

# INFLUENCE OF E-WOM ON BRAND IMAGE AND BRAND IMAGE IMPACT ON CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISION

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Research Article

## INFLUENCE OF E-WOM ON BRAND IMAGE AND BRAND IMAGE IMPACT ON CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISION

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### Abstract

Consumer's preference influenced through social media in choosing services or products as consumer is able to see others' feedbacks on different online platform. What is latest and what trend is going on, can be known with the help of word of mouth (WOM) communication. The study examined the impact of online word of mouth (E-WOM) on brand image and impact of brand image on consumer purchase decision of smart phone. Data was collected from 552 respondents through questionnaire from Haryana. Analysis was performed with CFA and SEM using AMOS. Study found that E-WOM quality, E-WOM quantity, E-WOM and information consumption significantly influence the brand image but prior purchase satisfaction does not significantly influence the brand image. Study also found that brand image significantly influences the smart phone purchase decision of the consumer.

**Key words :** WOM, E-WOM quality, purchase decision, brand image, E-WOM quantity, consumption, smart phone.

### Introduction

WOM plays a significant role in forming and influencing consumer behavioral intention & consumer attitude (Xia & Bechwati, 2008; Kiecker & cowls, 2001; Herr et al., 1991; Chatterjee, 2001; Smith & Vogt, 1995; Chevalier & Mayzline, 2006). Bickart and Schindler (2001) found WOM as the most trustworthy and credible source of information. In comparison of advertisement and editorial recommendation source, WOM is highly influential (Trusov et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2005; Bickart & Schindler, 2001). Breazeal (2009) argued that consumer's WOM is a trusted source. It is the most important source of information and also very important for a consumer in decision making (Cheung et al., 2008).

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Sen & Lerman (2007) and Chatterjee (2001) examined that initially WOM referred to the communication (person to person) about a product among consumers. Internet rise provide the consumers' to share their opinions on digital platforms and it increases the possibilities to share

those reviews or opinions at a global level (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006; Dellarocas, 2003; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Spread of internet at a global level form a new type of communication, E-WOM (Chatterjee, 2001; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004; Brown et al., 2007; Xia & Bechwati, 2008). For consumers, E-WOM became an important source to share their views or opinions (Mayzlin, 2006; Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Henning-Thurau et al., 2004; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) revealed that companies are designing various marketing strategies for people as the use of internet is increasing and also there is growth in people who share their experiences or views on digital platform. Chatterjee (2001) found that E-WOM is more effective than offline WOM. Nyer and Gopinath (2005) stated that WOM can be negative, positive or both. Market success, stock prices, company's future profits, merger and acquisition, long term cash flow, sustainable competitive advantage can be influenced by brand image (Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

### **Purchase Decision**

After getting advertising message, PI (purchase intention) is the chances of consumers in an attempt to buy a product (Dodds et al., 1991). Kotler and Armstrong (2010) stated that actual buying decision is not always same as purchase intention and preference for a product; other factors (unexpected situation, other's attitude) may come between. Consumers decision making is influenced by virtual communities and now before purchasing a product, people go through the experiences and reviews posted on virtual communities (Lu et al., 2010). Experience influenced the preference of customer's which afterward influences the purchase decision of customer (Fan & Miao, 2012). Consumers purchase intention is significantly influenced by the online communication (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006).

### **E-WOM**

Consumers consider E-WOM as an important information source as it consist the experiences and opinion of peer rather than information produced by company (Munnukka et al., 2015). When there is face to face exchange of spoken words with relatives or friends is known as typical WOM and in online WOM personal opinion and experiences are shared in written form (Sun et al., 2006). To get information about quality of service and products, E-WOM became a good source of information for customers (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2003). Through E-WOM, consumers can share their experiences and ideas, which provide many opportunities (Balakrishnan et al., 2014). Park et al. (2007) revealed that E-WOM can influence recommenders and informants both, as it gives previous consumer's recommendation and information about a product which is user oriented. Chevalier & Mayzlin (2006) discussed that E-WOM became a platform where consumers share their experiences directly about a product or service, without engaging in a commercial advertisement. Many researchers (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014; Wang et al., 2012; Chatterjee, 2001) revealed that uncertainty and risk can be minimize about a product through E-WOM messages and this influence the decision making or purchase intention of the consumer. Therefore, reviews based on E-WOM help to setup following hypothesis:

*H<sub>1</sub>: There is positive relationship between online WOM and brand image.*

