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EWOM and its Effect on Consumer Decision Making

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Abstract,

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has become an important factor on influencing consumer purchasing decisions in the digital era; with the fast growth of social media platforms consumers increasingly rely on shared experiences or perhaps opinions from other users before making purchase decisions. This study examines the impact of eWOM on consumer decision making and studies how online reviews shape consumer views and trust toward products and services.

The research adopts a quantitative and qualitative approaches using a questionnaire distributed to a sample of respondents. Specifically, A Likert scale was made to measure opinions toward eWOM and its sincerity of online reviews and their influence on final purchasing decisions. The data was then collected and was analyzed using descriptive statistical methods to identify patterns and trends in consumer behavior.

The findings show that eWOM has a strong influence on consumer decisions particularly when reviews are perceived as reliable; consumers tend to trust people generated content more than traditional advertising that is shown by big businesses, as it provides real and experience information. The study finishes off with the conclusion that businesses should actively manage their online presence and should also give encouragement towards positive customer feedback to give further growth to consumer trust and purchasing intentions. This research will contribute to a better understanding of eWOM's role in modern consumer behavior and offers insights for marketers seeking to leverage digital platforms effectively.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Topic:

In recent years, how customers in Oman and the larger GCC area access information, express their experiences, and create decisions regarding what they will purchase has transformed. A significant element as to why that is, is the emergence of digital platforms and digital marketing. It is the process of utilizing online platforms and technological advances to promote and market goods and services. These digital channels could be the internet, mobile devices, social media platforms, webinars, search engines, or the plenty of technological advancements currently available (TechTarget, 2024). It has been determined by a market intelligence analysis that the online retail sector in Oman is currently valued at approximately USD 0.75 billion. This market is estimated to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 13.45% (USD 1.4 billion) by 2030 (Mordor Intelligence, 2025). Likewise, the internet usage in Oman is estimated to reach 71.1% of the population. As a result of these numbers, it opens a highly favorable space for internet commerce and the adoption of digital marketing trends (Lloyds Bank Trade, n.d.).

Within this digital ecosystem emerged the electronic word-of-mouth phenomena. Electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) refers to content generated through reviews, comments,

and social media which have an impact on other customers' purchase decisions and brand perception (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Ismagilova et al., 2020). Global research has proven that E-WOM significantly has an impact on consumers' inclination to make a purchase and their overall perception of a brand. In addition, it has been proven in a Saudi Arabian study that E-WOM circulated on e-commerce sites and social media platforms had a significant impact on purchase intentions in which approximately 57.9% of the difference in brand quality perceptions has been noticed (Albarq, 2014)

1.2 Proposed Research Problem:

Even though E-WOM plays a significant role in the consumer purchasing decisions, the credibility of it remains in doubt. Many customers depend heavily on online reviews they fail to check the credibility and conduct their own research, which could lead to bias and inaccurate perceptions of a brand. In the long run, this is harmful as it can inflate the image of companies with false positive reviews or cause unjust harm to businesses receiving false negative reviews. Accordingly, the problem lies in the potential misdirection brought about by unverified eWOM, which impacts consumer trust and business performance (Filiari, 2023).

1.3 Objectives:

1. To investigate the extent to which Omani customers rely on eWOM when making purchase decisions
2. To examine cases where inaccurate or deceptive eWOM adversely impacts company performance
3. To determine how customers analyze and confirm the legitimacy of internet reviews
4. To propose recommendations and strategies on how to improve trust and eWOM credibility in digital marketing settings

1.4 Research Questions:

1. To what degree do Omani customers rely on eWOM when making purchase decisions?
2. How are businesses impacted from deceptive or misleading eWOM?
3. How could customers confirm the credibility of internet reviews?
4. What strategies could businesses in Oman implement to avoid the impact of deceptive eWOM?

1.5 The Scope of the Study:

This study aims to investigate the impact digital word-of-mouth (eWOM) has on client buy choices. It investigates how purchaser trust, brand perception, and purchase decisions are impacted by online critiques and reviews, remarks on social media platforms, and consumer-generated tips in addition to the reliability of those factors. The focus will be on consumers in Oman who are active users of different social media systems and e-commerce websites (which includes Instagram and TikTok) for product analysis and purchase recommendations. Online surveys and interviews with respondents between the ages of 18-45 may be used to collect information between October and December of 2025. To acquire a comprehensive understanding of digital consumer behaviour in Oman, the study will involve members from key cities including Muscat and Sohar.

1.6 Significance of Study:

1. **Useful Information for Companies:** this research supports Omani companies in analyzing the depth and risks of false or unconfirmed eWOM and its impact on brand image. The results from this research will provide tactics to be aware of reviews circling around as well as the appropriate reaction to maintain customer trust.

2. **Customer Awareness:** the research highlights the significance of assessing the authenticity of reviews found online. Once customers confirm, they are able to avoid poor purchasing decisions and are aware of right from wrong.
3. **Academic Contribution:** by demonstrating how eWOM affects consumer behavior and business growth, the research addresses a study gap on the topic in Oman and the GCC. In addition, it establishes a foundation for further research on the influence of social media and digital marketing.
4. **Research Students:** future researchers and students conducting research could benefit from ours. The research would serve as a foundation for others regarding eWOM credibility especially within the GCC region.

1.7 Expected Outcomes:

The findings of this study are predicted to focus on the growing impact of eWOM as it has evolved to become a key driver in shaping the consumer's trust and purchase choices in Oman's e-commerce systems. It is expected that credible and genuine eWOM significantly enhance consumer confidence and brand loyalty. On the other hand, misleading or false reviews may reduce trust and harm business reputation.

Furthermore, this study is expected to emphasize the significance of tracking eWOM credibility

for enterprises. By imposing trust-building strategies which include a verified review system and clear communication, brands can strengthen their recognition and reputation. They are also able to enhance their engagement and overall online presence.

For consumers, the research is anticipated to elevate awareness on the importance of evaluating online facts critically and significantly earlier before forming brand perceptions or making purchase decisions. Overall, the outcomes will offer valuable insights for marketers, researchers, and policymakers in comprehending and enhancing the role of eWOM within Oman's digital marketing landscape.

1.8 Definition of terms:

1) **Electronic Word of Mouth**

(eWOM): It refers to customer announcements or statements about a product, service, or company available as an entity on social media or the internet more broadly, as a republican principle.

- 2) **Consumer Behaviourist:** refers to studying how consumers of different age groups choose to purchase, replace, or dispose of a particular product or service to satisfy their needs and desires.

3) **Consumer Decision-Making:** It refers to the step where the consumer identifies their need and then moves to the decision-making stage to purchase a product or service.

4) **Digital Communication:** It refers to electronic communication and exchange through digital means such as email, text messages, and social media.

5) **Digital Marketing:** It refers to selling products and services using digital and online means.

6) **Purchase Intention:** It indicates the likelihood and willingness of the consumer to purchase a particular product or service.

7) **Motivation Intention:** It refers to the psychological and emotional motivation that encourages consumers to purchase a product or service.

8) **Target Audience:** It refers to a specific segment of people who possess Cobra's characteristics that qualify them to benefit from a particular product or service.

9) **Online Influence:** It refers to the ability to influence and control opinions through digital platforms by using specific content and interactions.

10) **Source credibility:** It refers to the duration during which the public perceives the source and given its popularity and widespread appeal.

Structure of the Research:

	Topics
Chapter 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Background of the Study - Statement of the Research Problem - Objectives of the Study - Research Questions - Scope of the Study - Relevance and Significance of the Study - Expected Outcome - Definition of Terms

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Structure of the Research - Summary
Chapter 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Literature Review
Chapter 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction - Research Design - Population of the Study - Sampling Technique and Sample Size - Research Instruments and Validity and Reliability Testing - Data Collection Techniques - Data Analysis Technique - Legal, Ethical and Social Issues
Chapter 4	Data Analysis and Presentation
Chapter 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction - Summary of findings - Conclusion - Recommendations - Future research
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Title Page - Abstract - Chapter 1 - Chapter 2 - Chapter 3

Final Project Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chapter 4 - Chapter 5 - Chapter 6 - References - Appendix
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1.10 Summary of Chapter 1, and introduction to Chapter 2:

In simple words, this research explores the growing influence that of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) has on consumer purchasing decisions in Oman. Digital platforms are constantly being expanded one way or another in the GCC, so naturally, Omani customers will rely on posted reviews, comments ratings, and overall content produced by or of online stores. With Oman's e-commerce market projected to reach USD 1.4 billion by the year of 2030, and the ever-rising internet usage, understanding the credibility and impact of eWOM has become very essential for us. However, credibility nowadays can be very easily a cause of concern, misleading or false reviews can negatively affect a business therefore completely keeping customer shy away from it.

