“E-WOM across digital channels: A comparison of e-commerce and social media impact on consumer purchase intentions”

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E-WOM ACROSS DIGITAL CHANNELS: A COMPARISON OF E-COMMERCE AND SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT ON CONSUMER PURCHASE INTENTIONS

Abstract

This study analyzed by comparing the effect of e-WOM (electronic word-of-mouth) virtual shopping websites and e-WOM from respondents on social networks on users' smartphone buying intentions. A research frame is established based on four e-WOM components: e-WOM source credibility, e-WOM source quality, e-WOM source attitude, and e-WOM source format toward the purchase intention of a smartphone. The effect of the independent variables was empirically tested using multiple regression analysis on the dependent variable of customer buying intention. The research was conducted in Uttar Pradesh, a province in India, with 362 respondents administering a questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, ANOVA (analysis of variance), and regression analysis were applied to interpret the source data. The results of regression factors had a strong statistical influence with a probability value of .000 and R2 of .358 according to the outcomes, suggesting that the framework described 35.8 proportion of the variance and that all the factors were major antecedents of buying intention. This study assists digital businesses in determining consumer buying trends through e-WOM on digital platforms. This study proposes a novel concept to understand how e-WOM affects customers' buying intent from social networks and e-commerce portals.

Keywords e-WOM, e-WOM source quality, e-WOM source credibility, e-WOM source attitude, e-WOM source format

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INTRODUCTION

In the modern scenario of consumer behavior, electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) has emerged as a critical determinant in shaping purchasing decisions. Consumer purchase intentions are dominated by a diverse range of elements, including societal, psychological, economic, and personal considerations (Mehyar et al., 2020). However, marketing professionals strive to communicate their offerings to customers through various means of advertising, including word-of-mouth communication, which is the most powerful as opposed to other media of promotional strategies (Keller & Fay, 2012; Iqbal et al., 2022; Faridi & Malik, 2019; Trusov et al., 2009). As marketing transforms from brick and mortar to digital, the old WOM has changed into a modern way of communicating ideas and opinions to a large crowd as a result of the implementation of digital advertising, known as e-WOM. It is described as Internet word-of-mouth or customer e-feedback regarding goods or services that affect the purchasing choice of other buyers. Consumers' information or feedback is accessible to a wide range of individuals online in a split of seconds with the help of e-WOM (Brown et al., 2007). Because of the speed, accuracy, and scale-up of these vital valuable benefits, researchers have become in-

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terested in e-WOM and have analyzed customer purchasing decisions (Bilal et al., 2021; King et al., 2014; Leong et al., 2022). Through the ability for users to connect with their current networks, the emergence of social networking sites has given e-WOM a fresh perspective. E-WOM on social networks holds remarkable power due to its dynamic nature. Most consumers search for relevant information about various products, mostly online shopping websites, before making their purchase decisions (Naylor et al., 2012; Mo et al., 2015). Individuals can communicate their views, feedback, and opinions about the product with familiar persons via social media, which has added a new dimension to e-WOM. Therefore, social media is acknowledged as a crucial channel for e-WOM conversations and consumer purchasing decisions. The effects of E-WOM on social media have also been widely studied, but very little attention has been paid to the comparison of E-WOM on social networking platforms and e-commerce websites.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Word-of-mouth communication plays a pivotal role in changing the consumer's mind toward any specific product or service. WOM marketing is a method of advertising a product or service that relies on the customer experience (Huang et al., 2007). Internet word-of-mouth communication, also recognized as e-WOM, has evolved as by far among the most pertinent media to interact with customers to make any choice related to purchasing as the Internet has grown and developed multifold (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). "Any favorable or unfavorable comments broadcasted online by consumers via the internet about any brand or product that is capable of reaching a countless number of individuals." is referred to as e-WOM (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2003). Doh and Hwang (2009) recognized buyers' perceptions of e-WOM about any product. They discovered that consumers have a high level of trust in e-WOM messaging because of its appealing persuasiveness. Moreover, a single or few candidate conversations can help establish a good opinion of the credibility of E-WOM websites. Nadarajan et al. (2017) explored the effects of adverse e-WOM on consumer inclination to switch mobile service providers using a qualitative method. Manes and Tchetchik (2018) explored the impact of e-WOM on decreasing the variance of information in online hotel reservations and observed that the number of digital reviews with quoted rates has a considerable influence on hotels with high online ratings compared to hotels with low digital ratings. Social media text messages have a greater influence than conventional advertising strategies (Mayopu et al., 2024). The findings demonstrated that social media advertising via e-WOM had a direct impact on purchase intention (Armawan et al., 2023). Farzin et al. (2022) recently identified that social media platforms provide a more informal and interactive environment, where e-WOM is shared in the form of comments, likes, and shares.