### **E-WOM quantity and quality**

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Total number of comments posted is known as E-WOM quantity (Cheung & Thadani, 2010). Quantity of comments could determine the product's popularity and product's market performance (Lin et al., 2013). Jeong and Koo (2015) examined that to reduce the risk and uncertainties, consumer collect more information when there are less knowledge about a product. Risk and uncertainty can be minimized through E-WOM messages related to a product (Chatterjee, 2001) and from these messages information about a products quality can be obtained (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006). Buying decisions can be determined by the information quality that is perceived by the consumers (Cheung et al., 2008). Number of reviews represent a product's popularity and when consumer search for the reviews, quantity of reviews makes them observable (Cheung & Thadani, 2010). Purchase decision of the consumer can be influenced by quality and useful information which can be gathered from online sources. Purchase decision of the consumer about a product or service is affected by E-WOM quantity, as there are lots of online source where people search for information about a product or service (Lee et al., 2008). Quality of the information creates positive attitude which shows that information quality is influential determinant (Filieri, 2015). Following hypothesizes have been setup based on reviews of E-WOM quality and Quantity:

*H<sub>2</sub>: There is positive relationship between E-WOM quality and brand image.*

*H<sub>3</sub>: There is positive relationship between E-WOM quantity and brand image.*

### Brand Image

For future profit, stock prices, competitive advantage and for long term cash flow etc., brand image is an important part for companies (Torlak et al., 2014). Howell and Rogers (1981) argued that consumer is influenced by brand image rather than the shopping mall size and it is very difficult to create a good image of the brand in the mind of consumers. There is positive link between brand image, E-WOM and purchase intention (Torlak et al., 2014). Also it was seen that consumer's attitude is influenced by brand image (Elseidi and EL-Baz, 2016). Consumer purchase behavior is determined by key factor i.e., brand image (Burmam et al., 2008) and it is associated with particular product's features and category (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Park & Arinivasan, 1994). From the above reviews following hypothesis setup:

*H<sub>4</sub>: There is positive relationship between brand image and purchase decision.*

### Information consumption and prior purchase satisfaction

Through E-WOM, consumers get reviews about a product and consumers collect pre-purchase information about a product that leads to form purchase intention (Zhu and Zhang, 2010; Sen and Lerman, 2007; Schindler and Bickart, 2005; Adjei et al., 2009). Shim et al. (2001) revealed that if a consumer satisfied from his last online purchase experience then he leads to repurchase. People get confident if they have experience about online purchase.

Tran et al. (2018) stated that social networking sites provide experiences and information about a product to consumer and it motivate consumer to interact with the firm. People do not have time to check all the advertisements and information because there is huge information available, so they ask for filtered information or a summary from their relatives and friends (Silverman, 2001). Hence, following hypothesizes are framed:

*H<sub>5</sub>: There is positive relationship between information consumption and brand image.*

**H<sub>6</sub>:** *There is positive relationship between prior purchase satisfaction and brand image.*

### Research Gap

Before taking decision about a product or service, people used to check reviews and comments online. Also they ask from their family, friends and peers. This will help them in taking better decision regarding a service or a product. Positive and negative comments influence the buying decision. Few researchers (Elfitra et al., 2019; Torlak et al., 2014; Shah et al., 2012) revealed that there is significant impact of brand image on purchase decision/intention. Lin et al. (2013) found positive influence of E-WOM quality and quantity on brand image; on the contrary Prastiwi and Aminah (2021) found positive impact of E-WOM quantity but no impact of E-WOM quality on company image. Yusof and Rosnan (2020) revealed that people use E-WOM to share their reviews and experiences. Therefore, in this paper the impact of E-WOM on brand image and later impact on consumer purchase decision has been studied.

### Research Methodology

To achieve the research objectives, a questionnaire was framed. After all the corrections the questionnaire was distributed for the responses. 600 questionnaires were distributed in Haryana state (India) which was universe of this study. In the questionnaire, first part includes the demographics of the respondents like; occupation, age, gender, income, educational qualification and marital status. In 2<sup>nd</sup> part of questionnaire to collect the views of respondents about influence of WOM to purchase smart phone, seven point likert scales was used. To collect the data, multistage sampling method was used. Only 552 responses were valid out of 600 responses for further analysis. CFA and SEM using AMOS were used in the study as statistical techniques.

