service and the promotion of the traditional word of mouth (eWOM) used in the process of marketing communications, product advertising and brand allegiance (Li-yin, J. I. N, 2007).Web, mail, online communities and online networking sites allow the other customers to associate, offer feelings, and read information. People use the information available online for a variety of ways, and this also affects their opinions, considerations and purchasing intentions.

With the traditional WOM, customers and consumers are searching for other experiences related to the item or product of interest that may be challenging but at the point of moving into an online method, a simple search for the item or product or a visit to any of the different sites allows customers to view reviews and information about the product posted by the other purchasers who have obtained it. The item or brand was used or regarded. Customers can visit distinct websites and observe distinct opinions of a product, item or group and even compare them with other alternative products that can meet the same requirements.

There is, however, a clear distinction between eWOM and WOM because the source of data linked to the WOM tends to be familiar while information or eWOM is unknown. That is the source of information in WOM is likely to be known to the purchaser or have any other link or association with them (the source) that allows them to access the item, product or brand.On the other hand, only the name of the user and the information they posted or an image can be known as the eWOM data source. Most of the moment, the evaluation comes from an unidentified source and the primary link for the same item is the potential enthusiasm.

Meanwhile, there is a kind of eWOM called online survey, where buyers who acquired or regarded the item present in particular on the item web page delineate their feeling or concept of execution or part of the item. Additionally, the items feeling and rating or examination incorporate short profile information on the buyer (source) posting the audit including group survey evaluation of analysts showing the clear estimation of the previously posted audit and the unique item received or purchased.This is important because clients think and trust the unknown interest users' information more than the company or organization's data. This means that eWOM is seen as having significance and would be more influential than marketing content or advertising over purchasing decisions, expecting the message to be represented at the same level.

1.3 Problem statement

The basic assumptions and challenges associated with the buying options or decisions on traditional WOM have been changed because of social media development (Hudson and Thal, 2013). Previously, there were a lot of problems being confronted by the consumers in making purchasing decisions. These problems include the inability of the consumers to make purchase decisions as the information on the product or brands are relatively available. Inability to communicate directly and effectively with the producer and make comment about their satisfaction or lay complains about their dissatisfaction on a product. Inability to access the product directly without going to the company and inability

to make public comment or give feedback on the product either positively or otherwise among others. However, a new and powerful means on how buyers engage with product and brand came into existence because of social media invention (Ibid). The finding shows that the word of mouth plays a vital role just like advertising did in transforming neutral or negative thoughts into positive approaches (Buttle, 1998). This is because the choice of consumer or individual evolves four basic stages in making purchasing decisions and they are: elevation, buying, consideration and enjoyment. By buying it means that it is more likely that buyers reach out to marketers and other sources will shape the customer's decision more than the marketer's effort to persuade the consumers. The organizations do no longer have the unique and sole power to convince the consumers because of the presence of social media and eWOM (Hudson and Thal, 2013).Meanwhile, the online brand community is very convincing at the evaluation stage because they are a non-geographical bound community that people operate on a defined set of social relationship among lovers of the product, item or brand (Hudson and Thal, 2013). Also, at the consideration stage, the social media campaign is used to generate traffic to the company's website and the followers of diverse companies are invited to register and compete by sharing the content of different companies that participate (Hudson and Thal, 2013).

This research aims to understand the effect of eWOM on customer purchasing intention online; it also aims to understand the effect of eWOM on consumer trust and the effect of consumer trust on customer purchasing intentiononline. Put in another way, this research seeks to investigate the role of eWOM on consumer trust and customer purchasing intention online.

1.4 Research model

The research model in "Figure 3.1" assumes that consumer trust causes mediation between the independent variable eWOM and the dependent variable purchasing intention. This causal model assumes the effect in the dependent variable.
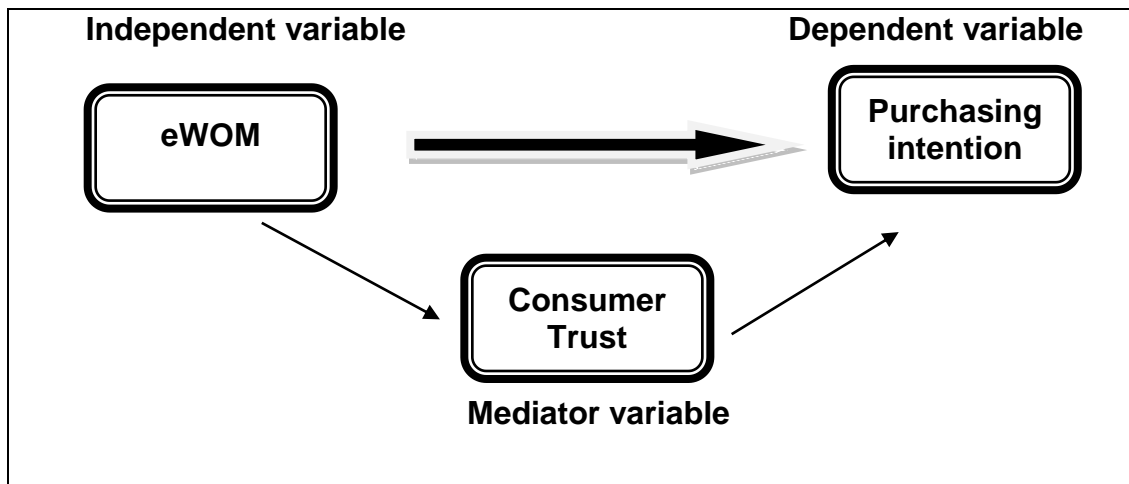
Figure 3.1: Research model

1.5 Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated in the light of the model illustrated with the "Figure 3.1"

H1	eWOM positively affects purchasing intention online
H2	eWom positively affects consumer trust
H3	Consumer trust positively mediates the relationship between eWOM and purchasing intention online

1.6 Research objectives

- The main objective of this study was to ascertain the influence of eWOM on consumer trust and purchasing intention online.
- To ascertain if eWOM helps customers in getting information about a product or brand more than the traditional means (WOM).
- To know the consumers' confidence in purchasing products online.
- To deduce the usefulness of eWOM information to consumers.

1.7 Significant of this study

This study is of paramount importance because many researchers have been focusing on the influence of an electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and consumers purchasing intention behaviour online. Similar research is being conducted in Europe and America where technology is the driven force of the day. However, it is recognised that more efforts are needed in receiving reports from different parts of the world to form a better picture.

1.8 Chapter summaries

Chapter 2:

This chapter is a review of previous research on the word of mouth before the introduction and adoption of social media and social network sites. It further explains how the modern social media emerged and the role it plays in the marketing, society and across the globe. Finally, the effect of eWOM on Consumer trust and customer purchasing intention is also explained using previous research findings.

Chapter 3:

This chapter presented the conceptual framework that guided this study. It showed relationships between the dependent variable, moderating variable and independent variables. It further provided thehypotheses that were to be tested in later chapters in order to fulfil the objectives of the study and answer the research questions.

Chapter 4:

This chapter introduces the concept of the research methodology as well as the type of study, purpose of the study, research design, instruments of data collection and the method of data presentation. This method was chosen to determine the effect of eWOM on the consumers purchasing behaviour or intention and the main aim of the study is to acquire enough information that can be used in answering the research questions and to make a good recommendation.

Chapter 5:

This chapter analyses the results of the research carried out among the students of Near East University, North Cyprus while investigating the effect of eWOM on consumer trust and purchasing intention online. A reliability test was conducted to know the research suitability and how consistency the variables under study were and a descriptive analysis was conducted on the demographic variables so as to differentiate the samples. Linear regression and correlation analyses were carried out to test the hypotheses built on the model.

Chapter 6:

This chapter discusses both the theoretical and empirical finding and analyses the results of the data obtained with the questionnaires. It further states the limitation of the work and makes a conclusion based on the results.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter introduced us to electronic word of mouth as the topic of the study and clearly state the problem background which the challenges that are faced by the consumers when buying a product or want to make a purchase decisions which necessitated the conduction of this research work as well as the objectives of the study and finally concluded with the importance of the research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of previous research on the word of mouth before the introduction and adoption of social media and social network sites. It further explains how modern social media emerged and the role it plays in the marketing, society and across the globe. Finally, the effect of eWOM on Consumer trust and customer purchasing intention is also explained using previous research findings.

2.2 The concept of Word of Mouth (WOM)

The concept of the word of mouth (WOM) has been in existence by academics and practitioners (Lee and Young, 2009). Word of mouth (WOM), which is described as an oral communication between person to person involving the receiver and the communicator for whom the receiver is a non-commercial regarding a product, brand or even service. The word of mouth (WOM) has been the traditional means of communication and marketing techniques before the event of social media and other technological development. The invention of technology advancement with the introduction of social media sites and

networks embraces the word of mouth which is presently regarded as electronic word of mouth (eWOM).