The stated Expectancy Value Theory (EVT) claims that consumer involvement in e-WOM through social networking sites is influenced by credibility and social capital, that is, social contacts within the social network (Gvili & Levy, 2018). MajlesiRad and Haji pour Shoushtari (2020) investigated the impact of a luxury brand's marketing approach on buying intent via social networks through e-WOM. The volume of likes, prominent followers, shares, the style of the marketing message, favorable comments, and the subject of an advertising message were all found to be significant factors and had a substantial impact on the buying intention of the luxury brand through e-WOM information on social networks. Saleem and Ellahi (2017) evaluated the influence of Facebook e-WOM on buying intention for fashion-related goods. Trust, homophily, experience, influential information, as well as excessive fashion participation, all have a substantial part in influencing online WOM on buying intent, according to the research. Kudeshia and Kumar (2017) analyzed the role of Facebook e-WOM in customer attitudes and purchase intention. Yan et al. (2016) examined the association between shopping websites and the adoption of e-WOM on social networks. Besides, the influence of e-WOM on e-commerce platforms seems to be more powerful than that on social networks in terms of online purchase intent (Erkan & Evans, 2016). They discovered that e-WOM characteristics such as credibility, usefulness, quality, adoption, needs, and attitude toward information influence a consumer's desire for social media. Alhidari et al. (2015) examined

involvement, self-dependence, and risk-taking as the three main antecedents of e-WOM, and their effects on social networks and buying decisions. Ladhari and Michaud (2015) investigated how Facebook e-WOM affects users' attitudes, trust, and homepage views related to booking hotels, as well as their intentions to do so. Ramírez-Correa et al. (2015) explored gender as a mediating factor to investigate the influence of e-WOM on various social networks and the Internet on consumer purchase behavior across various product types. Thoumrungroje (2014) concluded that, in light of the widespread usage of social networks and reliance on e-WOM, consumers are tempted to consume conspicuous yet impulsive products that are not essential.