The study researched on how consumers will depend on eWOM whether reviews were negative or positive, with the use of mixed methods, data was collected through surveys and interviews. Findings show the credibility of eWOM and how much it strengthens one's trust. Information gathered provided convenient insights for companies and consumers.

In the next chapter, Literature Review, the researcher delves into a handful of cited reference points that were gathered from journal articles that showcase author's theories on topics related to E-WOM and the shaping of consumer decision making, generally. The researcher then comments on whether they agreed with the statement, or not- and why.

as consumers increasingly rely on online related reviews; traditional marketing communications are often supplemented or perhaps replaced by peer-based information sources. The literature on eWOM highlights its role in shaping a brand across various industries; this body of research emphasizes how factors such as credibility type affects the persuasive power of online information; making eWOM a critical element in understanding modern consumer behavior.

2.2 Literature reviews

1) To investigate the extent to which Omani customers rely on eWOM when making purchase decisions

According to Jeseo & Tataru (2025), 'Defensive responses that call out illegitimate reviewers can increase third-party purchase intentions by shifting blame to the reviewer, diminishing the reviewer's credibility. However, overly aggressive callouts damage the service provider's credibility and reduce purchase intentions' (Jeseo & Tataru, 2025). The researcher agrees with this statement purely because facing false reviews would help keep a brand's reputation safe and builds a better relationship with customers and possible customers, however, aggressive replies to backlash is seen as unprofessional, which would just ruin any trust a brand can have with their buyers, and discourage potential buyers. In addition to that, according to Kumar et al. (2025), 'digital influencers are having a

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

A literature review is a very important part in a project, it is the summary and analysis of existing research put up by authors on sites like Emerald related to a specific topic, used to identify trends and establish a foundation for the current study.

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has become a powerful influence on consumer decision making in today's digital marketplace,

tremendous impact today, influencing consumers' purchasing decisions through their presence on social media platforms. These influencers have a broad fan base, and their opinions can significantly impact how people perceive and choose products or services.' This highlights how consumer trust and behavior increasingly depend on these influencers. The researcher strongly agrees with this study, as the world today relies heavily on these influencers to make purchasing decisions based on their interactions with them, and the fact that the parasocial relationships and the underlying trust factor that results from these relationships are a major driver of purchase intent.

As for e-WOM, according to a study by Zhang et al. (2025), 'electronic word-of-mouth has been heavily influencing consumer purchasing decisions. Especially ones related to social commerce and short-form video platforms. The authors found that interactive videos and videos with hooks create a deep state of enjoyment and absorption known as "flow" which increases a customer's emotional attachment to the brand and creates a deeper level of trust. As a result, customers are more likely to make purchases and recommend the brand to their social network' (Zhang et al., 2025). These results align with the main concept found in e-WOM literature that places credibility, authenticity, and emotional connection as significant drivers of turning consumer attention into actual purchases. The researcher agrees with the findings in this article. Furthermore, according to Ghenie et al.

(2025), 'word-of-mouth marketing has become an integral part of the world of social commerce. In this study, the extent of the impact of short video ads is specifically addressed. These ads are often widely available on social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram and are based on building trust in the brand through word-of-mouth marketing. This greatly enhances the decisions and purchase intentions of followers and consumers.' The researchers strongly agree on the importance of the vast impact that short videos have on social media, forming word-of-mouth electronically, contributing to raising the purchasing intention of customers today (Ghenie et al., 2025).

2) To examine cases where inaccurate or deceptive eWOM adversely impacts company performance

According to Chang, Lee, and associates (2025), "key pathways linking golf engagement to media consumption and WOM recommendations have been recognized, with motivation and identification acting as essential predictors and gender and marital status shaping the intensity of those effects." The researcher agrees with those findings because the study demonstrates how mental elements and personal identification affect the chance of spreading eWOM, this aligns with how Oman shoppers interact with online statistics. Even if the case is leisure golf, the fundamental concept remains identical: clients are extra inclined to express

opinions when they feel personally engaged or driven with the activity or brand. Gender moderating effects mirror real-life online habits, as numerous demographic groups regularly exhibit variable stages of trust and engagement with online opinions. This aligns with Objective 1, explaining why clients depend on online word-of-mouth that is consistent with their identity. It additionally highlights the assumption that eWOM legitimacy is determined by personal relevance in preference to data quantity.

Helal et al. (2025) investigated how influencer e-WOM and purchaser e-WOM affect e-reputation and repurchase intentions in the food enterprise. Their findings monitor that both styles of e-WOM have a good effect on e-recognition, with customer feedback outperforming influencer content material twice as much. It is also discovered that as social-information cues become overloaded, they lessen the impact of purchaser e-WOM. While these takes facilitate to apprehend how different voices affect brand recognition, the researcher disagrees with the extent to which the study generalizes the strength of customer e-WOM. This article focuses on primarily the positive aspects of e-WOM while it is important to note that they may not always be accurate. Specifically in virtual environments where deceptive or misleading critiques are common. Furthermore, the food-influencer context might not absolutely constitute how Omani customers

investigate critiques throughout large internet platforms.

3) To determine how customers analyze and confirm the legitimacy of internet reviews

According to Bahri-Ammari et al. (2025), "social capital advantages had been a vital aspect influencing digital brand network pride and brand engagement, with engagement substantially improving e-WOM and loyalty throughout nations." The researcher agrees with these findings considering the fact that they demonstrate how active engagement in social networks boosts trust, identity, and the opportunity of spreading eWOM. This is related to Objective four, which aims to increase the legitimacy of virtual word-of-mouth. When customers experience an engaged and thrilled community, they may be much more likely to leave actual and truthful online opinion. The study also demonstrates that brand engagement will increase loyalty, which improves the long-term efficacy of eWOM.

Choi, Lee, Northup, and Han (2025) found that "consumers' individual cultural value orientations of collectivism and power distance positively affect their eWOM behaviors through several motivations to maintain and enhance social relationships with others on SNSs." For consumers in both countries, the collective's

influence on eWOM activities has been mitigated by comparable social relationship incentives. In contrast, the effect of power distance was mitigated by distinct social connection motives, with especially substantial differences in normative influence and connecting or bonding social capital. The researcher agrees with these findings, which show that social and cultural variables influence why people share eWOM. Choi, Lee, Northup, and Han (2025) found that "consumers' individual cultural value orientations of collectivism and power distance positively affect their eWOM behaviors through several motivations to maintain and enhance social relationships with others on SNSs." For consumers in both countries, the collective's influence on eWOM activities has been mitigated by comparable social relationship incentives. In contrast, the impact of power distance became mitigated by wonderful social connection motives, with in particular big differences in normative influence and connecting or bonding social capital. The researcher agrees with those findings, which display that social and cultural variables have an impact on why individuals circulate eWOM.

4) To propose recommendations and strategies on how to improve trust and eWOM credibility in digital marketing settings

According to Kwan, 'We find evidence that a significant number of NMPs are spreading

brand-related eWOM. Using the principles of U & G, we also uncover their motivations for doing so. These include meeting aspirational, informational, and social needs' (Victor Kwan, 2024). The researcher agrees, because NMPs (Non-Market Participants) genuinely influence a brands perception while also aligns with U & G (Uses and Gratifications) framework. Many people of various backgrounds and opinions share eWom to give them a satisfaction about their aspiration related needs, such as expressing oneself identity. Others are motivated by informational needs, wanting to guide other future customers with their process of purchasing from that brand. Social needs also play a crucial role, because sharing eWom helps them connect with sought after communities, therefor gaining social approval. All these aforementioned motivations help explain why eWOM is impactful. And in another journal article on social media's impact on a consumer's decision, based on the author's research, 'The findings reveal that social attractiveness has the strongest positive impact on variety-seeking behavior, with trustworthiness also playing a significant role. In contrast, perceived expertise, parasocial relationships, attitude homophily and physical attractiveness did not show statistically significant effects. Furthermore, storytelling was found to significantly mediate the relationship between influencer traits and consumers' variety-seeking behavior.' (Gaith al-Abdullah, et al. 2025). The researcher disagrees with these findings because variety-seeking behavior often

is driven by a deeper cognitive factor that further extend way beyond simple social attractiveness. A cosumer typically relies more on a perceived trust in an influencer's knowledge when deciding to try new products offered by a brand, not just based on said brand's social appeal. It seems rather unlikely that a parasocial relationship would have no influence on a brand, as someone's emotional connection usually plays a meaningful role in shaping exploratory consumer behavior.