### Results

#### Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

To check the analysis reliability, composite reliability (CR) and cronbach's alpha has been used (table 2). In the measurement model, CFA was performed to assess the validity of constructs. Table 2 revealed that the AVE is more than 0.5 for all the constructs, value of CR were higher than 0.7, which was above the threshold value Cronbach's alpha values were also more than 0.7 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988) which shows that reliability and internal consistency was very good. On the other hand, figure 1 exploring the diagram and table1 indicating the model fit values CMIN (1.928), RMR (0.032), RMSEA (0.041), TLI (0.964), CFI (0.971), AGFI (0.925) and GFI (0.944) and all the values are fit for CFA measurement model.

**Table 1: Fit indices of CFA measurement model**

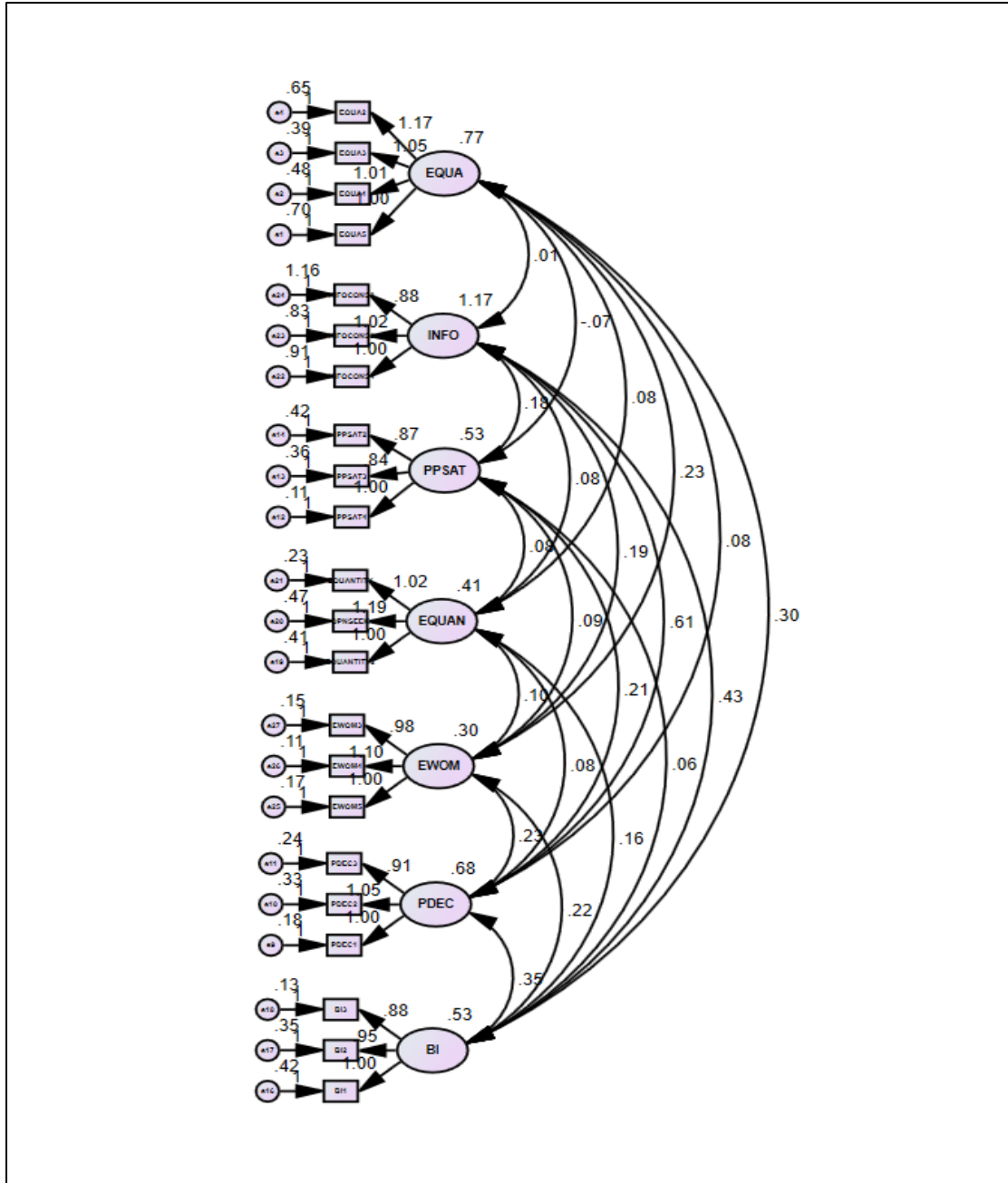
Fit index	CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	RMR
Acceptable value	<5	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	<0.08	<0.08
Model fit score	1.928	0.944	0.925	0.971	0.964	0.041	0.032