A study revealed that marketing professionals are urged to enhance their business strategies by considering the reliability, credibility, and quality of the digital review approaches from electronic WOM material to intensify the virtual reviews for their items (Leong et al., 2022). Recent research illustrated that information quality, quantity, attitude, needs of information, and information usefulness are crucial E-WOM elements impacting purchase intention (Ngo et al., 2024). The results of another investigation showed that brand equity and purchase intention are positively and significantly impacted by eWOM (Khan et al., 2023). ShabbirHusain and Varshney (2022) in their study highlighted the purpose of eWOM generated via Flipkart in affecting consumer buying behavior. According to Mehyar et al. (2020), consumers' inclination to make purchases is positively affected by noticing the quantity and quality of e-WOM, whereas the credibility of e-WOM has no considerable effect on users' buying intent. Ismagilova et al. (2020) assessed the pertinent elements related to e-WOM on consumer purchase intentions based on meta-analysis and weight analysis. Harun et al. (2020) ascertained that trust operates as a positive mediator between electronic WOM and buying intent, and favorable e-WOM communications had a greater effect on purchase inclinations than adverse information through e-WOM. Moreover, Haque et al. (2020) investigated some key factors related to pessimistic electronic WOM that affect how Malaysian consumers are influenced by their purchase intent. Sa'ait et al. (2016) examine the influence of four aspects of e-WOM on consumers' purchasing intentions: accuracy, relevance, timeliness, and comprehensiveness. Wang et al. (2015) discovered that a favorable comment affects users' attitudes regarding e-WOM more than a balanced or unfavorable one. Torlak et al. (2014) discovered that e-WOM has a considerable effect on purchase intent and that consumer opinions regarding the purchase of cell phones are more influenced by brand image. Park and Lee (2008) found that e-WOM significantly affects the behavioral intent of customers due to review number, customer involvement, and review type. Ahmad et al. (2020) explore the effect of web-based visitor trustworthiness on the purchasing intent of airline e-tickets and e-WOM. The independent factors included credibility, expertise, similarity, trustworthiness, expertise, quality, and tie strength. According to these findings, online trust is a mediating factor in the purchase intent of airline e-tickets and e-WOM. E-WOM also demonstrates a favorable and significant association with airline e-ticket-buying intent. Farzin and Fattahi (2018) found that customer trust, altruism, moral obligation, self-efficacy, sense of belongingness, and informational influence are the major e-WOM elements that influence consumer brand image and purchase intent. This study assists digital businesses in determining consumer buying trends through e-WOM on digital platforms. This study proposes a novel concept to understand how e-WOM affects customers' buying intent from social networks and e-commerce portals.

The degree to which a person views e-WOM messages as trustworthy, believable, or accurate is referred to as e-WOM credibility (Cheung et al., 2009). Consumers' attitudes towards a specific product are influenced by the credibility of e-WOM. If a buyer believes that Internet reviews of a product, such as a smartphone, are genuine or trustworthy, the reviews are more likely to influence their decision to buy a smartphone. In previous studies, e-WOM credibility has been considered an important factor in assessing consumers' intent to buy (Dou et al., 2012; Hsu & Tsou, 2011; Park et al., 2007). Therefore, e-WOM credibility is considered one of the components affecting consumers' purchase intentions. Since e-WOM on social media is mostly from familiar people, it is predicted that people prefer reviews to be more credible than e-WOM on e-commerce platforms in their buying intentions.

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The belief of an individual towards a specific entity is referred to as an attitude. E-WOM attitudes can be favorable or negative, depending on how a person feels about a website or product. Many researchers have used e-WOM attitude as an independent variable to predict customer purchase intention (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Lee et al., 2009). The diversity in customer preferences on social networks and e-commerce platforms for buying smartphones influences attitudes toward e-WOM. In the research study, consumers' e-WOM attitudes on social networks may be more effective than consumers' e-WOM attitudes on e-commerce platforms. People believe more in their peer groups and relatives and friends on social networks compared with e-WOM on virtual shopping portals, which are from unknown people. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis.

E-WOM quality is a general term referring to the dominance of content incorporated into the form of communication (Yeap et al., 2014). Most customers are influenced by the quality of online reviews available on e-WOM platforms when they search for previous comments about their preferred product (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). When a product's Internet reviews indicate that smartphones are easy to understand, valuable, and effective, the likelihood of the comments having an impact is higher on the customer's decision to purchase a smartphone. Therefore, the quality of e-WOM information could be considered an important element in assessing customers' intention to purchase smartphones. As reviews on virtual shopping portals typically come from random people relative to recommendations on social networks that are less anonymous, it is foreseen that the source quality of e-WOM on social networks has a greater effect than e-commerce portals when considering buying a smartphone. Therefore, the following underlying hypothesis is proposed.

The e-WOM source format is a concept that relates to the display of internet reviews in various formats, including textual messages, image-based, video, or combined forms. According to previous research, buyers prefer Internet reviews that provide thorough information about a product, as well as photographs and videos (Iqbal et al., 2022; Teng et al., 2014). In recent times, audiovisual and video-based comments on cell phones have become accessible to several virtual buying portals such as Amazon and Myntra, as well as on social networks including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and others (King et al., 2014). Reviewing videos is considered highly persuasive to customers because it involves a pictorial representation with non-verbal cues (Xu, 2014).