Electronic word of mouth is, therefore, an advancement of the traditional word of mouth (TWOM) formally used in the marketing communication process, product advertisement and creation of brand loyalty which has two groups of referral types. They are customer referral and non-customer referrals (Buttle, 1998). Referrals that are customers initiated emanate through present or old customers who are satisfied with their experiences and they are advocating for the product or brand without being paid.

Although, the company may offer them some incentives to refer to their friends and families. Also, two or more companies may agree to cross-refer customers to each other and this is called reciprocal referrals and is so common in high ranked marketing services. For instance, if a consultant recommends a doctor and vice versa. The level of internal referral may be high within an establishment (Buttle, 1998).

However, consumer online communication and rational information are paramount in any referral marketing (Reingen and Karnan, 1986). This is because there are two premises of consumer's behaviour according to rational information (Reingen and Karnan, 1986). The first one state that unequivocal recognition should be given to the social structural context within which an interaction takes place because interpersonal communication is a social occurrence and the second premise opined that it is important to enabling communication network into a larger one through a social relation between the system actors due to a particular event of informal communication that arises as a result of development and innovations and are conveyed by the interacting individual on social environment.

Meanwhile, so many researchers have argued that eWOM information has an important impact on online buying behaviour. The electronic word of mouth information could adequately increase the buyers doubt shaped from an online

purchase which includes perceived risk, information asymmetry and data absence etc. with the aim of helping customers to make a good buying decision.

The eWOM is an important source for customers to get information on an item or product because a large percentage of customers would look through the online customer's survey. Research showed that half of the youths would buy movies, DCs and games through information provided by eWOM (Godes, 2004), according to (Cheung, 2014). As a piece of eWOM information, online buyer survey on a product is valuable data formed through their previous encountered experiences. As a result, the view is quite persuasive and useful for different customers and for others to make decisions.

Stokes (2002) explored the influence of customers' suggestion on consumer's decision making in virtual community or group in his doctoral paper. In this research, he utilizes three variables (including individual differences, element of proposal and buying target) to describe the influence of electronic word of mouth on the customers' choices. He believed that the trust is the arbiter (mediator) variable and the target was the moderator variable that helps in knowing the influence of eWOM information on the buyers' decision and secondly, the influence of eWOM data trust changes or varied in various purchasing situations and environment

Smith Menon and Siva Kumar, (2005) further talked about the previous result mentioned in their later findings. They conducted an emulation decision-making experiment to research the influence of WOM (word of mouth) on online buying decision making. The two experimental studies exhibited that many of online buyers would actively search for and acknowledged related information to improve data search effectiveness. This shows that the buyers are dependably on high involvement.

The influence of recommendation agents (including characteristics like internalization and familiarity) on the buyer's appropriation expectation or intention and decision making in e-commerce surrounding were studied. The

research contended that internalization and familiarity influenced capacity based trust, consideration based trust and affection based trust or respectability. However, ultimately influence buyers' perception goals or intention and recognize assisted preference. Also, capacity-based trust benevolent based trust and respectability based trust bring the impact of influence based trust (Komiak, 2004).

Cha, M., Mislove, A., &Gummadi, K. P. (2009)divided the variables which influence the eWOM communication into viewpoint. They are a source, message and acceptor. Source here implies expertise amiability and trustworthiness (Roggers, 1995) and religion, character, status, morals etc. message includes feelings, opinions and appeal conclusion. These added to the influencing model of eWOM data on buying or purchasing intention or behaviour. (Xu Lin, 2007) demonstrated the forces or power of eWOM relying upon its credibility. The study discovered five viewpoints that are quality of the relationship between the information distributor and the reader, the dependent of the reader on eWOM communication platform or stage, readers apparent value of the site, risk included and inclination to trust have a paramount positive effect on the eWOM.

To add with, recent research or studies has analyzed the effect of eWOM data on customer online purchasing practices. Lee, D., Kim, H. S., & Kim, J. K. (2011)a utilized experimental study to explain the influence of direction or bearing of electronic word of mouth, websites reputation and brand categories on eWOM communication. This research demonstrated that the effect of negative WOM data is much more paramount than that of positive ones, the effect of eWOM information from the websites with reputation and the type of product or item plays vital moderating roles in the process. The exact exploration on WOM creditability conducted the (Xu Lin, 2007) formed the quality of relationship among the buyers and data publisher, customer dependence on eWOM communication stage, their perceived usefulness of the site, danger included and the propensity to trust plays the vital positive effect of creditability.

(JinLiyins examination, 2007), reveal that the type of eWOM information the direction and the product involved has a paramount influence on the purchasing intention.

2.3 Marketing and social media

Social media, which can be described as a cooperative environment concentrated on the trading of contents. (McCann, 2008), has changed the way we interact, relate, offer, share, and comport our relationship with our family, friends, colleagues, legislators, the media, famous individuals, and organizations alike thereby enabling individual to make decision that favour them most and reject any negative and unfavorable situations and enabled consumers to make decisions toward any product or brand. It gives us a unique forum not just to get content like traditional media outlets but to effectively take part in the creation, improvement, dispersion of element and decision-making processes. (McCann, 2008). states that "social media represent a development over Web 1.0 as a term to illustrate the evolutions that have impacted the Internet in its most fundamental sense – a movement in how individuals find, read and share news, information, and contents".

It can, however, be described as a union of sociology and technology, altering communication from monologue (one to many) into dialog (many to many), and changing individuals from content reader to content publisher (McCann, 2008). As indicated by (KamelBoulos and Wheeler, 2007), "the second incarnation of the (Web 2.0) has been known as the 'Social Web', because, as opposed to Web 1.0, its contents can be more effectively created and distributed by the users, and the collective intelligence of users energizes more democratic use". All-inclusive McCann considers social media to have as a lot of an effect on society and consumers as other media stages have had it in the past including newspapers, radio, TV, and Web 1.0 considering their "collective application." Similarly, Shirky (2009) states that since social media are "sufficiently adaptable to coordinate our social capacities", they oversee the ascent of the "better approaches for organizing group activity". He goes ahead to say that social

media have been "drastically modified" the way groups convey, collect, and manage each other. Thus, division lines are vanishing between the content suppliers and the buyers as the consumer expecting to be the part of an information supplier which enables them to make purchasing decisions (Giurgiu and Barsan, 2008). Social media applications, social networking sites, video sharing site, blogs, message board, virtual groups, immensely multiplayer web recreations, and texting.

This distinctive user-created environment permits the word of mouth to be expressed electronically and it seems to be what energizes the achievement, continuous adoption, and exponential development of social media use. To outline, a late study piloted by (Akar, et al., 2011) found that grown-up Americans are expanding generally every day because of the use of social media in their daily activities which supplies them useful information and allows them to make cogent decisions. Be that as it may, Americans are spending more time online than earlier years – almost three hours for each day more than previously reported. As indicated by (Akar, et al., 2011), in which about three hours a day grown-up Americans spend online, almost half of the time is spent on the social media sites – a 25% expansion from 2009. In addition, a recent survey conducted by (Harris Interactive, 2011) found that 65% of American grown-ups are utilizing social media constantly, compared to just 26% in 2009 – about a 40% expansion in social media adoption in only two years. These numbers demonstrate the principle of relative consistency in that time spent with media, as a rule, remains the same over the years though, the allocation of the time might be spent through with various media as new media advance (Gruen, T. W., Osmonbekov, T., &Czaplewski, A. J., 2006).

The concurrence of correspondence and the unmistakable shots make content scattered on an open stage seem, by all accounts, to be the supporting of the grasping of this advancement. Clients' Sentiment toward Marketing (CSM) is a variable considered by specialists to gauge how well buyers will see online networking as a system that connects both the purchasers and the item to the

association. Clients' Sentiment toward Marketing is characterized as general emotions that clients have for showcasing and the commercial centre as alluded to by (Mady, 2011). An individual's view of the in general feelings a customer has plays a vital role in whether they are motivated to share in consumption activities Mady, (2011). To make a fruitful marketing effort by means of social media, a customer must be interested in the technology. Customer technology readiness is defined as "individuals'' propensity to clinch and utilize new technology for achieving objectives in home and work". Consumer technology readiness is vital for retailers to recollect when marketing on the social network because if their planned target market does not utilize social media, is not acquainted with it, or sees it adversely, then their social media marketing will be unrewarding. Analysis of technology readiness can figure out whether marketing through the social network would be a solid match for a retailer's objective market

The Innovation Adoption Process (IAP) is another instrument that gives data on a shopper's affirmation of development. The IAP is the drive-through which an individual encounters the advancement choice process (Rogers as alluded to in Mady, 2011). Five stages make up the procedure: learning of the improvement, shaping a perspective toward the advancement, choosing to grasp or reject the headway, use of the advancement, and confirmation of the improvement (Mady, 2011). Learning of IAP can help advertisers or association to get online networking promoting effort that is fulfilling.