To futher study this, according to Ywan et al., 'The results show that the negative impact of online NCRs of search attribute, experience attribute and credence attribute on purchase intention is gradually increasing according to correlation level with the individual and trust plays a significant mediating role on this relationship. In addition, online NCRs exert a more pronounced negative effect on low-standardization products (e.g. apple) than that of standardized products (e.g. milk) and green certification effectively mitigates the negative impact of search attribute NCRs but fails to alleviate the negative effects of experience or credence attribute NCRs.' (Mengqui Ywan, et al. 2025). The researcher agrees with these findings, consumers increasingly put trust into when interpreting online negative customer reviews, especially for products where personal self is high, low standardization products will naturally face a stronger level of negative impact on a brand since quality will vary more therefore

making reviews more influential. Logically, green certification helps reduce concerns related to attributes related to searching but can't meaningfully address experience, which depends on personal usage. On the other hand, according to the authors, 'The findings confirm that eWOM volume significantly influences platform performance. However, this positive effect diminishes with high inconsistencies between star ratings and textual eWOM or increased external uncertainty.' (Yang Li, et al. 2025). The researcher simply disagrees with the authors; platform performance is influenced by way more than just the amount volume of eWOM and its impact does not necessarily weaken due to its inconsistencies. Consumers are generally accustomed to getting mixed reviews while often relying on a deeper pattern rather than a picture-perfect alignment between star ratings.

And according to Beck B et al, 'Findings reveal that eWOM provided by strong ties (recommendations and referrals; social media communities) is superior to weak ties (ratings and reviews). Surprisingly, ratings and reviews do not significantly relate to trust in the retailer, suggesting that this information may be necessary but not sufficient for trusting retailers on social media.' (Beck B et al. 2023), The researcher agrees with the study which focuses on electronic word of mouth through shopping via social media platforms, the study shows us how to identify the most frequently used types of electronic word of mouth on social media platforms (such as ratings, reviews,

recommendations, referrals, and communities) and determine their impact on consumer trust in the seller before making a purchase decision. And related to that is a study made by Vu Dinh et al 'The study identified the evolution process and nine thematic clusters exploring the effects of eWOM on tourism destinations. Moreover, it proposed future research directions, emphasizing the dissemination mechanisms of eWOM, green eWOM on advanced digital platforms, its effect on sustainable tourism destinations and tourist behavior across diverse cultural contexts.' (Vu Dinh et al., 2025) The researcher agrees with this study because it simply explains the impact of digital technology and the ease of exchanging experiences in the tourism sector, transforming them into global experiences (e-WOM) and their adoption by tourists as a reference for evaluating and choosing tourist destinations. The digital impact of online word of mouth through reviews is broad and multifaceted. The researcher strongly agrees with everything the study presented because it is indeed a reality in our time.

According to Yang sun et al., that 'The results show that when consumers receive negative e-WOM, it increases their resistance to innovation, consequently raising the probability of them sharing this negative feedback. However, strong customer loyalty mitigates this interaction. Interestingly, customer loyalty increases the likelihood of consumers sharing negative e-WOM upon receiving it. This suggests that loyal consumers tend to be more

inclined to share information, regardless of its positivity or negativity.' (Yang Sun et al. 2024) The researcher agrees with this study, because the clarification of the relationship between two important factors in consumer purchasing decisions: brand and purchase intention. This relationship is overwhelmingly positive; the more credible electronic media are, the higher the percentage of consumers who decide to buy, as brand directly influences purchase intention. Furthermore, the impact of brand image and trust in the brand or product is closely linked to purchase intention among customers, albeit indirectly.

The author found that 'This paper identified that electronic word of mouth can have a significant impact on the sales performance of a business.' (Emerald Publishing, 2024) The researcher agrees with this study because it highlights the importance of word of mouth marketing, which is abundant online (such as recommendations, reviews, and ratings), and its ability to influence sales performance in companies. The researcher agrees with this study because it clearly explains the impact of (Electronic word of mouth) marketing on a company's sales flow. This study can be a valuable resource for anyone seeking to improve sales by focusing on building a strong word of mouth marketing strategy, which can contribute to boosting the company's online sales performance.

2.3 Digital marketing framework

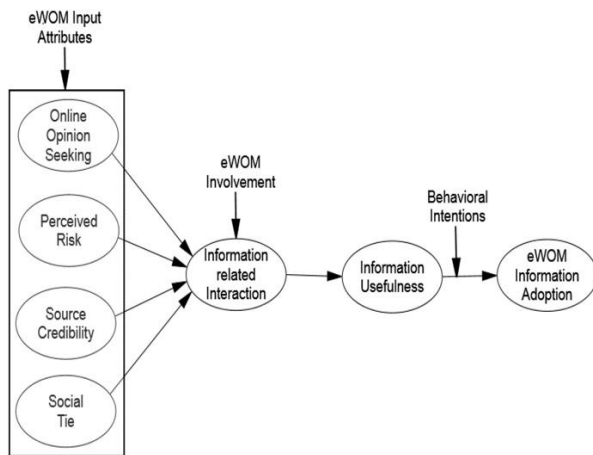


Figure 2.1

The research model gives the visual of how key eWOM components influence the consumer buying decision making process which include online opinions as independent factors that shape how information is perceived to a consumer; these elements feed into eWOM channels which would be platforms where someone can leave a review such as social media which functions as a medium through which information is delivered, the model suggests that the effectiveness of eWOM channels depends on both the quantity and credibility of shared opinions. Ultimately, exposure to eWOM through these channels influences consumer's opinion of products and services.

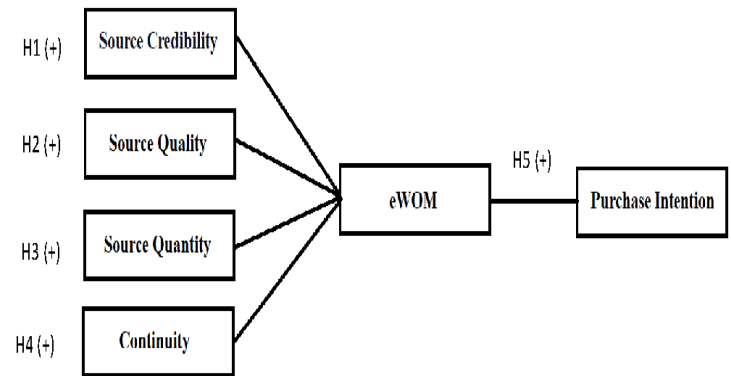


Figure 2.2

This diagram presents a conceptual research model examining factors influencing purchase intention through electronic word of mouth (eWOM); Four independent variables which are source credibility, source quality, source quantity, and continuity and are hypothesized to have positive effects (H1–H4) on eWOM. This suggests that trustworthy sources, high quality information, a greater volume of reviews, and consistent messaging enhance the effectiveness of eWOM. In turn, eWOM is hypothesized (H5) to positively influence purchase intention, indicating its mediating role. Overall, the model emphasizes eWOM as a key mechanism through which information-related factors shape consumers' purchasing decisions.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction:

Chapter three outlines the research methodology adopted for this study as well as explains how the research was systematically conducted; research methodology refers to the overall approach that was used to collect data in order to answer the research objectives. It plays a crucial role in ensuring that the study is reliably structured. A well defined methodology allows the researcher to choose appropriate research or sampling methods and at the same time minimizing errors. This chapter justifies the selected research design and methods, in doing so demonstrating how they support the investigation.

3.2.1 Research design:

The purpose of this research is to examine how electronic word of mouth influences consumer varying perceptions on digital markets. This study adopts exploratory and descriptive research approaches; The exploratory approach assists in gaining initial insights into electronic word of mouth and identifies key factors influencing consumer decision making. It allows the researcher to explore the opinions of consumers. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in this research, the descriptive approach is used to clearly describe consumer behaviors or attitudes related to

eWOM, providing a structured understanding of how it affects purchasing decisions.

3.2.2 Qualitative and Quantitative approaches

Quantitative research is focused on collecting and analyzing numerical data to identify patterns, In this study, questionnaires are distributed to the general audience to assess perceptions of the eWOM in todays society. The results are easy to analyze statistically, In contrast, qualitative research examines non-numerical data, such as interviews, to gain deeper insights into personal experiences, though interpretation and presentation are more challenging.

3.3 Population of the study:

The study population consists of individuals and consumers in society who are exposed to electronic word-of-mouth that influences their purchasing decisions as a result of their widespread use of the internet today, from different ages (18-50), both genders (male and female) and different education levels (diploma, bachelor's, master's, etc.).