The aim is as follows: to examine how e-WOM e-commerce and social media impact on consumer purchase intentions; to study the e-WOM components: e-WOM source credibility, e-WOM source quality, e-WOM source attitude, and e-WOM source format toward the purchase intent of a smartphone.

The hypotheses are as follows:

H1: E-WOM source credibility on social networks is more effective on the buying intent of smartphones relative to e-WOM source credibility on e-commerce platforms.

H2: E-WOM source attitude on social networks is more effective on the buying intent of smartphones as relative to e-WOM source attitude on e-commerce platforms.

H3: E-WOM source quality on social networks is more effective on the buying intent of smartphones relative to e-WOM source quality on e-commerce portals.

H4: E-WOM source format on social networks is more effective on the buying intent of smartphones relative to the e-WOM source format on e-commerce platforms.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research creates a theoretical framework to pinpoint the factors that impact customers' intentions to make purchases using EWOM information shared on social media and e-commerce platforms. E-WOM discussions are primarily about sharing basic information or feedback. In earlier research, the information adoption process was examined to better comprehend how people internalize the knowledge they are given. IAM (information adoption model) explicitly describes

how individuals are impacted by the information on internet-based communication platforms (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). Numerous scholars have deemed this paradigm suitable to e-WOM studies since they focus specifically on the impact of information on digital platforms (Cheung et al., 2008; Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Shu & Scott, 2014). As this work addresses eWOM information across social media and e-commerce platforms, employing the IAM is also considered suitable.

This research will present a particular and original conceptual model that expands on and improves IAM as the basic plan of IAM only describes how information is adopted; in contrast, this study model broadens the concept of information adoption by taking consumer behavior into account and defining how E-WOM information affects buying intention. The proposed framework thus looks at the connections between the elements of E-WOM information including source quality, source credibility, source attitude, source format, and purchase intention.

According to the aforementioned literature, word-of-mouth communications, particularly digital WOM, also called electronic WOM, play an important role in modifying people's perceptions of purchase intention. Online reviews from social networks and virtual shopping portals influence consumers' buying decisions, as discussed in previous studies (Yan et al., 2016; Faridi & Malik, 2020). In a previous research study conducted by Erkan and Evans (2016), e-WOM on virtual shopping portals has a greater influence than e-WOM on buying intent on social networks. In this study, we compared the purchase intentions of these two platforms in India for a specific product category: smartphones. To differentiate the e-WOM effect between social media users who are well-known and users of virtual shopping platforms who are unknown, the elements of e-WOM that affect consumers' purchase intentions were identified. Thereafter, the research study's hypothesis was framed in light of these elements. Many aspects of electronic WOM affect consumers' intention to buy in different ways, depending on how effective they are seen to be. The credibility, quality, and attitude of e-WOM (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Ismagilova et al., 2020; Mehyar et al., 2020) at various virtual shopping portals as well as social networks are vital factors affecting consumers' buying intentions. These characteristics are regarded as acceptable for the study because the research framework explores the influence of electronic WOM on virtual shopping portals and social media affecting smartphone buying intention. The study used buying intention as the dependent factor, with e-WOM source attitude, credibility, quality, and format as independent factors as shown in the research framework. Since it was added the e-WOM source format as just another newly founded variable, the explanatory model differs from previous research.