**Table 2: Analysis of reliabilities and validities**

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<b>Variables/Factors</b>	<b>Constructs</b>	<b>FL</b>	<b>CA</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>SQRT(AVE)/DV</b>
Brand Image (BI)	BI1	0.873			
	BI2	0.761	0.822	0.632	0.795
	BI3	0.746			
Purchase Decision (PDEC)	PDEC1	0.839			
	PDEC2	0.832	0.885	0.728	0.853
	PDEC3	0.888			
E-WOM Quality (EQUA)	EQUA2	0.784			
	EQUA3	0.826	0.859	0.610	0.781
	EQUA4	0.789			
Information Consumption (INFOCONS)	EQUA5	0.722			
	INFOCONS2	0.662			
	INFOCONS3	0.772	0.772	0.532	0.730
Prior Purchase Satisfaction (PPSAT)	INFOCONS4	0.750			
	PPSAT2	0.700			
	PPSAT3	0.718	0.813	0.611	0.782
E-WOM Quantity (EQUANTITY)	PPSAT4	0.910			
	EQUANTITY1	0.805			
	EQUANTITY2	0.743	0.791	0.567	0.753
Online Word of Mouth (EWOM)	EQUANTITY3	0.709			
	EWOM3	0.806			
	EWOM4	0.874	0.865	0.682	0.826
	EWOM5	0.797			

**Figure 1: CFA measurement model**



**Table 3: Hypothesized Structural Model Constructs - Conceptual Model**

Exogenous Construct	Endogenous Variable
E-WOM Quality(EQUA)	Brand Image (BI)
Information Consumption (INFOCON)	Purchase Decision(PDEC)
Prior Purchase Satisfaction (PPSAT)	
E-WOM Quantity (EQUANTITY)	
Online Word of Mouth (EWOM)	

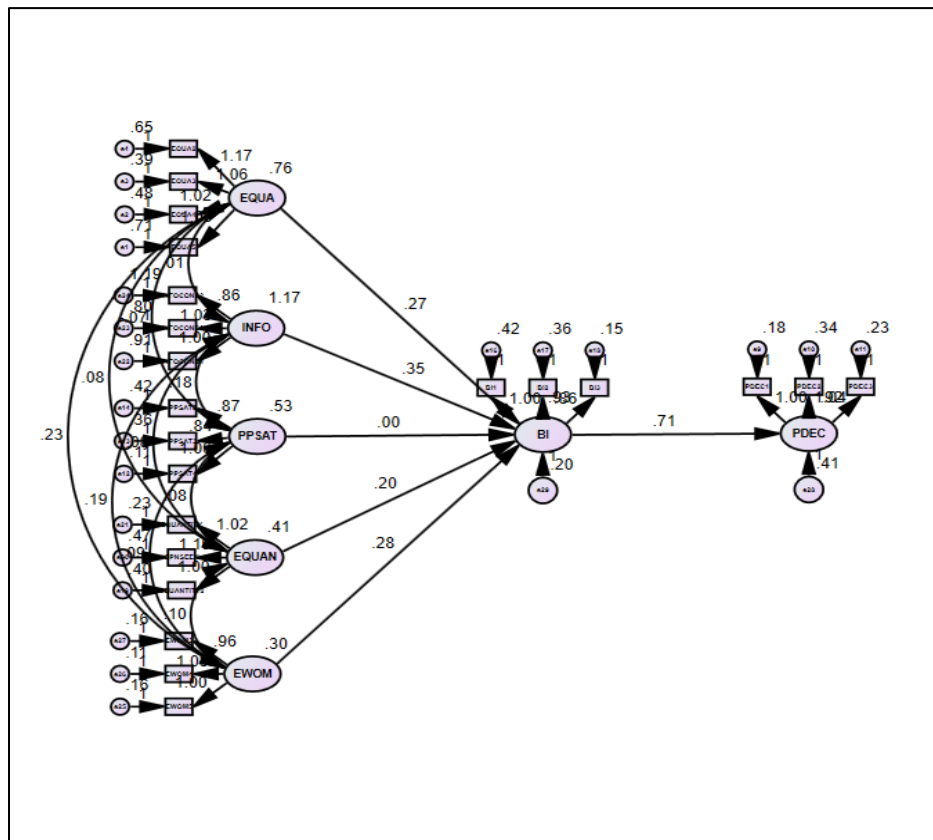
**Table 4: Fit indices of SEM path model**

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<b>Fit index</b>	<b>CMIN/DF</b>	<b>GFI</b>	<b>AGFI</b>	<b>CFI</b>	<b>TLI</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>	<b>RMR</b>
Acceptable value	<5	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	>0.9	<0.08	<0.08
Model fit score	2.743	0.922	0.898	0.944	0.933	0.056	0.072

Table 3 highlights the endogenous (purchase decision and brand image) and exogenous constructs (online word of mouth, information consumption, EWOM quality, E-WOM quantity and prior purchase satisfaction) used in this study. Table 4 indicated that the goodness of fit indices and the model were at the level of acceptable (CMIN/DF= 2.743, CFI= 0.944, RMSEA= 0.056).