3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

Sampling Technique

A non-probability convenience sampling approach will be used on this research. This technique is appropriate as the study intends to

collect reviews from folks that have access to the internet regularly and have experienced electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) via social networks, online feedback, and e-commerce websites. University college students, working people, and individuals of the Omani public will all be selected as respondents relying on their availability and willingness to participate.

Convenience sampling is appropriate for this study since it enables the researcher to efficaciously get information from a huge variety of customers in a restrained quantity of time whilst guaranteeing that participants are relevant to the research objectives. This method makes it feasible to collect real authentic reviews and behaviors given that eWOM is often encountered in every day digital interactions.

Sample Size

The quantitative survey's intended sample size is between 70-100 respondents. This is predicted to be enough for recognizing massive inclinations and patterns in customers' dependence on eWOM. For the qualitative aspect, a smaller size of 4-8 respondents might be selected from this group so as to provide deeper insights into personal stories, credibility assessments, and trust improvement related to online reviews.

3.5 Research Instruments and Validity and Reliability Testing

Research instruments refer to the tools used to collect data, such as structured questionnaires

that are designed to gather relevant information on electronic word of mouth and consumer decision making. In this research, questionnaires are used because they efficiently capture respondent's perceptions, Validity refers to the extent to which the instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure, which has the questions that align with the research objectives, Reliability relates to the consistency of the instrument in producing stable results over time. The selected respondents are considered valid as they actively engage with online platforms as well as rely on eWOM when making purchase decisions, making their responses more credible.

3.6 Data collection techniques:

The data was collected through several methods and techniques using primary sources that rely heavily on consumer responses to measure their impact (online word of mouth) in the form of a questionnaire divided into different types of questions that help us collect information from them in the best way, in addition to secondary sources such as websites to support the theoretical framework and additional information on the main topic.

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques:

Data analysis techniques were used to obtain information that facilitated our access to key findings and measured the impact of online word-of-mouth on consumer purchasing

decisions, through analyzing consumer responses, data, and answers via Google Forms in the form of statistics.

3.8 Legal, Ethical, Social Considerations and Sustainability

To ensure this research paper aligns with ethical procedures- which includes acquired consent of questionnaire participants, as well as research paper authors, participating in this study was a voluntary choice among all participants. All participants were provided with crystal clear information about the purpose of this research. Participants were given the freedom to withdraw at any point, without any consequences. To keep all participant's data safe, all participants were kept anonymous, and answers were kept private and only used for academic research and were put under passwords that were handed out to the researchers only. This study posed no physical or psychological harm to the participants.

Practicing these precautions - that are following Research Ethics and Bio-Safety Approval guidelines - does not only establish confidentiality, but also minimizes harm that could be done, while also maintaining integrity through transparency.

By highlighting the importance of responsibility, transparency, and credibility in digital word-of-mouth (eWOM), the research places an emphasis on moral and accountable digital marketing strategies from a sustainable

point of view. The study recommends companies to include long-term strategies that promote honest communication and consumer trust as an alternative to obtaining short-term gains though misleading communication and manipulation at the expense of losing trust and credibility down the line. Lastly, the study supports sustainability by using online surveys instead of paper usage and physical resources.

3.9 Summary

This chapter demonstrated the application of the research design to study the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communications on the perceptions and purchasing behaviors of the consumers in the online market. The type of research design employed in the study was an exploratory and descriptive study to obtain the initial understanding of the consumer perceptions, in addition to systematizing the behavior and attitudes of the consumers about the impact of the eWOM. For the collection of the data, the structured questionnaires were used to obtain the primary data by distributing them to the internet users who actively use the internet for the online platforms, and the secondary data were used to add strength to the theoretical framework. Moreover, the type of the sampling employed in the study was the convenience type of the non-probability sampling, and the sample for the study was estimated to be between 70 to 100 to determine the trends, and the further smaller qualitative samples were used to obtain the detailed information. The data was analyzed

with the help of the statistical tools using Google Forms. The study strictly followed the proper ethics, laws, and the social issues, and the provision of informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and sustainability was ensured. In sum, the proposed research design enabled reliability, validity, and the assurance of research ethics.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction:

This chapter reveals statistics collected through a questionnaire that was meticulously designed the researchers to step into the shoe of the general audience and to find out and to understand the impact of online word of mouth on consumer's online purchasing decisions. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions to gather as wide range of information as possible to come up with the most viable information from consumers opinions.

The various question types in this questionnaire that we conducted gave us the opportunity to obtain qualitative and quantitative information about the impact of online word of mouth on consumer purchasing decisions, and these answers were given to us by an audience that has different backgrounds and experiences. The closed ended questions provided a more statistic based understanding and evaluations of quantitative data on each idea. Meanwhile, the open ended questions allowed us to understand consumer's current perspectives and opinions on

eWOM and its impact on their purchasing decisions. This qualitative information contributed to a comprehensive and general understanding of the topic, which enabled us to get an insight onto a consumer's mind, which we relay in this research.

4.2.1 Quantitative data analysis

The demographic characteristics of the respondents assist in establishing a tracking on the general validity and representatives of the findings.

Gender:

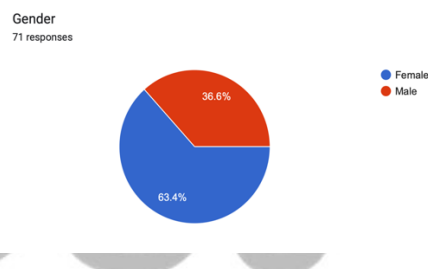


Figure 4.2.1.1

In regard to gender, a small majority of 36.6% were male consumers and a large majority of 63.4% were female consumers. This indicates a minor increment in the form of increased involvement of female customers in the process of evaluating online reviews and electronic word-of-mouth communication during the process of making purchasing decisions.

Age:

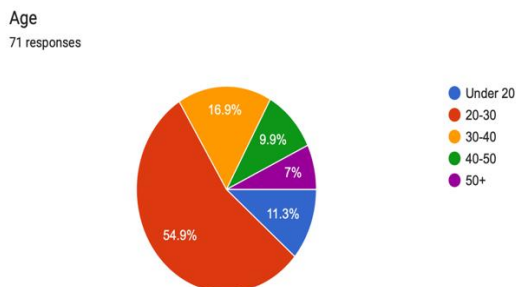


Figure 4.2.1.2

In terms of age distribution, the results noted that 54.9% of the respondents were aged 20-30 years of age hence concluding that young adults form the largest segment that is very reliant on eWOM in order to make informed buying decisions. Individuals under the age of 20 years constituted 11.3% of respondents, which reflect a certain level of influence of such individuals. On the other hand, 16.9% between 30-50 years and 9.9% were between 40-50 years, with 7% of them being above the age of 50.

Educational Level:

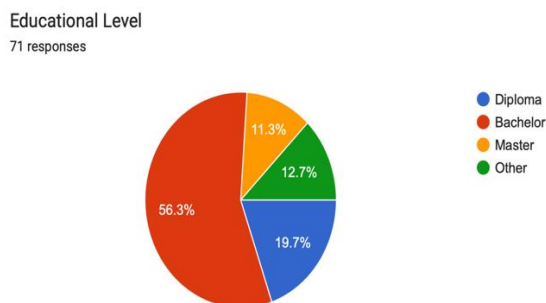


Figure 4.2.1.3

According to the results from the questionnaire, the level of education achieved by the participants also indicates the presence of an educated, informed, and tech-savvy set of consumers, adding to the credibility of the study results. Most of the respondents (56.3%) possess a bachelor's degree, which points to the presence of well-educated individuals who are quite likely to be aware of research, evaluation of information, or online decision-making processes. In addition, 19.7% of the participants possess a diploma-level education, signifying applied level knowledge that also promotes informed decision-making processes on the part of the consumers.

Participants who possess an advanced master's degree comprised 11.3% of the total respondents, signifying the presence of highly educated individuals who are also likely to critically evaluate the source of information, raise doubts about the credibility of the information, or consider different perspectives prior to making purchasing decisions. The remaining respondents (12.7%) possessed different forms of education.