The study utilized both primary and secondary data collection methods to gather relevant information regarding E-WOM influence. Secondary data were collected through an extensive review of existing literature, research articles, online websites, and relevant sources to gather valuable insights on consumer behavior, e-WOM trends, and social media data which helped in contextualizing the study, providing background information, and supporting the findings. The primary data were obtained using a survey questionnaire to evaluate the hypotheses. The survey questionnaires were designed based on the research objectives and variables of the study. Mostly closed-ended, dichotomous questions were used to collect demographic data and each construct was consequently tested using the Likert scale. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Participants' demographic profiles are covered in the first section. The second section contained questions about purchase intent based on how frequently and preferred e-commerce portals and social networks are accessed. The primary body of the survey was covered in the third section, which comprised 18 items based on the factors used in the research. As shown in Table 1, some of the statements for the conceptual framework were derived from past studies and were altered to meet the scope of the research. This increased the validity of the results. E-WOM source credibility was specifically assessed using the items created by Dou et al. (2012) and Erkan and Evans (2016). The components of the e-WOM source attitude were modified from the study by Cheung and Thadani (2012). The following research was conducted to evaluate the items of e-WOM source quality (Mehyar et al., 2020). The components for the e-WOM source format were taken from a previous study (Iqbal et

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al., 2022; Teng et al., 2014). Finally, buying intention items were derived from these studies (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Hille et al., 2015). The factors were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with 5 denoting 'strongly agree' and 1 denoting 'strongly disagree.'

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Approximately 622 million Indians actively use the Internet, as determined by the IAMAI-Kantar ICUBE 2020 study 2020. There were 448 million users on social networks by 2020 (datareportal.com), and 150 million online shoppers in India by 2020 (Statista.com). Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in India, and the study primarily focuses on social networking and e-commerce users. The study included 362 samples in total (at a 5% error margin and 95% confidence interval).

Sampling is done by dividing the population of Uttar Pradesh, India into four economic regions, including the Western Region, Central Region, Eastern Region, and Bundelkhand Region. The samples were taken from each region via online and offline modes from customers who frequently use both social media and e-commerce websites based on convenience and snowball sampling as this sampling method encourages scholars to get data from the most accessible sources, such as students, or Internet users. Also, it supports the purposeful sample selection that satisfies the objectives of this investigation.

To calculate the sample size for the current study, the researcher employed Yamane's formula: $n = N/1+N\,(e)^2$, and by applying the formulae, the obtained sample size is 400 from the 200 million population of Uttar Pradesh (according to the census). The researcher obtained the data from about 400 participants; however, some replies were discarded and finally, 362 respondents' replies were technically sound enough for analysis.

Table 2 lists the sample attributes. According to the demographic statistics, there were 240 male respondents and 122 female respondents (66.3 percent and 33.7 percent). The survey shows that 203 respondents always prefer user reviews online and 126 respondents occasionally do so before purchasing a smartphone. For purchasing a smartphone, the majority of the participants consider reviews online from e-commerce portals rather than social media reviews (66% vs. 30.1%), while only 3.9 percent of those surveyed do not reckon with online reviews.

Table 1. Variables and items

Variables	Definitions	Items
1. E-WOM source credibility (Dou et al., 2012; Erkan & Evans, 2016)	The degree to which a person analyzes the information through e-WOM as genuine or desirable (Cheung et al., 2009)	For purchasing a smartphone, I trust a majority of the ideas on my "friends" page on social networks.
		I trust a majority of the customer reviews on e-commerce platforms when it comes to purchasing a smartphone.
		Social networks provide genuine views on smartphone purchases.
		Users of e-commerce platforms provide honest opinions on smartphone purchases.
2. E-WOM source attitude (Cheung & Thadani, 2012)	An individual's learned inclination or propensity to respond to an entity positively or negatively (Reza Jalilvand et al., 2012)	I have a favorable attitude toward suggestions for buying a smartphone through social media.
		I have a favorable attitude toward suggestions for buying a smartphone through e-commerce platforms
		After seeing a favorable or critical comment concerning a smartphone on social networks, I will reconsider purchasing that smartphone.
		After seeing a favorable or critical comment concerning a smartphone on e-commerce portals, I will reconsider purchasing that smartphone.
3. E-WOM source quality (Mehyar et al., 2020)	The dominance of content embedded in a form of communication (Yeap et al., 2014)	The opinions on social media are useful and effective for buying a smartphone.
		The reviews on e-commerce portals are useful and effective for purchasing a smartphone.
		I often choose a smartphone focusing more on the quality of online reviews than quantity.