Social media and social networking have advanced from recently giving an individual the chance to remain in contact with their family and companions. Presently it is a place where customers can take in more about their most fancied associations and the items they offer. Organizations and retailers are utilizing these media as another way to deal with convey to the purchasers and give another simple and advantageous way to deal with shop. innovation-related enhancements, for instance, the climb of proficient web crawlers or web crawlers, propelled cell phones and interfaces, peer vehicles to peer, and online

an online interpersonal organization, have built up advertisers' ability to accomplish clients through new touch focuses" (Shankar et al., 2011). Consumer marketing is another idea that has been developed, creating another touchpoint for the interactions between organizations and clients. consumers marketing is "the planning and execution of all promoting exercises that impact a customer along and past, the whole way of procurement, from the time when the inspiration to shop first develops through buying, utilization, repurchase, and proposal" (Shankar et al., 2011). Perceived fit is an imperative factor for retailers to consider for customer marketing; perceived fit is the measure of similarity between an expanded item category and existing items associated with the brand (DelVecchio and Smith, 2009). Providing shopping services on social media can give business development to retailers because of the different customers who use social network sites. The extensive number of consumers using social media implies that most target markets can be achieved (Cha 2009).

This gives a good platform to retailers to promote their image, brand or product to potential buyers. As indicated by Sen, et al., (2007), consumer marketing can unite with clients to enhance an item, pass clear messages, recognize promoters, and fill in as a promoter with in-store works out, along these lines showing the criticalness of online networking inside a retailer's showcasing game plan. Movements inside online networking destinations have made buyers groups that are portraying new courses in which associations and customers can speak with each other to share data on the brand item. For example, virtual brand groups are making a PC producing space for purchaser and retailers to connect with each other through promoting. online networking showcasing as an "amongst items and the shopper, [while] offering an individual channel and cash for clients or clients centred network and social media interaction." The devices and methodologies for communication with clients have changed enormously with the development of social media.

The literature defines social media as a group of Internet-based applications thatbuild on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 technology, andthat allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Bianchi & Andrews,2015; Chang et al., 2015; Kaplan &Haenlein, 2010). Kaplan and Haenlein (2011)and Sashi (2012) define social media marketing as electronic-word-of-mouth (DiPietro et al. 2013) and as a sort of marketing message of a firm, brand, or product.Despite buyers' strong enthusiasm, many firms remain skeptical about embracingsocial media to assist the marketing function (Ferreira et al., 2014; Sashi, 2012;Bruhn et al., 2012).

Social media have changed the classic business dynamics. Through more efficientcommunication means, such as weblogs, social networks, social bookmarking sites,wikis, and virtual worlds (Curran & Lennon, 2011), social media facilitate promotionamong dispersed individuals with seemingly, marginal concerns (Rodriguez,Peterson, & Krishnan, 2012), they foster mutual enrichment through conversation,exchange, and participation (Whelan et al., 2011) and they reduce transactionand coordination costs. In addition, social media platforms allow salespeople tocoordinate internal value-creating functions and deliver superior value in customerrelationships. In doing so, they representan important marketing strategy in which organizations build relationships withcustomers (Agnihotri et al., 2012; Culnan et al., 2010). Social media also capturethe attention of managers. A recent global survey of managers has found that almosthalf of the buyers pay attention to social media's role when involved in the buyingprocess (Agnihotri, et al., 2012).

This expanded role of social media platforms can better contribute to improvingdecision making than traditional methods (Bruhn, et al., 2012) on purchase intention.

2.4 The role of the Word of mouth in the marketing process

Word of mouth (WOM) evolves oral and individual discussion through communication (Buttle, 1998). It is an informal showcasing interaction (Reingen and Karnan, 1986). The communicator is seen by the receiver as a non-commercial regarding a brand, product or service (Buttle 1986). WOM reflects the behaviour of consumers getting and giving out useful marketing information to other consumers (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2013).

Word of mouth came into existence as a result of social interactions which was initiated to satisfy individual needs (Alenxandrov, Lilly and Babakus, 2013). Motivating good word of mouth is solely the need for self-enhancement and a negative WOM is basically driven by the need of self-affirmation. Self-enhancement was said to be the motive for expanding WOM just as an opportunity also drive the spreading of the word (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2013).

Awareness, expectation, attitudes, perceptions and behaviour are all influenced by the word of mouth (Buttle, 1998). More so, some research showed that there are many reasons why an individual involves in the word of mouth. These reasons among others include loyalty, commitment, trust, quality and value which are paramount drivers of the word of mouth (Alexandrov, Lilly and Babakus, 2013). WOM influences decisions either in positive ways or negative manners and negative WOM are more powerful than positive WOM (Buttle, 1998). In addition, findings reveal that where negative word of mouth prevails so much there is a tendency of high-level positive WOM (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2013). However, literature shows that word of mouth is more memorable than negative WOM, (Ibid). They (WOM) are affected by emotion and this could be expressed through achievement, confirmation seeking and achieving therapeutic feelings (Alexandrov, Lilly and Babakus, 2013). Negative word of mouth has a strong effect on the receiver if it comes from a dissatisfied customer more than a positive WOM that is opined by satisfied clients. This implies that a negative WOM draws more attention because of the infrequency, making it more surprising (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2013).

WOM communication significantly affects the customer's behaviour or conduct. It is the most critical element that influences sales growth (Bonfrer, 2010). WOM is has been described as an individual to individual communication is featured with valance, focus, solicitation and intervention. Valance can be demonstrated when there is good news, statement and endorsement anticipated by an organization and expressed which gives rise to a positive word of mouth. Findings prove with evidence that management can influence the continuity and path of WOM by the complaint management procedures, servicing recovering programs and unconditional service guarantee on the after-sales service (Buttle 1998)

Furthermore, one of the early studies, particularly about WOM, was led by (Cheung, C. M., Lee, M. K., &Rabjohn, N. (2008)and they discovered that WOM is the most vital wellspring of information for household items. Besides, included that in terms of high risk, a man is significantly prone to be impacted by WOM. Researchers also contributed their findings across a wide range of items (Engel, Kegerreis and Blackwell, 1969) and further differentiated between positive and negative WOM. From one viewpoint, findings showed that buyers will always share negative WOM because of their disappointment with an item or an administration to keep others from purchasing such a product.

However, (Cheung, C. M., Lee, M. K., &Rabjohn, N. (2008) pointed out that there are some consumers in every society or community who are highly respected, credible and has more influence than others that can simply be regarded as an opinion leader. They are known to be more involved in social activities than others; they spend more time on a product and share their experience with the product or item.

2.5 The adoption of the electronic word of mouth (eWOM)

The development of technology and creation of social media has taken the traditional Word of Mouth (TWOM) into the Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

and it is different from the formal with better and easy access (Cheung and Lee, 2012). Consumers may access the eWOM through an email, chat room, social media, websites and blogs etc. However, a lack of social media in eWOM forces the consumer to evaluate it persuasiveness based on the content character (Zhang, 2010). Unlike the traditional word of mouth, eWOM holds extraordinary scalability and the speed of diffusion (Cheung and Lee,2012) with no closeness between the communicator and the listener's many ways of spreading information are also part of the electronic word of mouth communication system (Cheung and Lee, 2012). Also, eWOM can easily be managed compared to the traditional Word of Mouth (Ibid).

In addition, the electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is more measurable, unlike the traditional methods which occur because of the presentation format, quality and persistence. Through eWOM, the ability of the receiver to make a judgement on the communicator or the sender is so reduced in most cases (Cheung and Lee, 2012).

Recently, the electronic word of mouth has received an important managerial and theoretical attention which has made it a vital factor in shaping the customer's behaviour because the information is very influential between the customer owing customers opinion site. Interaction between the consumers also affects the online consumer's opinion platform participation (Cheung and Lee, 2012).

Prominent research on eWOM communication motives identified four key emotional categories of positive WOM communication and they are: focused related, consumption utility, moderator related and homeostasis (Cheung and Lee, 2010).

According to some reviews, negative messages are seen to be more persuasive more than positive ones while other theories conversely oppose the assumption (Zhang, 2010). Research proved vital simple effects indicate that participants that the positive products review is more persuasive more than the negative

ones when they examined the product associated with the prevention consumption goals. On the other hand, consumers give a positive comment to any product that is associated with the prevention goals (Ibid). This means that consumers do not give the same perceptions towards positive and negative product review Zhang et al, 2010). The consumption goal consumer relates with a review product determine the consumers' evaluation towards the positive and negative product evaluation.