4.2.2 Yes/No Questions

Does electronic word of mouth indirectly influence your purchasing decisions?
71 responses

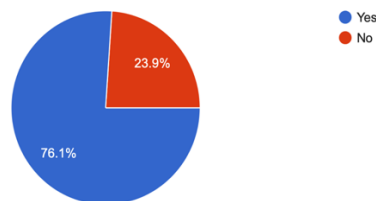


Figure 4.2.2.1

Q1) When we asked the individuals who participated in this survey about the direct impact of online word of mouth on their purchasing decisions, the majority answered "yes." 76.1% agreed that electronic word of mouth directly influences their purchasing decisions, reflecting the powerful impact of online word of mouth on consumers today. This is due to the proliferation of online services such as reviews, ratings, and other tools that facilitate consumers receiving information about any available service, product, or idea before making a purchase. The smallest answer, "no," was 23.9%, a small percentage that doesn't directly rely on ratings and reviews to make a choice and decision independently of the ratings and recommendations surrounding the product or service, whatever they may be.

Is electronic word of mouth a decisive factor when comparing alternatives?
71 responses

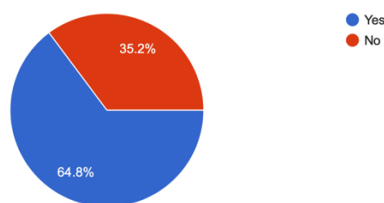


Figure 4.2.2.2

Q2 When people are asked if online recommendations are important when they are looking at options a lot of them say yes. In fact, 64.8% of people answered "yes". This shows that online recommendations from people are really important to many consumers when they are trying to decide what to buy. Online recommendations help people make choices that're right for them. They can look at what other people think and quickly find something that meets their needs and what they want. This also helps them pick something that fits with what they believe in and what's important, to them. Conversely, 35.2% answered "no," representing a moderate percentage indicating that consumers do not rely on online recommendations as a decisive factor when comparing available alternatives. This reflects the individuality of consumers in making purchasing decisions.

Do positive online reviews encourage you to buy a product quicker?
71 responses

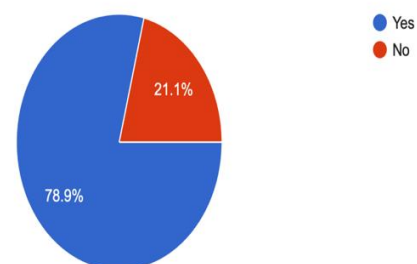


Figure 4.2.2.3

Q3 People usually do something when they see things about it. This is also true when people are buying things. We asked people if good reviews on the internet make them buy things faster. Most people said yes. In fact 78.9 percent of people said that good reviews make them decide to buy something. This shows that what people say about things on the internet really affects what people buy. Good online reviews are, like people telling their friends about something. This really impacts what people decide to purchase. On the other hand, 21.1% answered "no," stating that positive online reviews do not influence their purchasing decisions more quickly than others, as they do not rely on them as a primary factor in making a purchase, meaning that online word-of-mouth does not affect their purchasing decisions.

Do you believe that user opinions are more truthful than companies advertising messages?
71 responses

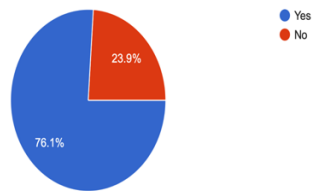


Figure 4.2.2.4

q4) In this question, we discover the source of consumers' faith and belief: where does it lie? Is it through consumer opinions or advertising messages? 76.1% answered "yes," supporting their feeling that user opinions are genuine and can be relied upon as a truthful electronic word of mouth that may be taken into consideration and positively influence their purchasing decisions, unlike advertising messages from companies that may serve their own personal goals rather than the public interest. Meanwhile, 23.9% answered "no," rejecting the statement "user opinions may be more truthful than advertising messages from companies," believing that advertising messages from companies are also truthful, just like the opinions of others at other times. Some advertising messages from some companies may be successful, and others may fail, and this also happens in the diversity of user opinions due to the difference in their desires and needs. Finally, we understand the large percentage of consumers who are greatly influenced today by electronic word of mouth, which is reflected in their decisions. This also gives us perspective on the importance of building a good reputation for

any company in the world, which serves its institutional interests and also meets the needs of society.

4.3: Likert Scale

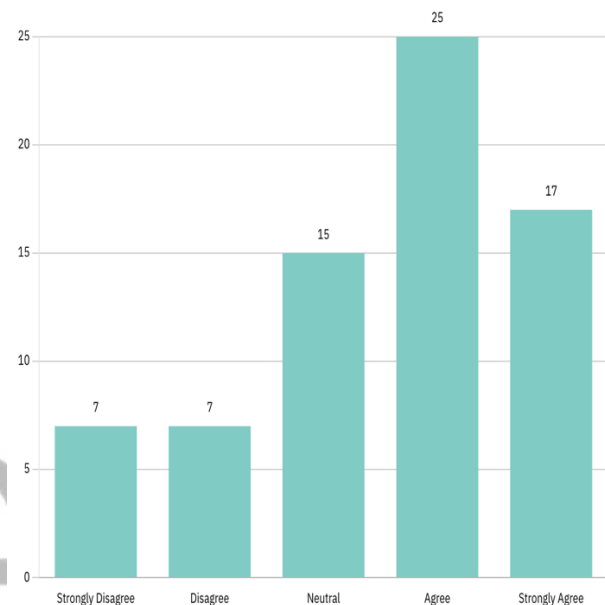


Figure 4.3.1 Online reviews influence my decision to purchase a product or service.

This bar chart displays the findings of the statement assessing online reviews influence my decision to purchase a product or service., among 71 respondents, the majority expressed a positive perception, with 35.2% selecting "4" (agree) and 23.9% selecting "5" (strongly agree). This indicates that nearly 60% of participants feel that online reviews significantly affect their purchase decisions. A moderate portion, 21.1%, chose the neutral option "3," suggesting that some respondents are undecided or have mixed experiences regarding the impact of online

reviews. Only a small fraction disagreed, with 9.9% selecting “2” and 9.9% selecting “1” (strongly disagree), highlighting that very few participants consider online reviews to have little or no effect on their purchasing behavior. Overall, the data suggests that consumers largely recognize online reviews as an important factor influencing their decisions when buying products or services. (Jeseo & Tatara, 2025).

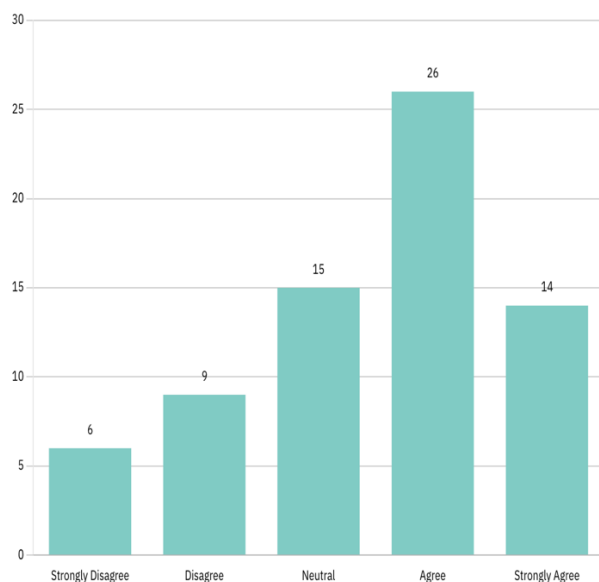


Figure 4.3.2 Recommendations from other consumers online influence my final purchasing decision.

This bar chart displays the findings of the statement assessing recommendations from other consumers online influence my final purchasing decision., among 70 respondents, most showed a favorable view, with 37.1% selecting “4” (agree) and 20.0% selecting “5” (strongly agree). This indicates that over half of the participants perceive online recommendations from other

consumers as significantly impacting their purchase choices. A moderate portion, 21.4%, chose the neutral option “3,” suggesting that some respondents neither agree nor disagree, possibly reflecting limited exposure or mixed experiences. Only a smaller fraction disagreed, with 12.9% selecting “2” and 8.6% selecting “1” (strongly disagree), highlighting that few participants consider online recommendations to have little effect on their purchasing behavior. Overall, the findings suggest that consumers generally recognize eWOM, in the form of other consumers’ recommendations, as an influential factor in shaping their final purchase decisions. (Zhang et al., 2025).