Table 1 (cont.). Variables and items

Variables	Definitions	Items
4. E-WOM source format (Teng et al., 2014; Iqbal et al., 2022)	The presentation format of e-WOM (Lin et al., 2012)	On e-commerce platforms, I bought a smartphone relying on the form of user's opinions (i.e., collection of words, pictures, and videos uploaded).
		I bought a smartphone relying on the user's opinions and videos posted related to it on social networks like Facebook and YouTube.
5. Buying intention (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Hille et al., 2015)	The level of a customer's willingness to buy anything from a virtual store (Pavlou, 2003)	I would rather purchase a smartphone following user reviews and pictures posted rather than videos.
		Any product's online reviews have influenced my purchasing decision in the past.
		My purchase intent was impacted by a product recommendation from a previous comment on a virtual platform.
		When it comes to smartphones, I usually go for internet reviews from social media platforms.
		When it comes to smartphones, I usually go for reviews from e-commerce platforms.

ANOVA was also utilized to see if the sample's demographic characteristics affected the customers' intent to buy online. The p-values were all greater than 0.05, according to the data (Table 3). Thus, the demographic profile of respondents has little bearing on their buying intentions.

The dependence of the variables was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. All the dependent and independent variables had Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.75 (Table 4). All variables in the study were found to be reliable based on these results.

Table 2. Sample attributes

Criterion	Frequency	Proportion
Gender		
Male	240	66.3
Female	122	33.7
Age		
Below 24	86	23.7
24-34	214	59.1
35-45	39	10.8
Above 45	23	6.4
Education		
Below UG	57	15.7
Graduate	126	34.8
Postgraduate	152	42
Ph.D.	27	7.5
Purchasing a smartphone based on online reviews		
Always	203	56.1
Sometimes	126	34.8
Very rare	28	7.7
Never	5	1.4
Social networks or e-commerce portals for buying a smartphone		
Social media reviews	109	30.1
E-commerce	239	66
Platforms reviews		
None of the above	14	3.9

A multiple regression test was performed to examine the effect of the independent factors on the dependent factors (Table 7). All factors had a strong statistical influence with a probability value of .000 and R^2 of .358 according to the outcomes, as shown in Table 5 and Table 6, suggesting that the framework described 35.8 proportion of the variance and that all the factors were major antecedents of buying intention. However, contrary to the prediction, only one hypothesis is supported, and all other hypotheses are rejected.

Multiple regression evaluation revealed that e-WOM on social networks was not more effective than e-WOM on e-commerce platforms in influencing smartphone purchase intentions. In contrast, e-WOM credibility on social networks (B =.99) was shown to be less effective on smartphone purchase intentions than e-WOM credibility on e-commerce portals (B =.182). Similarly, the quality of e-WOM on social networks (B =.010) has not been proven to be more effective than that on e-commerce platforms (B =.086). Furthermore, the e-WOM source format was found to be less influential on social networks (B = -.010) relative to the e-WOM source format on e-commerce portals (B = .061). Hence, Hypotheses *H1*, *H3*, and *H4* were rejected. Ultimately, among the four hypotheses,

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Table 3. ANOVA analysis of buying intention

Criterion		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Gender	Between groups	2.116	9	.236	.897	.547
	Within groups	5.251	20	.262		
	Total	7.367	29			
Age	Between groups	3.834	9	.427	1.344	.275
	Within groups	6.333	20	.316		
	Total	10.167	29			
Education	Between groups	10.701	9	1.188	.891	.548
	Within groups	26.666	20	1.334		
	Total	37.367	29			

Table 4. Cronbach's alpha

Item-total statistics				
Criterion	Scale mean if item deleted	Scale variance if item deleted	Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha if item deleted
E-WOM source credibility on e-commerce platforms	29.8920	17.851	.597	.842
E-WOM source attitude on e-commerce platforms	29.5789	18.000	.636	.838
E-WOM source quality on e-commerce platforms	29.9169	17.272	.661	.835
E-WOM source format on e-commerce platforms	29.5859	18.085	.634	.839
E-WOM source credibility in social networks	29.8102	18.435	.471	.855
E-WOM source attitude in social networks	29.5873	19.101	.477	.853
E-WOM source quality in social networks	30.1122	17.486	.575	.845
E-WOM source format in social networks	29.6468	18.212	.641	.838
Buying intention	29.6482	18.727	.593	.843

Table 5. R-squared value

Model	R	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared	Std. error of the estimate
1	.599[a]	.358	.343	.57966

Note: a. Dependent variable: buying intention.