Some past studies have analyzed that WOM communication on the purchase behavior of the consumers. For instance, (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006) found that online communication essentially influenced the conduct and behavior of the customer to buy the product or an item from different sales points. Be that as it may, what factor quickens or accelerate the impact of electronic word of mouth. For example, research on marketing has constantly advocated and supported the influence the celebrities, message appeal, message sender believability etc. (HennigThuaru et al, 2004, Chevailer and Mayzlin, 2006, Severi and Nasermadeh, 2014).

2.6 Characteristics of electronic word of mouth (eWOM)

In marketing, electronic word of mouth indicates that the consumer makes an active move to encourage WOM. For example, giving an award or gift to the communicators. Meanwhile, a normal word of mouth implies that the communicator is not rewarded by the organization. WOM in marketing involves different sub-categories like buzz, blogs, rival, grassroots and brand advocate, cause influencer, social media marketing. It is an ambassador of programs that works with consumers generated media and this can be highly valued through the product media and performance marketers. After consumer word of mouth was also suggested which works as a counterbalance to generally motivate WOM (Lang, Bodo, Lawson and Rob, 2013).

Research showed that people are more inclined to believe WOM more than other methods of promotional techniques because the listener feels that the

information sender or communicator is more honest without and motive for self-gain or reward. This means that he or she believes that the communicator does not engage in the act purposely because of any pro-profit (Buttle, 1998).

WOM greatly depends on the level of satisfaction a customer derives from a service or product or brand and basically on the perceived value. Furthermore, it encompasses other factors such as valence, timing, focus, solicitation and intervention. Timing can be defined as any expression or comment on the product before or after the sales of that particular product that are made concerning the product. On this note, there is an output and input WOM. Input WOM is expressed as paramount information before the selling of a product while output WOM is been expressed after the sale of that product or consumption experience (Buttle, 1998). Valence is said to take place if the good statement made by the organization about a product yield a positive Word of Mouth (WOM).

2.7 Message source creditability on consumers purchasing behaviour

Source of credibility implies authenticity, and the reliable source means trustworthy, having expertise in its message or whatever it spreads (Self, 1996). The credibility of the source can be assessed by understanding if the source from which the message originates is instructive, masterful and conceivable (Self, 1996). Scientist suggested that different types of attribution of clients have unique effects of persuasion (Laczniak et al, 2001).

Specifically, the attribution hypothesis stated that if the characteristics of the communicator relate to the highlight of the product, there may be more impacts on the consumers of the items or products. If it does not match the features of the recipients, however, the motive behind the message, the messenger's purpose or intent fails. As a result, it is vital that the communicator sends the product review as indicated by the beneficiary characteristics so that consumers can be influenced by this item or product review (Sen and Lerman, 2007). It is important to note that the online customer study on the web can affect the

reader's orientation and persuaded him or her of an item, product or brand which would improve the product or item purchases and even the brand. (Cheung, Luo, Sia and Chen, 2009).

As indicated by a bigger amount of researchers or inquiries about the generally reliable element and the most imperative point of convergence in the operation of impact relies on the source that talks to customers. His experience, reliability and credibility discovered a strong or strong connection with clients buying conduct or intention. Thus, It is assumed that word of mouth communication by a reliable source via an online medium will have a strong influence on the customer's intention to purchase a separate product or brand.

2.8 Appeal message to the consumers

Different scientists have argued that the advertising message is split into conversion or enlightenment (Golan and Zaidner, 2008). Meanwhile, previous study stated that advertising of any item, product or brand may be concerned about the item or the reason for purchasing the item and raising awareness of the product.

Other results indicated that advertising was a request produced to play with the buyer's emotions or emotions (Puts and Wells, 1984).

Kotler, 2008 claimed that the sender of the message should check the type of appeal they may wish to send to their recipients in order to obtain the receivable response, and that the advertisement label should be supported by some kinds of support, benefits and reasons. Because of this fact, by buying the item or service, customers must sell focus to calls or need to appear or show some support.

Interest reviews show distinctive characteristics related to the value of the evaluation. It is imperative that the advertisement has any kind of effect that makes it easy for specialists and researchers to review it fundamentally and accumulate reactions (Rodger and Thorson, 2000). In addition, the substance

that clicks on the customer's feelings may have less impact on the buyer and eventually the buyer may not spread the word of mouth too much but complementary rational appeal showing the buyer's essential needs for more utilitarian consideration of these specialized and useful parts of the item or brand.

2.9 Consumers behaviour towards buying of goods and services

Consumer behavior was dependent on unbelievable marketer excitement. Understanding the behavior of customers enables marketers to see how customers think, feel and choose from decisions such as goods, items, brands, etc. and how they are influenced by their setting, reference, group, family and sales people, etc. Consumer buying behavior is affected by psychological social, cultural and personal factors. Most of these factors are uncontrollable and are still to be considered in the hands of marketers while trying to understand consumer behaviour.

Consumers who are studying processes or processes engaged in selecting, purchasing, using or discarding an item or a product, thought or experience to meet requirements and wishes (Solomon, 1995). In marketing environments, the word customer refers to buying and sampling the complete purchase that includes pre-and post-purchase operations. Pre-purchase movement may involve a growing familiarity of needs or desires, and a search to evaluate the product or brand information that can satisfy it.

Post-purchase activities are referred to as the assessment of the purchased items or products and the reduction of any fear associated with the expensive and uncommon purchased product, each of which has suggestions for purchase and repurchase that are acceptable in different degrees to the impact of marketers. (Foxall, 1987). According to Enjel et al (1986), the behavior of consumers was characterized as the demonstrations of people specifically required to obtain, use and dispose of economic goods and services, including the decision-making process to proceed with and determine this act. Simple

perception gives a limited understanding of the intricate way consumer decisions are made, and research has gradually looked for more refined ideas and research techniques provided by behavioral science to understand and possibly control consumer behavior and behaviour.

2.10 Purchasing intention

Consumers purchasing choice are extremely unpredictable and complex. Generally, purchasing intention which is defined as an individual commitment, decision or plan to execute an action or to achieve a goal is connected with the buying behaviour, attitude, perception and observation or state of mind. Purchasing intention or conduct is an essential key point for the consumers during the consideration and evaluating of a certain product or an item (Keller, 2001).

Mikalef, P., Giannakos, M., &Pateli, A. (2013) expressed that purchase intention is an effective tool use in predicting or anticipating purchasing process. Once the customer chooses to buy the product in a certain store, they will be driven by their own intention. However, purchase intention might be influenced by certain factors such as price, quality, discernment and value observation (Zeithaml, 1998). More so, customers will be hindered by the internal impulse and external environment during the acquiring process. Their behaviours will be driven by psychological inspiration that stimulate their responses which convey them to retail store or location to satisfy their needs.

2.11 The impact Social media on consumer's behavior

Online transaction needs your organisation to take advantage of any benefit or chance to communicate with clients. Social media sites allow higher reach with focus communication than the traditional means that clearly ensure the message of your company. It also enables communication to interact in both

waysbetween the company and customers with a few direct effects on the consumers' behavior (Weibacher, 2001).

In addition, building virtual home for your business through social media and social networking sites provides you with a wide opportunity to increase your perceptibility with consumers or buyers and inviting them to the site will offer you space for free and simple communication. However, on the end of the clients, liberty means that clients can now express their emotions about your product or organization a semi-public setting where various individual can read or see it. Although, this work to your company's benefit or advantage if the conclusion is good and an unfavourable comment could possibly head out the business.

Erasing negative messages from the websites is only a partial variable, as reade rs can post adverse views elsewhere or even create up another page committed to adverse evaluation and your home limitation because strong networks are int ended to create data easy to share, the antagonistic observer can then efficientl y deliver the message to others within the scheme.

2.12 Consumer trust

Trust can be viewed as the most imperative component which impacts the accomplishment of e-commerce exchange. As a result of the uncertainty of the seller's behavior or practice, the perceived risk, loss of individual information through programmer, assault, consumer frequent refusal (Mcknight et al, 2002). Trust plays a key part in helping consumers to overcome hazard and vulnerability. The anticipated variable that impact trust is a typical phenomenon and an online trust formed in an online administration is emphatically identified with the consumer buying intention.

According to the social exchange theory, consumer trust plays a key and vital part of an online transaction. Social exchange theory is about the standard and the direction controlling asset trading among individual (Frenzen and Nakamoto,

1993). These resources incorporate economic value of tangible item or product as a result of word of mouth that is likely viewed as a type of social trade. In this trade, the state of trust will be advanced because of the high level of uncertainty and danger (Molm, Takahasi and Peterson, 2000).