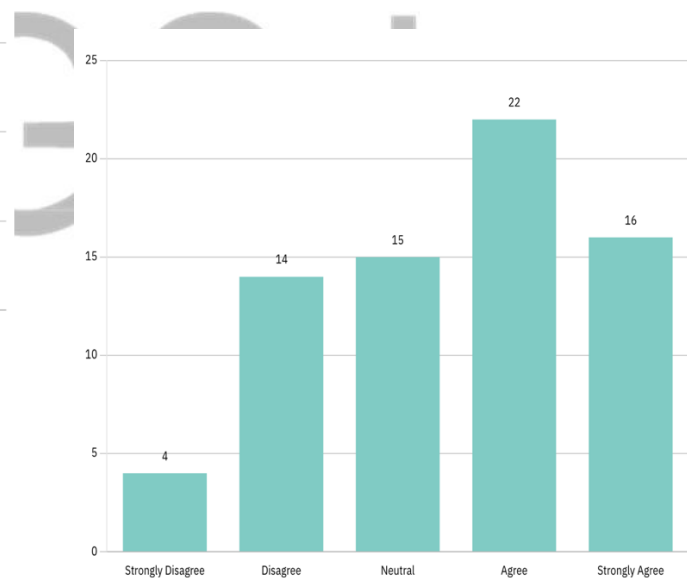


Figure 4.3.3 Electronic word of mouth plays a significant role in shaping my buying behavior.

This bar chart displays the findings of the statement evaluating Electronic word of mouth plays a significant role in shaping my buying behavior, among 71 respondents, most showed a

positive view, with 31.0% choosing “4” (agree) and 22.5% choosing “5” (strongly agree). This suggests that over half (53.5%) of respondents feel that eWOM plays a significant role in shaping their buying behavior. A moderate portion, 21.1%, selected the neutral choice “3,” indicating they neither agree nor disagree, possibly reflecting varied experiences or limited reliance on online recommendations. Conversely, a smaller fraction expressed disagreement, with 19.7% choosing “2” and 5.6% choosing “1” (strongly disagree), emphasizing that only a few participants consider eWOM unimportant in their purchasing decisions. Overall, the data indicate that consumers generally recognize electronic word-of-mouth as an influential factor in their buying behavior. (Ghenie et al., 2025).

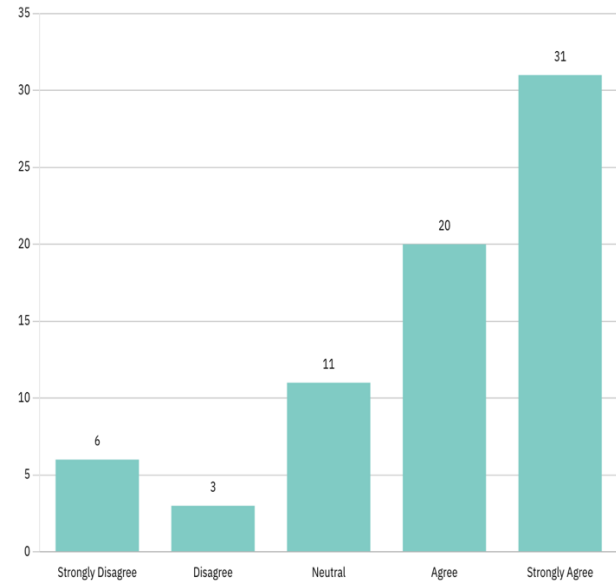


Figure 4.3.4 I actively search for online reviews before making a purchase decision.

This bar chart displays the findings of the statement evaluating the extent to which consumers actively search for online reviews before making a purchase decision, among 71 respondents, most showed a favorable view, with 28.2% choosing “4” (agree) and 43.7% choosing “5” (strongly agree). This indicates that a substantial majority (71.9%) of participants actively consider online reviews when making purchase decisions. A moderate portion, 15.5%, selected the neutral choice “3,” suggesting some respondents neither agree nor disagree, possibly reflecting occasional use of online reviews. Conversely, a small fraction disagreed, with 4.2% choosing “2” and 8.5% choosing “1” (strongly disagree), emphasizing that few consumers ignore online recommendations. Overall, the data indicate that online reviews are widely recognized as an important influence on

consumer purchasing behavior. (Chang, Lee, et al. 2025).

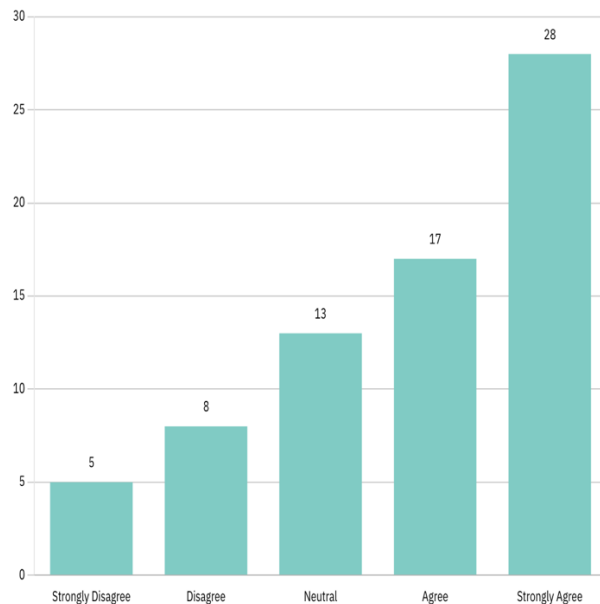


Figure 4.3.5 I trust online customer reviews more than traditional advertisements.

This bar chart displays the findings of the statement the level of trust consumers place in online customer reviews compared to traditional advertisements, among 71 respondents, most showed a favorable view, with 23.9% choosing “4” (agree) and 39.4% choosing “5” (strongly agree). This suggests that over 63% of respondents trust online reviews more than traditional advertisements. A moderate portion, 18.3%, selected the neutral choice “3,” indicating they neither agree nor disagree, possibly reflecting occasional reliance on reviews. Conversely, a smaller fraction expressed disagreement, with 11.3% choosing

“2” and 7.0% choosing “1” (strongly disagree), emphasizing that only a few participants rely more on traditional advertisements. Overall, the data indicate that online customer reviews are widely recognized as a more credible and influential source for shaping consumer purchase decisions. (Helal et al. 2025).

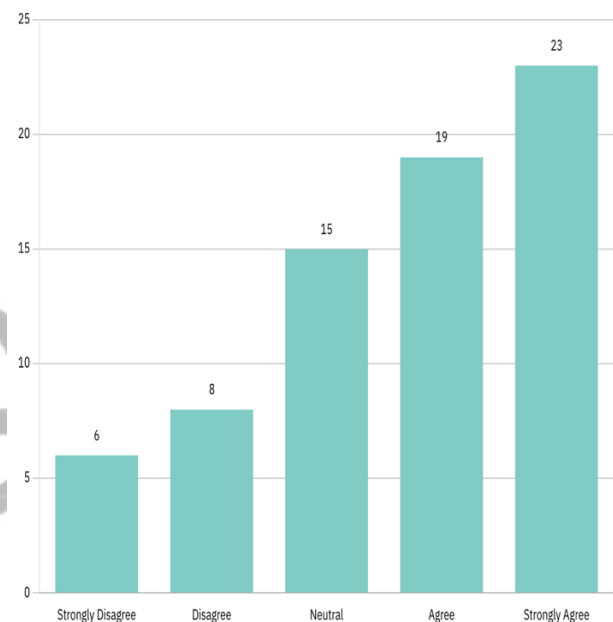


Figure 4.3.6 I believe online reviews provide reliable information about product quality.

This bar chart displays the findings of the statement evaluating consumer perceptions of the reliability of online reviews in providing information about product quality, among 71 respondents, most showed a positive view, with 26.8% choosing “4” (agree) and 32.4% choosing “5” (strongly agree). This suggests that nearly 60% of participants believe online reviews provide reliable information about products. A

moderate portion, 21.1%, selected the neutral choice “3,” indicating some respondents neither agree nor disagree, possibly reflecting mixed experiences with online reviews. Conversely, a smaller fraction disagreed, with 11.3% choosing “2” and 8.5% choosing “1” (strongly disagree), emphasizing that only a few participants doubt the reliability of online reviews. Overall, the data indicate that consumers generally recognize online reviews as a trustworthy source of information regarding product quality. (Bahri-Ammari et al. 2025).

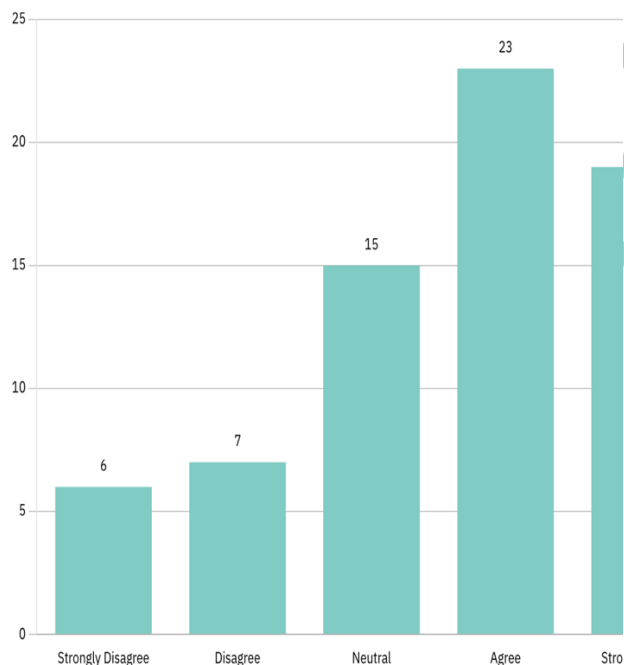


Figure 4.3.7 I consider the number of reviews when evaluating a product or service.