Table 6. Probability value

Model		Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	65.679	7	8.209	24.429	.000[b]
	Residual	118.275	349	.340		
	Total	183.960	362			

Note: a. Dependent variable: buying intention.

H2 is accepted; e-WOM attitude on social networks (B =.227) was found to be more important than e-WOM attitude on e-commerce portals (B =.196) on buying intention of a smartphone.

This study is centered on a comparison of the impact of e-WOM on smartphone purchase intent from e-commerce portals and social networks. Previous studies have examined the effects of word-of-mouth and e-WOM on different product categories (Doh & Hwang, 2009; Nadarajan et al., 2017; Saleem & Ellahi, 2017). Owing to the extensive usage of the Internet and social media, e-WOM has become a crucial tool and a means of communication when choosing a product to buy. Numerous investigations have been conducted to assess the e-WOM influence via virtual shopping websites and social media websites independently and found effective on consumers' intent to make purchases (Alhidari et al., 2015; MajlesiRad & Haji

Table 7. Multiple regression evaluation of variables on social networks and e-commerce platforms

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	.989	.219		4.421	.000
E-WOM source credibility in social networks	.079	.039	.099	1.889	.058
E-WOM source attitude in social networks	.219	.049	.227	4.259	.000
E-WOM source quality in social networks	.006	.053	.010	.129	.894
E-WOM source format in social networks	–.009	.059	–.010	–.158	.865
E-WOM source credibility in e-commerce platforms	.170	.049	.182	3.159	.002
E-WOM source attitude in e-commerce platforms	.191	.060	.196	3.270	.001
E-WOM source quality in e-commerce platforms	.069	.059	.086	1.169	.240
E-WOM source format in e-commerce platforms	.061	.070	.061	.880	.381

Note: a. Dependent variable: buying intention.

pour Shoushtari, 2020; Nadarajan et al., 2017; Park & Lee, 2008; Mehyar et al., 2020). Besides, some research studies have compared e-WOM in virtual shopping portals and social networks in terms of buying intent (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Yan et al., 2016). Nonetheless, the impact of these two digital platforms on a specific product is yet to be examined, as their impact on different product categories may provide different findings and outcomes. Reviews and comments on online purchasing sites are more thorough and numerous, in contrast to social networks with a smaller number of responses. Additionally, most social media reviews come from known individuals, such as family members and friends, which can be more effective. In contrast, Internet shopping portals offer user reviews that are unidentified and anonymous, and these ratings may or may not influence customers' buying intent. Thus, the influence of e-WOM on the buying intention of a specific product through these two digital platforms differs significantly concerning their efficacy.

Four hypotheses were proposed for the research study (Table 8), and contradictory results were found according to the expectations. The regression analysis shows that e-WOM on e-commerce platforms is more efficacious than social media e-WOM.

Contrary to the framed research hypothesis, only one hypothesis was supported, and all three hypotheses were discarded, as displayed in Table 8. Since comparing e-WOM across e-commerce portals and social networks is the main emphasis of the study in terms of smartphone buying intention, the beta scores of both digital channels were examined. The findings reveal that social networking e-WOM fails to possess more influence on the desire to buy a smartphone relative to e-WOM in virtual shopping portals. According to the beta values, out of four factors that were analyzed: wWOM quality, the credibility of e-WOM, and the format of e-WOM on e-commerce platforms have a greater influence than e-WOM on social networks apart from the more effective 'e-WOM attitude' in terms of e-WOM on social networks relative to e-WOM attitude in online shopping portals on consumers intent to purchase a smartphone. The results indicated that although the reviews on online shopping platforms are from unknown people, the consumers prefer their reviews more than those on social media, which may be a result of the abundant amount of user responses and