Under customer to the customer environment, the member attempts more hazard or risk than in the real world and because of that, a new meaning of customer trust was given. (Molm, Takahasi and Peterson, 2000) imagined that customer trust is a sort of mentality, a dependable desire that their helplessness would not be assaulted in an online environment. (Pavlou, 2003) held the view that trust in e-business exchange incorporates the respectability and altruism of the trustee.

2.13 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the concept of the electronic word of mouth, its emanation and the role it plays in marketing and communicating processes geared towards showcasing of a product or brand to the public as well as influencing the consumer buying decisions of any product or good and services. It also expatriates, the impact of social media, appeal message, message source credibility and purchase intention of the consumers. It went further to discuss the essentiality of the impact of the social media on the consumers purchasing behaviour, the effect of eWOM on consumer trustshould be overemphasized in advertising and marketing of any product or brand.

CHAPTER 3
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research model, research hypotheses and explains the variables of the model as eWOM, consumer trust and purchasing intention online. It illustrates the relationship between the variables as portrayed in the model.

3.2 Research model

The variables included in this study are; eWOM, consumer trust and purchasing intention online. The dependent variable is purchasing intention online, eWOM is independent variable and consumer trust is the mediating variable between eWOM and purchasing intention online. Previous research and reviews on the influence of eWOM on consumer trust and purchasing intention online revealed and indicated that consumers search for quality information and analyses them (Smith Menon and Sivakumar, 2005). Having got the information and analyzing

it, customers use such information to carry out transactions based on trust which is the most important mediator variable during the buying process. Therefore, eWOM effect leads to consumer trust and this gives rise to the purchase intention and all these depends on the product type which is utilized as the reference factor to explain the eWOM effect on the consumer buying intention.

The research model in "Figure 3.1" assumes that consumer trust causes mediation between the independent variable eWOM and the dependent variable purchasing intention. This causal model assumes the effect in the dependent variable.

Independent variable   **Dependent variable**

| eWOM | → | Purchasing intention |

| Consumer Trust |

Mediator variable
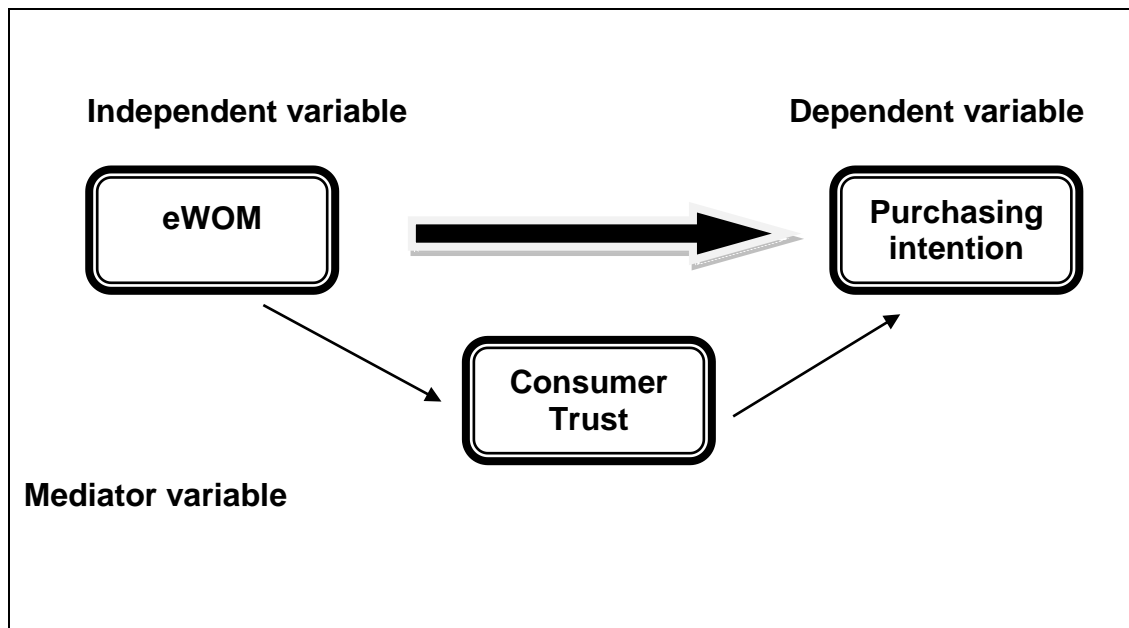
Figure 3.1: Research model

3.3 Hypothesis formulation

After reviewing the relevant literature and with regard to the problem formulation and the development of the theoretical framework of this thesis, three hypotheses have been formulated based on the research model in "Figure 3.1"

as the following will be tested with the help of survey data to support or not to support them.

H1	eWOM positively affects purchasing intention online
H2	eWOM positively affects consumer trust
H3	Consumer trust positively mediates the relationship between eWOM and purchasing intention online

3.4 Consumer trust

Consumer trust play a key and vital role in an online transaction unlike the traditional system of marketing and advertising programs where the buyer has the opportunity and possibility to evaluate and inspect the organization, product, item or even brand before making payment for such product because it is a visual process that cannot be lied about. However, online shopping is different from this and do not give the consumer the avenue or access the product before making the payment. This differentiation creates a certainty, lack of control and anonymity or opportunity. Therefore, a customer could suffer from the risk of getting the exact product as demanded or being advertised on the company's website or the product can even be damaged during the delivering process(Lee, M. K., & Turban, E, 2001). All these and many more are the risks involves in online shopping or marketing as the case may be. As a result, trust is a key factor in the buyer-seller relationship in order to facilitate an online transaction because the online buyer wants to an online seller to be willing and capable of acting in their customer's interest and deals honestly to prove their faithfulness in delivering the desired ordered product or item. Therefore, the customer helps to bridge the gap between the buyer and the seller and this leads to the buying intention.

3.5 Purchasing intention online

Trust, which mean perceptions about others, product, items and even brand attributes a related willingness to become vulnerable to others and enable people to put their faith into action because trust allows you to feel secure about the product, item, brand or object of trust, such that one can move forward without fear despite the risks or uncertainties in this situation (Lee, et al., 2009) Thus, trust in an online business the helps consumers to overcome perceptions of risk in web-based interaction. However, in most of the online shopping sites, the primary objective is to persuade the consumer to make a purchase and this requires that the consumer must be willing to share his or her personal information, such as name, address, and credit card number (Keller, 2001).

Meanwhile, many consumers are scared or suspicious about the functional process of online transactions, it's in transparent processes and effects, and the quality of many products that are offered online but trust helps consumers to overcome all these risks and make their purchases even though they can't access the product as at the time of making the payment yet they believe it will be the best.

3.6Electronic word of mouth (eWOM)

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is defined as the exchange of product or serviceevaluations among people who meet, talk and text each other in the virtual world(King et al., 2014; Yoon, 2012; Barreto, 2014). eWOM is emerging as a moreinfluential knowledge sharing tool than traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) (Katz&Lazarsfeld, 1955). Social media have become among the most prevalent eWOMchannels because of their ubiquity, mobility, and interactivity (French & Read, 2013;Zmuda, 2013). These characteristics enable social media users to communicate andconnect with each other more frequently and more closely (Laroche et al., 2013;Kleina et al., 2015).Despite the benefits of using social media to improve eWOM effectiveness, theeffects of network closeness

and network strength on the diffusion of eWOMremainunclear (Wang et al., 2016).Relevant studies have investigated the key drivers (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Chu& Kim, 2011) of eWOM and their impact on sales (Chevalier &Mayzlin, 2006),on the consumer decision-making process (De Bruyn&Lilien, 2008), and on theattitude toward both brands and websites (Lee et al., 2009). In particular, throughthe social digital media, ad hoc virtual communities and blogs, eWOM providesadditional and highly-customized information related to the research on a social mediaplatform. Then, it measures the popularity and the inclinations for a specific brand, when a product or service is concerned (Casaló et al., 2010; Chan & Li, 2010;Park & Kim, 2008). As a consequence, in the process of choosing what to buy,consumers are compelled to use social media to search for information on possibleproduct or service, to visualize images, and access other's opinions in order togain a larger amount of info to make a more effective choice. According to Bickartand Schindler (2001), eWOM has the potential to reduce the risk, uncertainty, and ambiguity associated with a product or service.Potential consumers thus depend on referrals from their friends, family members,and social networks. In this sense, eWOM becomes a powerful tool for catchingconsumers' attention and influencing their behaviours (Litvin et al., 2008; Chan &Li, 2010).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter presented the conceptual framework that will guide this study. It showed relationships between the dependent variable, moderate variable and independent variables. The chapter provides a hypothesis that will be tested in later chapters in order to fulfill the objectives of the study and answer the research questions. As a result, the following hypotheses have been developed and will be subject to a test to determine their validity.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the concept of the research methodology as well as the type of study, purpose of the study, research design, instruments of data collection and the method of data presentation. It explains the method chosen to determine the effect of eWOM on the consumers trust and purchasing intention online and the main aim of the study which was to acquire enough information that can be used in answering the research questions and to make a good recommendation.