**Figure 2: Research model path diagram**



Specified relationships between constructs of the model and paths using structural equation modeling are shown in figure 2. As revealed in table 5, the entire hypothesis found supported except H<sub>6</sub>. It was seen that E-WOM significantly influence the brand image with  $\beta = 0.210$ ,  $t=4.022$ , and  $P = 0.000$ . E-WOM quality ( $\beta = 0.321$ ,  $t=6.421$ , and  $P = 0.000$ ), E-WOM quantity ( $\beta = 0.172$ ,  $t=4.115$ , and  $P = 0.000$ ) and information consumption ( $\beta = 0.517$ ,  $t=9.963$ , and  $P = 0.000$ ) positively influence the brand image of smart phone. Furthermore, purchase decision of the consumer is influenced by brand image ( $\beta = 0.629$ ,  $t=12.932$ , and  $P = 0.000$ ). However, brand image of the smart phone is not significantly influenced by the prior purchase satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.002$ ,  $t=-0.056$ , and  $P = -0.002$ ). Therefore, H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>5</sub> were accepted but H<sub>6</sub> was found not supported.

**Table 5: SEM – Structural Relationships – Conceptual Model**

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Path	Regression Weights	S.E	C.R	p	Standardized Regression Weights	Hypothesis Results
H <sub>1</sub>	EWOM→BI	0.280	0.07	4.022	***	0.210	<b>Supported</b>
H <sub>2</sub>	EQUA→BI	0.270	0.042	6.421	***	0.321	<b>Supported</b>
H <sub>3</sub>	EQUAN→BI	0.197	0.048	4.115	***	0.172	<b>Supported</b>
H <sub>4</sub>	BI→PDEC	0.707	0.055	12.932	***	0.629	<b>Supported</b>
H <sub>5</sub>	INFO→BI	0.351	0.035	9.963	***	0.517	<b>Supported</b>
H <sub>6</sub>	PPSAT→BI	-0.002	0.041	-0.056	0.95	-0.002	<b>Not Supported</b>
*** p<.001							

### Discussion

The main aim of the study was to investigate the impact of E-WOM on brand image and brand image impact on consumer purchase intention. Literature review proved that E-WOM significantly influence the brand image. With advancement of technology, people use internet more. Total 6 hypothesizes were framed for the study. With SEM using AMOS, it is found that only H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>5</sub> are supported. Findings revealed that E-WOM (Elseidi & El-Baz, 2016; Torlak et al., 2014; Alwashdeh et al., 2019; Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012; Kala & Chaubey, 2018), information consumption, E-WOM quantity and E-WOM quality (Lin et al., 2013) significantly influence smart phone's brand image. Impact of prior purchase satisfaction (H<sub>6</sub>) on brand image was not found significant. The study observed that purchase decision/intention (Shah et al., 2012; Chao & Liao, 2016; Torlak et al., 2014) of the consumer is influenced by brand image (H<sub>4</sub>).

### Conclusion

In decision making process, WOM plays an important role. To reduce the risk related to purchase of service or product, consumers collect reviews from friends, family, expert person etc. The main objectives of this research were to examine the influence of E-WOM on brand image and brand image on purchase decision of consumer. 6 hypothesizes were set up, out of which 5 were found supported. Torlak et al., (2014) and Jalilvand & Samiei (2012) supported the result of this study that brand image significantly influenced by E-WOM (H<sub>1</sub>). Chao and Liao (2016), Lien et al. (2015) and Torlak et al. (2014) supported that purchase decision of the consumer significantly influenced by brand image (H<sub>4</sub>). Study found that E-WOM quality (H<sub>2</sub>), E-WOM quantity (H<sub>3</sub>) and information consumption (H<sub>5</sub>) significantly influence the brand image but prior purchase satisfaction (H<sub>6</sub>) not significantly influence the brand image. Therefore, it is suggested that marketers should focus on the website community and SNS (social networking sites) to encourage the consumers for expressing their good reviews. Future study can be conducted about negative WOM and its impact on consumer purchase decision.



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