Table 8. Hypothesis assessment results

No.	Hypothesis	Results
H1	E-WOM source credibility on social networks is more effective on the buying intent of smartphones contrasted with e-WOM source credibility on e-commerce portals	Not supported
H2	E-WOM source attitude on social networks is more effective on the buying intent of smartphones contrasted with e-WOM source attitude on e-commerce portals	Supported
H3	E-WOM source quality on social networks is more effective on the buying intent of smartphones contrasted with e-WOM source quality on e-commerce portals	Not supported
H4	E-WOM source format on social networks is more effective on the buying intent of smartphones contrasted with the e-WOM source format on e-commerce portals	Not supported

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in-depth product descriptions on online shopping websites. Additionally, based on the statistics, we conclude that e-WOM influences consumer purchase intentions, and e-WOM in e-commerce portals has been more successful in terms of quality, credibility, and format than e-WOM in social networks in influencing smartphone buying intentions. To identify purchase intention, these variables can be useful as they provide insights into different aspects of e-WOM information. By understanding the relative impact of credibility, attitude, quantity, and format on online shopping platforms versus social media platforms, businesses can tailor their marketing strategies and allocate resources accordingly. For instance, focusing on building credibility and promoting positive attitudes on social media platforms, or leveraging the quantity and format of E-WOM information on online shopping platforms to enhance purchase intention.

The role of e-WOM has had a strong impact on building creativity, improving quality, and instilling positive attitudes.

CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this study was to ascertain the influence of e-WOM on smartphone purchasing intentions from shopping and social web platforms. It was anticipated that e-WOM via social networking platforms would have a greater impact than e-WOM via e-commerce platforms based on the variables of e-WOM, as online reviews on social platforms come from individuals known to consumers, and it is typically brief and extreme, whereas the reviews on shopping platforms are typically from strangers and more comprehensive. Unlike the assumed hypothesis, the results were different. E-WOM generated by e-commerce platforms has a greater effect than that generated by social networking platforms. In addition, using the research findings, this study proposes that e-WOM influences consumer purchase intent, and e-WOM in e-commerce portals has been more efficacious concerning quality, credibility, and format than e-WOM in social networks in influencing smartphone purchase intention in Uttar Pradesh, India. By analyzing the consumer responses and behaviors on both platforms, the study can provide insights into the relative effectiveness and significance of e-WOM on e-commerce websites and social media in influencing smartphone purchase decisions. Furthermore, the outcomes of both digital channels may be altered, depending on the digital reviews of various product groups and characteristics. The findings of the study enhance our understanding of how these e-WOM factors influence consumer decision-making processes in the context of smartphone purchases. By comparing the impact of e-WOM variables between online shopping platforms and social media platforms, this study sheds light on the differential effects and dynamics of e-WOM in these contexts. It expands our understanding of the unique characteristics and influences of each platform and provides insights into the nuances of consumer behavior within these environments. Also, the findings of this study can inform and enrich information adoption models and provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior in the digital marketplace.

The limitation of the research is it was conducted in an emerging market as in India, opportunities to conduct the research in developed and underdeveloped markets can have tremendous scope for deliberation in influencing smartphone buying intentions. This study proposes a novel concept to understand how electronic word-of-mouth affects customers' buying intention from social networks and e-commerce portals.

The study highlights the importance of tailoring marketing strategies and engagement efforts to specific platforms. Businesses should prioritize building credibility as it plays a significant role in influencing purchase intention and leveraging quantity in online shopping platforms while focusing on fostering positive attitudes and utilizing different formats such as visuals, videos, or interactive content to capture consumers' attention on social media platforms. Moreover, monitoring and responding to e-WOM discussions, addressing concerns, and engaging with customers positively influence purchase intention and foster a favorable brand image.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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