4.2 Research design

We define design as the different methods, procedures, techniques used in data collection and measuring variables in research. According to (Miller, 2009) research design offers new unique learning lessons, directly applied research; research design improves research educational practice, that is to say, advancing their understanding. (Pauwels, 2014) Said that, research design is a confirmation that permits an analyst to measure the level of interference or relationship between variables under study. (Yin R.K, 2014) describes it as a

blueprint that directs you in the right way of achieving your goal or plan for research methodology.

We used quantitative research and therefore, this type of research demands numerical data that will be analyzed and translated all through the research. The design of this research is descriptive in nature and correlative, measuring the different variables dependent variables, moderate variable and independent variable. To determine the real effect, we used structured questionnaires to do the survey and gather the needed primary data.

4.3 Method of collecting data and the measuring instrument

Primary data was collected and used in analyzing the effect of electronic word of mouth on the consumers trust and purchasing intention online and this was achieved using a questionnaire. A questionnaire comprises research questions/ attitude statements as a measuring instrument to gather information on a particular assignment, product, brand or behaviour. The information obtained through the questionnaires is used to make data comparable and agreeable to analysis. Fink,(2003) defined questionnaire as a survey system used in setting objectives in order to obtain data.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections: The first section included the students' personal details. The second section comprised respondents' attitudes on eWOM contained seven, consumer trust four and consumer purchasing intention another four attitude statements all measurable on a 5-point Likert Scale.

4.4 Population and population size

The population is defined as the total number of people residing in a geographical area on which this study is based and the sample size is drawn. At the time of the study (2018-2019 Academic Year Spring Semester) there were a total of 916 active undergraduate students at the faculty of economics and administrative science, Near East University. According to this population a

sample size of 200 was found to be suitable (Sekaran&Bougie, 2013). Questionnaires were randomly distributed by the author, using a face-to-face technique, to 200 undergraduate students. They were instructed to complete the questionnaires and return them directly to the author, so the lecturers never had access to the completed questionnaires. Complete confidentiality was guaranteed and participation was voluntary. The undergraduate students returned 188 of the 200 questionnaires distributed.

The study will focus strictly on a convenient sampling of the students of Near East University, North Cyprus. Therefore, 200 students who have purchased online were sampled from the entire population to be able to deduce the effect of electronic word of mouth on the consumers trust and purchasing intention online.

4.5 Sampling method

Sampling is described as a small part or quantity to show what a whole is like said (Manfred Bruhn, 2012). We used a convenient sampling technique; the sample of 200 participants was selected randomly from students on Near East University campus on June 2019, those that were available and willing to take part in the research. This method was selected due to time constraints and could easily access students, Near East University students were chosen because they were available for the researcher.

4.6 Testing the measuring instrument

The measuring instrument for this research was developed as a questionnaire from the engagement and understanding of literature reviews of different researchers and work have done. There was an initial pilot study on 10 different Near East university students, the aim of the pre-testing was to make sure the attitude statements being asked were simple to understand by participants, personal details not too personal, check for question errors and examine the necessary time taken to answer the questionnaire. This helped to save time and contributed to the reliable data collected.

4.7 Data analyses

In this study, the descriptive statistic wascarried out to demonstrate the demographics of the information, line regression analysis, correlation analysis and other related statistical instruments or approaches were used to analyse the data. Correlation coefficients tests were conducted to examine the nature and level of the relationship among the variables as well as reliability text. Thereafter, an examination on the investigation was composed through these tests which tried to testy the hypotheses of this research. Furthermore, the conclusion was composed on the bases of the analyses.All the analyses were conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software (IBM armonk New York) the p-value of 0.05 was considered significant for all the method.

4.8 Conclusion

Generally, this chapter covers where and how our research data was collected and results received and examined. The aim was to explain the process of how data was collected, the steps through which research design was taken in the survey or study, amount of questionnaires used, how they were tested and the sampling technique used.

CHAPTER 5
DATA ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the results of the research carried out among the students of Near East University, North Cyprus while investigating the effect of eWOM on consumer trust and purchasing intention online and the mediating effect of consumer trust between eWOM and purchasing intention online. Descriptive analysis was conducted on the demographic variables so as to see the composition of the respondents. Correlation and linear regression analyses were carried out to test the hypotheses built on the model.

5.2 Realization rate

A total number of 200 questionnaires were handed out to students on the Near East University. There were 18 questionnaires screened out.

Table 5.1: Realization rate

Total questionnaires handed out	200
Questionnaires screened out	18
Total Questionnaires realized	**188**

5.3 Consistency of the measuring instrument

The following reliability tests were carried out through applying Cronbach a Alpha test on the data obtained from the attitudes statements with the questionnaires. This test is a very popular one for consistency reliability and a coefficient above 0.60 is enough for most of the social science studies (Sekaran and Bougie, 2009). The Cronbach' coefficient alpha for 7 items for the electronic word of mouth questionnaires was 0.796, and consumer trust was 0.755. While purchasing intention online was 0.663.

Table 5.2: Reliability Statistics for the eWOM

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
.796	7

Table 5.3: ReliabilityStatistics for consumer trust

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
.755	4

Table 5.4: Reliability Statistics for purchase intention

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
.663	4

5.4 Descriptive statistics

5.4.1 Demographic analyses of the respondents

There are two sections in the questionnaire. The first part included the demography (gender) of the participants while the second parts contained questions proper.

Table 5.5: Gender demographic statistics

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Male**	83	44.1	44.1	44.1
	Female	105	55.9	55.9	100.0
	Total	188	100.0	100.0	

From the two hundred (188) questionnaires administered, table 5.6 shows that 83 which represent 44.1% are male while 105 which represent 55.9% are female.

Major finding: The number of female respondents was slightly higher than male respondents.

Table 5.6: Descriptive Statistics eWOM

Items	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Dev.
I rarely purchase the latest fashion styles until I am sure my friends approve of them.	2.90	.101	1.388
It is important that others like the products and brands I buy.	2.96	.091	1.249
When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of.	3.00	.094	1.283
I like to know what brands and products make good impressions on others.	3.32	.082	1.125
I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase.	2.91	.089	1.222
If I want to be like someone, I often try to buy the same brands that they buy.	2.45	.095	1.690
I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase.	2.46	.091	1.247
Average	2.8731	.06482	.8881

Major finding: **On average respondents, neither agreed nor disagreed that eWOM affects their online purchasing decisions**.

Table 5.7: Descriptive Statistics Consumer trust

Items	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Dev.
I trust social media websites information to be true.	2.89	.087	1.197
I trust the information on Facebook to be true.	2.70	.078	1.073
The people who post information on social media are trustworthy.	2.73	.075	1.026
I believe that social media has the skills and expertise to meet most members' desires.	3.34	.081	1.114
Average	2.9162	.06113	.83815

Major finding:Onaverage respondents, neither agreed nor disagreed that eWOM affects their online purchasing decisions. However, the respondent slightly agreed that social media has the skills and expertise to meet most members' desires.

Table 5.8: Descriptive Statistics Purchasing Intention Online

Items	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Dev.
Using social media platform helps me to make decisions better before purchasing goods and services.	3.60	.074	1.011
Using social media platform increase my interest in purchasing products and services.	3.59	.079	1.078
If I found out that the utility of a product or service is larger than personal devotion in terms of money, time and energy. I will consider buying this product or service	3.61	.069	.945
I am very likely to buy products and services recommended by my friends on social platforms.	3.38	.073	1.003
Average	3.541	.0519	.7125

Major finding:On average, respondents somehow agreed that they have intentions for purchasing online.

5.5 Correlation Analysis

Correlation describes the degree of relationship between variables that indicates the interrelatedness of data. A relationship gets stronger with high correlation value but the relationship does not exist when correlation value is zero. Pearson coefficient was selected by this study to observe the correlation between variables (Sekaran, U., &Bougie, R. (2016)

"Table 5.10" shows the results of correlations between the dependent variable (purchasing intention online), mediator variable (consumer trust) and the independent variable (eWOM).