This bar chart displays the findings of the statement evaluating the extent to which consumers consider the number of online

reviews when evaluating a product or service, among 71 respondents, most showed a favorable view, with 32.9% choosing “4” (agree) and 27.1% choosing “5” (strongly agree). This indicates that over 60% of participants take the number of reviews into account when assessing products or services. A moderate portion, 21.4%, selected the neutral choice “3,” suggesting some respondents neither agree nor disagree, possibly reflecting inconsistent use of review quantity in decision-making. Conversely, a smaller fraction expressed disagreement, with 10.0% choosing “2” and 8.6% choosing “1” (strongly disagree), emphasizing that only a few participants disregard review quantity. Overall, the data suggest that the number of reviews is generally recognized by consumers as an important factor in evaluating products and services. (Choi, et al 2025).

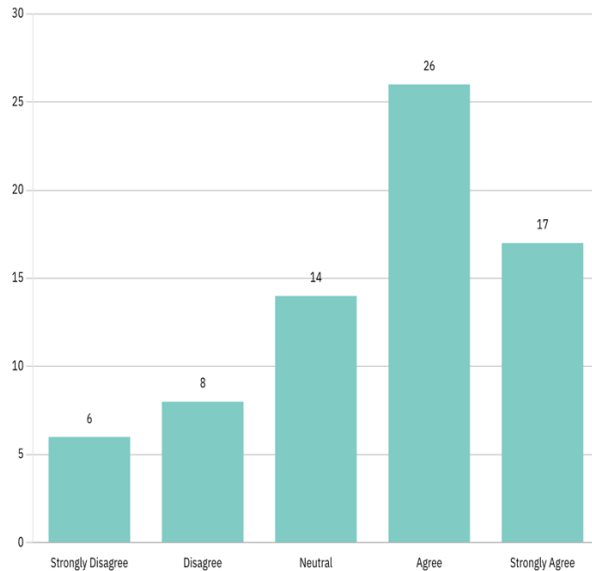


Figure 4.3.8 Negative online reviews discourage me from purchasing a product or service.

This bar chart displays the findings of the statement question evaluating the impact of negative online reviews on consumers' willingness to purchase a product or service, among 71 respondents, most showed a favorable view, with 36.6% choosing "4" (agree) and 23.9% choosing "5" (strongly agree). This indicates that over 60% of participants are discouraged from purchasing when encountering negative reviews. A moderate portion, 19.7%, selected the neutral choice "3," suggesting that some respondents neither agree nor disagree, possibly reflecting occasional indifference to negative reviews. Conversely, a smaller fraction expressed disagreement, with 11.3% choosing "2" and 8.5% choosing "1" (strongly disagree), emphasizing that only a few participants are unaffected by negative reviews. Overall, the data suggest that negative online reviews are

generally recognized as a significant deterrent in consumer purchase decisions. (Gaith al-Abdullah, et al. 2025).

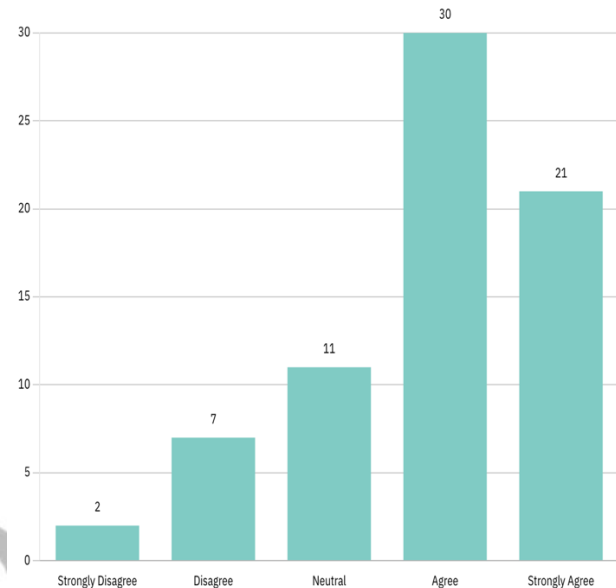


Figure 4.3.9 Positive online reviews increase my confidence in a brand.

This bar chart displays the findings of the statement question evaluating the influence of positive online reviews on consumer confidence in a brand, among 71 respondents, most showed a favorable view, with 42.3% choosing "4" (agree) and 29.6% choosing "5" (strongly agree). This indicates that over 70% of participants feel more confident in a brand after reading positive online reviews. A moderate portion, 15.5%, selected the neutral choice "3," suggesting some respondents neither agree nor disagree, possibly reflecting mixed experiences. Conversely, a smaller fraction expressed disagreement, with 9.9% choosing "2" and 2.8%

choosing “1” (strongly disagree), emphasizing that very few participants are unaffected by positive reviews. Overall, the data suggest that positive online reviews are widely recognized as enhancing consumer confidence in brands. (Ywan, et al 2025).

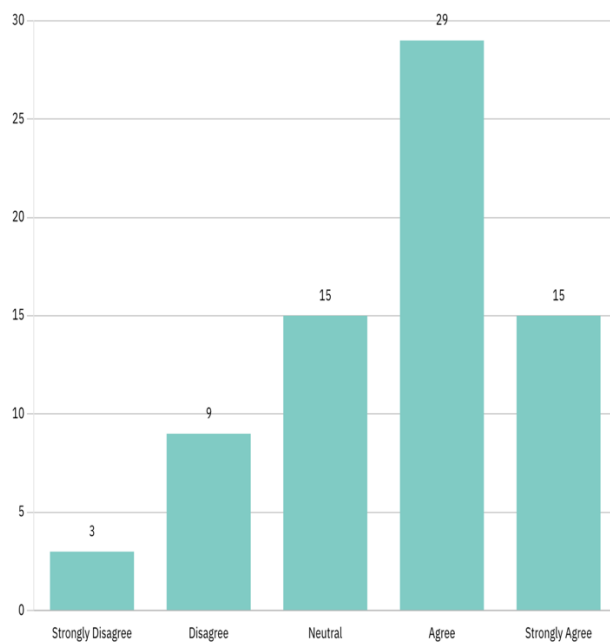


Figure 4.3.10 Reviews shared on social media platforms affect my perception of a brand.

This bar chart displays the findings of the statement evaluating the influence of reviews shared on social media platforms on consumers' perception of a brand, among 71 respondents, most showed a favorable view, with 40.8% choosing “4” (agree) and 21.1% choosing “5” (strongly agree). This suggests that over 60% of participants consider social media reviews influential in shaping their perception of a brand.

A moderate portion, 21.1%, selected the neutral choice “3,” indicating that some respondents neither agree nor disagree, possibly reflecting inconsistent experiences with social media reviews. Conversely, a smaller fraction expressed disagreement, with 12.7% choosing “2” and 4.2% choosing “1” (strongly disagree), emphasizing that only a few participants feel unaffected by social media reviews. Overall, the data indicate that reviews on social media platforms are generally recognized as an important factor influencing brand perception. (Yang Li, et al. 2025).

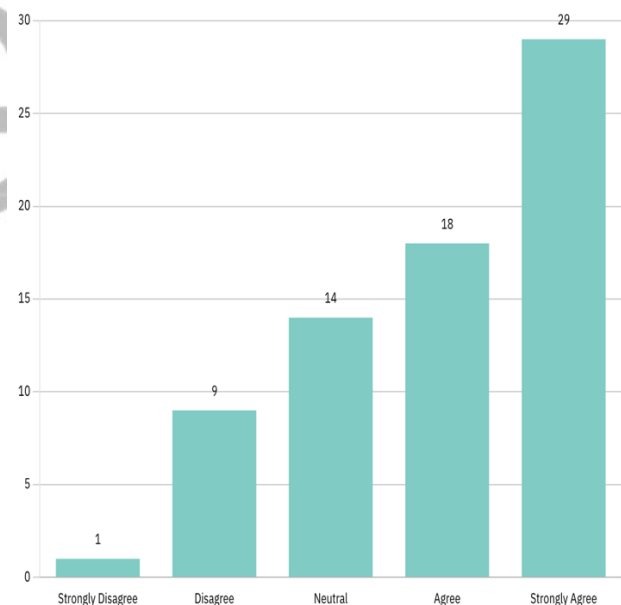


Figure 4.3.11 Online reviews help reduce uncertainty when making purchasing decisions.