Table 5.9: Correlations

Correlations		eWOM	Trust	Ponline
eWOM	Pearson Correlation	1	.433**	.431**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	188	188	188
Trust	Pearson Correlation	.433**	1	.437**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	188	188	188
Ponline	Pearson Correlation	.431**	.437**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	188	188	188
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

eWOM and purchasing online were moderately correlated, $r = .431$, $p<.000$

eWOM and consumer trust were moderately correlated, $r = .433$, $p<.000$

Consumer trust and purchasing online were moderately correlated, $r = .437$, $p<.000$

Major finding: All the variables, eWOM, consumer trust and purchasing intention online were moderately correlated with each other.

5.6 Hypotheses testing

This study tested its hypotheses using regression analysis. The conceptual model of the study included a mediator; therefore, a method was needed to test the meditational hypotheses which were adopted from Baron and Kenny (1986). This method describes steps to measure the mediating effect of a mediator variable. Meditational hypothesis generally assumes that the effect of an independent variable on the dependent variable is being mediated by a mediating variable.

Baron and Kenny (1986) have discussed four steps in establishing mediation:

Step 1: Conduct a simple regression analysis with independent variable predicting the dependent variable.

Step 2: Conduct a simple regression analysis with independent variable predicting mediating variable.

Step 3: Conduct a simple regression analysis with a mediating variable predicting the dependent variable.

Step 4: Finally, conduct multiple regression analysis with independent variable and mediating variable predicting the dependent variable.

Tables 5.10 and 5.11 show the results of regression analyses. Following Baron and Kenny (1986)

Tables 5.10: SimpleRegression between eWOM and purchasing intention online

		Coefficients				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		**Standardized Coefficients**		
Model		**B**	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
1	(Constant)	2.549	.160		15.940	.000
	eWOM	.347	.053	.431	6.506	.000

a. Dependent Variable: POnline
b. Predictors: (Constant), eWOM,

This analysis show that purchasing intention is positively affected by eWOM (β = .431, p< .000).

Tables 5.11: SimpleRegression analysis between eWOM and consumer trust

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.740	.188		9.261	.000
	eWOM	.411	.063	.433	6.551	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Trust
b. Predictors: (Constant), eWOM

This analysis shows that consumer trust is positively affected by eWOM (β = .433, p< .000).

Tables 5.12: MultipleRegressions between eWOM, consumer trust and purchasing intention online

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.093	.184		11.350	.000
	eWOM	.239	.056	.297	4.241	.000
	Trust	.262	.060	.309	4.405	.000

a. Dependent Variable: POnline
b. Predictors: (Constant), eWOM, trust

Table 5.12 depict that consumer trust positively affects purchasing intention online (β = .309, p< .000). Multiple regression analysis shows that the relationship between eWOM and purchasing online is partly mediated by consumer trust. This is because relationship between eWOM and purchasing online is reduced from (β = .431, p< .000) to (β = .297, p< .000) through the mediation of consumer trust.

The **"Figure 5.1"** illustrates these relationships:

C
(β = .431, p< .000).

| eWOM | | Purchasing intention |

a
(β = .433, p< .000).

| Consumer trust |

b
(β = .309, p< .000).

c'
(β = .297, p< .000).

| eWOM | | Purchasing intention online |
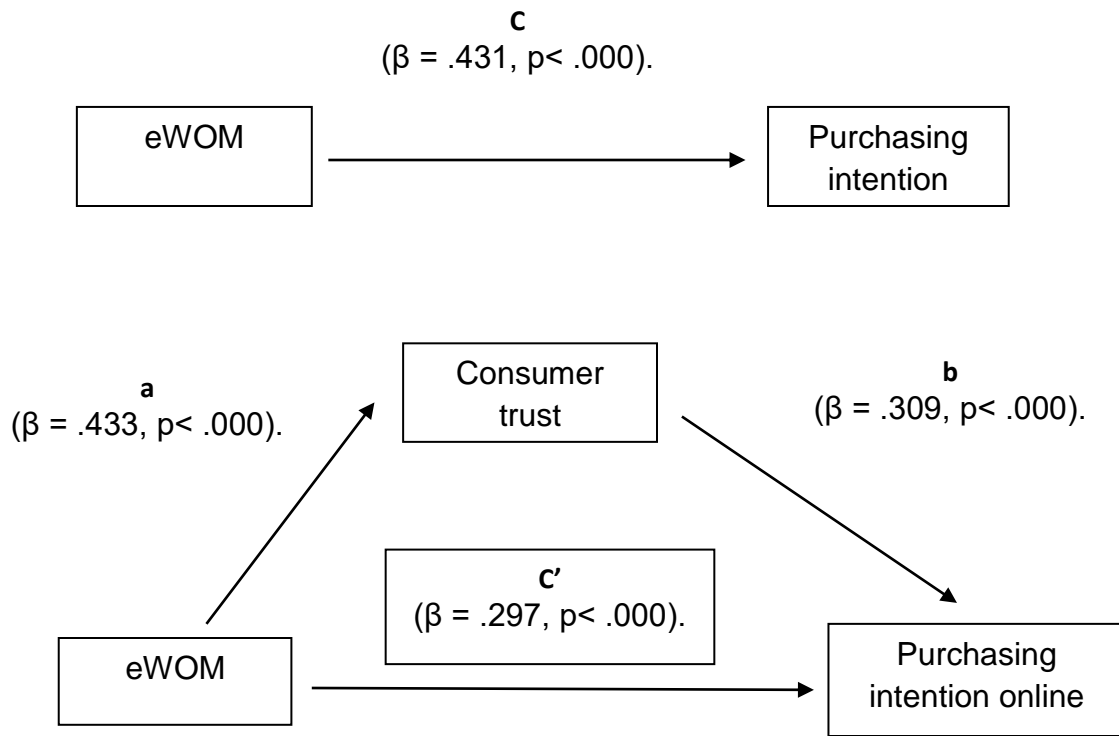
The difference between C and C' is explained the partial mediating effect of consumer trust.

According to the regression analyses above the research hypotheses were supported as in "Table 5.13" below:

Table 5.13: Hypotheses results

H1	eWOM positively affects purchasing intention online	supported
H2	eWOMpositively affects consumer trust	supported
H3	Consumer trust positively mediates the relationship between eWOM and purchasing intention online	supported

5.7Conclusion

This chapter is a presentation of major empirical findings for this thesis study. It commenced with introduction and clearly states the realization rate consisting of the measuring instrument, reliability statistics for trust as well as descriptive statistics. The model of the study was also included. The data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially and regression analysis was also conducted.

Chapter 6

Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses both theoretical and empirical findings and discusses the results in relation to the main question of this thesis study. It also states the study's limit and concludes on the basis of the results.

6.2 Theoretical findings

6.2.1 Electronic word of mouth is an advancement of the traditional word of mouth (eWOM) officially used in the process of marketing communication, product advertising and brand loyalty development with two groups of referral kinds.

6.2.2 The word of mouth (WOM) has been the traditional means of communication and marketing techniques before the event of social media and other technological development.

6.2.3 Social media has changed the way we interact, relate, offer, share, and comport our relationship with our family, friends, colleagues, legislators, the unfavourable, famous individuals, and organizations alike thereby enabling individual to make decision that favour them most and reject any

negative and unfavourable situations and enabled consumers to make decisions toward any product or brand.

6.2.4 Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is more measurable, unlike the traditional methods which occur because of the presentation format, quality and persistence. Through eWOM, the ability of the receiver to make a judgment on the communicator or the sender is so reduced in most cases.

6.2.5 purchase intention might be influenced by certain factors such as price, quality, discernment and value observation

6.2.6 Trust playsthe main role in assisting customers with conquers weakness and risk. (Geffen and Straub, 2000) thought that the expected trust-impact variable is a typical occurrence and that the internet trust created by the internet administration is strongly associated with the intention of the consumer to buy.

6.2.7 eWOM is an important source for customers to get information on an item or product because a large percentage of customers would look through the online customer's survey.

6.2.8 Consumers purchasing choice are extremely unpredictable and complex. Purchasing intention which is defined as an individual commitment, decision or plan to execute an action or to achieve a goal is connected with the buying behaviour, attitude, perception and observation or state of mind.

6.2.9 Expressed that purchase intention is an effective tool use in predicting or anticipating purchasing process. Once the customer chooses to buy the product in a certain store, they will be driven by their own intention.

6.2.10 WOM communication significantly affects the customer's behaviour or conduct. It is the most critical element that influences sales growth.

6.2.11 Expressed that purchase intention is an effective tool use in predicting or anticipating purchasing process. Once the customer chooses to buy the product in a certain store, they will be driven by their own intention.

6.2.12 concept of the word of mouth (WOM) has been in existence by academics

and practitioners.

6.2.13 WOM influences decisions either in positive ways or negative manners and negative WOM are more powerful than positive WOM and findings reveal that where negative word of mouth prevails so much there is a tendency of high-level positive WOM.

6.2.14 WOM in marketing involves different subcategories like buzz, blogs, rival, grassroots, brand advocate, cause influencer, social media marketing and an ambassador of programs that works with consumers generated media and can be highly valued through the product media and performance marketers.

6.2.15 Consumer purchasing behaviour is affected by social, cultural and personal psychological factors. Most of these factors are uncontrollable and are in the hands of the marketers are yet to be considered while attempting to comprehend the behaviour of the consumers.

6.3 Empirical findings

6.3.1 The number of female respondents was slightly higher than malerespondents during this research.

6.3.2 On average respondents, neither agreed nor disagreed that eWOM affects their online purchasing decisions

6.3.3 On average respondents, neither agreed nor disagreed that eWOM affects their online purchasing decisions. However, the respondent slightly agreed that social media has the skills and expertise to meet most members' desires.

6.3.4 On average, respondents somehow agreed that they have intentions for purchasing online.

6.3.5 All the hypotheses of the study were supported. Particularly, it was supported that consumer trust positively mediates the relationship between eWOM and purchasing intention online.

6.3.6   All the variables, eWOM, consumer trust and purchasing intention online were moderately correlated with each other.

6.4 Research objectives

Objective1:The main objective of this study was to ascertain the influence of eWOM on consumer trust and purchasing intention online

The analyses carried out supported the hypotheses that eWOM has a moderate effect on purchasing intention online and also on consumer trust. The analyses also supported the hypothesis that consumer trust has a mediating effect between eWOM and purchasing intention online.

Objective2: To ascertain if eWOM helps customers in getting information about a product or brand more than the traditional means (WOM)

As a piece of eWOM information, online buyer surveys on a product are valuable information formed through their previous encountered experiences. As a result, the view is quite persuasive and useful for different customers and for others to make decisions.

Objective3: To know the consumers' confidence in purchasing products online

Consumers trust the social media websites information to be true therefore; they have the confidence to purchase the product online.

Objective4: To deduce the usefulness of eWOM information to consumers

Consumer online communication and rational information are paramount because it enables consumers to communicate and obtains useful and advantageous information about the product or an item which helps in averting or reducing an online shopping risk or hazards.

6.5 Discussion

After thorough research and investigation, these results which serve as proof to solidify and justify this work were obtained. Through the results or findings revealed that 105 out of the total sampleof the respondents which represent 55.9% are female while 83 which represent 44.1% are male. Respondents showed a negative attitude towards trust in electronic word of mouth. A model was designed for the thesis which aimed at examining three hypotheses in order to show the relationship between the dependent variable, mediating variable and independent variable based on the effect of electronic word of mouth toward consumers trust and purchasing intention online. It further aimed to know about the consumer trust of the respondents which serves as the moderating factor between the dependent and independent variables. Linear regression and correlation analysis test was conducted to analyses the relationship between these factors.

Purchasing online is a recent phenomenon that has attracted research interest mainly in the field of consumer behavior. This research was similar in nature trying to understand the effect of eWOM and consumer trust on consumer purchasing intention online. This research contributes to a better understanding of the ways in which eWOM and the consequent consumer trust influence consumer buying behavior. It reveals a causal relationship between eWOM and consumer trust and also between eWOM and purchasing intention online. It also reveals that there is a mediating effect of consumer trust between eWOM and purchasing online. These results agree with similar findings in literature as Cheng, Rhodes and Lok (2013) suggested that "the "reliability dimension" of brand trust has a mediating effect on online customer reviews' valence to a willingness to buy".

6.6 Limitations

This thesis is limited to the effect of electronic word of mouth on consumer purchasing intention due to time constraints, finance and data collection. Further studies are therefore advised to investigate and research on eWOM from the company's perspective, eWOM is a non-profit organization and finally customers' expectations of companies on social media.

6.7 Recommendations for future research

The future research should also include other eWOM dimensions such as frequency and of online reviews. The findings of this study relate to the characteristics of university students. Other sampling methods should be used in different populations may yield different results.

6.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the growth of information technologies the discovery of an online social network site have totally changed the way information is been carried and disseminated which enable customers and consumers to gather enough information about a product, brand or company before venturing into any transaction on such item or with the company.Therefore, electronic word of mouth positively influences consumer trust and purchasing intention online. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to say that social media and social network sites now play major and an important role in creating awareness, communication and connection of individual as well as placing an advertisement for products, services or brand across the globe. The impact of these media and network sites can be felt or seen in all countries as they are now the trend of the day. Also, if a large number of people assess a product or company and loves it, then this will have a positive influence on the awareness of the product or company and interest the recipients. This is because word of mouth is a well-recognized and most influential source when it comes to information dissemination. Also, this study shown and proved that electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has a positive effect on the consumer purchasing intention because the more products or companies are advertised on the media or network sites, the more awareness people get on such product or company and this will enable the customers to assess and evaluate such product or company which will equally permit them to draw conclusion on such brand, company or an item and as well refer their friends and family to patronize the product.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix I: Research questionnaire

Near East University
Graduate School of Social Sciences
Business Administration Department

THE EFFECT OF eWOM ON CONSUMER TRUST AND PURCHASING INTENTION ONLINE

Dear participant,

The questionnaire below is design as part of my masters' thesis studies that focuses on the effect of eWOM on consumer trust and purchasing Intention online. The information to be obtained will be used for scientific purposes only and not on any circumstances will your contributions other than the general findings will be shared with other persons or organizations.

Your kind assistance on the completion of the questionnaire is needed which will directly affect the outcome of my thesis

Thank you for your time.

LavanTalib Abdullah

Section 1: Personal details

Tick as appropriate ($\sqrt{}$)

1. Do you shop online?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If no, you do not need to carry on

2. Are you a student at Near East University?

Yes ☐ No ☐

3. Your gender?

Male ☐ Female ☐

Section 2

Tick as appropriate (√)

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

Electronic Word of Mouth		1	2	3	4	5
eWOM1	I rarely purchase the latest fashion styles until I am sure my friends approve of them.					
eWOM2	It is important that others like the products and brands I buy.					
eWOM3	When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of.					
eWOM4	I like to know what brands and products make good impressions on others.					
eWOM5	I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase.					
eWOM6	If I want to be like someone, I often try to buy the same brands that they buy.					
eWOM7	I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase.					

Consumer Trust

Trust1	I trust the social media websites information to be true.					
Trust2	I trust the information on Facebook to be true.					
Trust3	The people who post information on the social media are trustworthy.					
Trust4	I believe that the social media has the skills and expertise to meet most members' desires.					

Online Purchasing Intention

POnline1	Using social media platforms help me make decisions better before purchasing goods and services.					
POnline2	Using social media platform increases my interest in purchasing products and services.					
POnline3	If I find out that the utility of a product or service is larger than personal devotions in terms of money, time and energy. I will consider buying this product or service.					
POnline4	I am very likely to buy products and services recommended by my friends on social media platforms.					

APENDIX II

Correlations

Correlations

		eWOM	Trust	Ponline
eWOM	Pearson Correlation	1	.433**	.431**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	188	188	188
Trust	Pearson Correlation	.433**	1	.437**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	188	188	188
Ponline	Pearson Correlation	.431**	.437**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	188	188	188

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

Regression C

Variables Entered/Removed[a]

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	eWOM[b]	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Ponline

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.431[a]	.185	.181	.64487

a. Predictors: (Constant), eWOM

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	17.602	1	17.602	42.328	.000[b]
	Residual	77.348	186	.416		
	Total	94.950	187			

a. Dependent Variable: Ponline

b. Predictors: (Constant), eWOM

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.549	.160		15.940	.000
	eWOM	.347	.053	.431	6.506	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Ponline

Regression a

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	eWOM^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Trust

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.433^a	.187	.183	.75755

a. Predictors: (Constant), eWOM

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24.626	1	24.626	42.912	.000^b
	Residual	106.742	186	.574		
	Total	131.368	187			

a. Dependent Variable: Trust

b. Predictors: (Constant), eWOM

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.740	.188		9.261	.000
	eWOM	.411	.063	.433	6.551	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Trust

Regression b & C'

Variables Entered/Removed^a

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Trust, eWOM^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: Ponline

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.513^a	.263	.255	.61515

a. Predictors: (Constant), Trust, eWOM

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24.945	2	12.472	32.960	.000^b
	Residual	70.006	185	.378		
	Total	94.950	187			

a. Dependent Variable: Ponline

b. Predictors: (Constant), Trust, eWOM

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.093	.184		11.350	.000
	eWOM	.239	.056	.297	4.241	.000
	Trust	.262	.060	.309	4.405	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Ponline