This bar chart displays the findings of the statement evaluating the role of online reviews in reducing uncertainty when making purchasing

decisions, among 71 respondents, most showed a favorable view, with 25.4% choosing “4” (agree) and 40.8% choosing “5” (strongly agree). This suggests that over 66% of participants feel that online reviews help them make more confident purchasing decisions. A moderate portion, 19.7%, selected the neutral choice “3,” indicating that some respondents neither agree nor disagree, possibly reflecting occasional reliance on online reviews. Conversely, a smaller fraction expressed disagreement, with 12.7% choosing “2” and 1.4% choosing “1” (strongly disagree), emphasizing that very few participants feel online reviews do not reduce uncertainty. Overall, the data indicate that online reviews are generally recognized as an effective tool for minimizing uncertainty in consumer decision-making. (Vu Dinh et al., 2025).

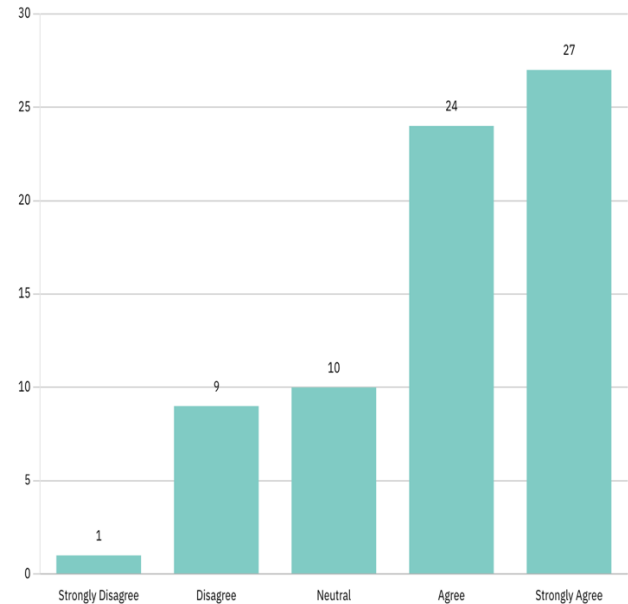


Figure 4.3.12 I am more likely to try a new brand if it has positive online feedback.

This bar chart displays the findings of a Likert scale statement evaluating the likelihood of consumers trying a new brand based on positive online feedback, among 71 respondents, most showed a favorable view, with 33.8% choosing “4” (agree) and 38.0% choosing “5” (strongly agree). This suggests that over 71% of participants are more inclined to try a new brand when it has positive online reviews. A moderate portion, 14.1%, selected the neutral choice “3,” indicating some respondents neither agree nor disagree, possibly reflecting occasional influence of online feedback. Conversely, a smaller fraction expressed disagreement, with 12.7% choosing “2” and 1.4% choosing “1” (strongly disagree), emphasizing that very few participants are unaffected by positive online reviews. Overall, the data indicate that positive

online feedback significantly encourages consumers to try new brands. (Yang Sun et al. 2024).

4.4 Open ended Questions

Question 1 How does social media opinions/reviews influence your trust and confidence in a product/brand before making a purchase?

It depends on whether it's advertised or not. Usually with advertisements, I feel less likely to purchase the product due to lack of objectivity as influencers are paid to promote the product regardless of its quality. However, with online reviews on the products site, you can assume that customers are going out of their way to talk about their satisfaction with said product.

Consumer trust varies with perceived objectivity, Something like advertisements often reduce confidence because endorsements are paid, can often give people the impression of misrepresentation of product quality. But in contrast, online reviews on product sites are seen as mostly authentic which reflects genuine customer experiences; These reviews provide reliable insights into satisfaction making consumers more confident and likely to base their purchasing decisions on them rather than on paid promotions.

Opinions or reviews online whether it is negative or positive makes me make a informed decision shopping. Negative or positive reviews doesn't always help me decide but it gives me confidence and manages my expectations for the product because traditional advertising gives usually unrealistic expectations.

Online reviews; whether it'd be positive or negative, help consumers make a bit more informed decisions while shopping, while they may not always directly determine a purchase reviews increase confidence and set realistic expectations about products. Unlike traditional advertising which often presents idealized portrayals, allowing consumers to better anticipate product performance and feel more secure in their choices.

Question 2 Can you describe a situation where electronic word of mouth affected your decision to buy or avoid a product or service?

I was considering buying the new Samsung ear buds. I have the older ones, which I really like and thought upgrading might be worth it. I searched for reviews on reddit for the new buds and found a lot of people saying the older ones, which I have, might be better than the new ones. They also highlighted issues I was not aware of such as cheap material quality. After reading the reviews, I changed my mind and did not buy the product.

This example demonstrates the strong influence of electronic word of mouth on purchase decisions; by consulting online reviews on Reddit, these authentic user experiences reduced factors like uncertainty or corrected expectations ultimately lead to a decision not to purchase the new product.

When purchasing a hair dryer, I did a very deep research for online reviews on this products from people who has hair like me because the brand ad did not include variety of models. After the research I made the decision on not to buy it because it is falsely advertised that it works on all hair type when in fact user reviews were the opposite.

This example highlights how online reviews help consumers verify advertising claims; by researching reviews from users with similar hair types the consumer identified inconsistencies between the brand's advertisement or their real

user experiences. These insights revealed to the researcher misleading marketing claims and demonstrates the critical role of electronic word of mouth in informed and confident consumer decision making.

4.5 Summary

This chapter has introduced and discussed the primary data collected by using the structured questionnaire to explore the effects of electronic word-of-mouth communication (eWOM) on the purchasing decision of the consumers. The combination of demographic analysis and the use of Yes/No answers have played an effective role in describing the purchase behavior of the targeted customers in both qualitative and quantitative manners. The demographic analysis has proved that the sample customers belong to diverse and educated groups and use technology actively. The quantitative results also show that the role of eWOM in influencing perceptions, trust, and purchase intentions is significant. This is because majority of the participants in the research searched for reviews before the purchase, believed them to be more credible than other forms of advertising, and used both positive and negative reviews to alleviate the perceived uncertainties. The results have also been supported by the findings from the text analysis.

Taken collectively, these results also serve to confirm that electronic word-of-mouth is a significant and important influence within the contemporary consumer behavior.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In today's digital age, the significant influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) marketing, made through the widespread use of social networking sites and review platforms, cannot be underestimated. The fact that customers can provide their real views and opinions on a product and service in eWOM, whereby in traditional marketing, the customer has no capacity, makes eWOM a highly believable source of information delivery to customers in Oman in which internet use and digital interactions are on a rapid increase. This chapter attempts to examine the extent to which Omani customers depend on eWOM to make purchase decisions, and the importance of eWOM credibility in trusting it enough to make a purchase decision. It goes further to examine the adverse impacts of misrepresenting eWOM which can eventually impact the performance of companies and the processes by which eWOM legitimacy can be established. This paper, thus, attempts to provide meaningful information that is associated with enhancing trust and the management of eWOM in digital marketing platforms effectively.

5.2 Summary of findings

1. To investigate the extent to which Omani customers rely on eWOM when making purchase decisions

The findings have revealed for us that Omani customers rely a lot on the basis of electronic word of mouth when making purchase decisions both in real life and the digital world; people's opinions come in different forms, like we've discussed before, either through ratings or reviews, and these opinions influence consumer's perceptions of product quality tremendously. Many respondents indicated that eWOM plays a more important role than traditional advertising, just on the factor that it's opinions of real life people and real life experience particularly for high involvement purchases, as it provides real user experiences and gets rid of false perceptions that could be put up by the company

2. To examine cases where inaccurate or deceptive eWOM adversely impacts company performance

The study found that inaccurate, deceptive depictions of eWOM can innately affect company performance; misleading reviews were shown to go through an immense amount of damage to a company from brand reputations declining to the reduction of trust a company can have with its customers and eventually lead to decreased sales. Participants reported avoiding brands associated with fake or exaggerated reviews, like paid promotion through hidden ads

or youtube segments, indicating that negative eWOM spreads quickly and can have consequences for businesses that aren't easy to come back from.

3. To determine how customers analyze and confirm the legitimacy of internet reviews

Results indicate that customers actively analyze as well as verify the base line and legitimacy of online reviews before making purchasing decisions, a common method can include comparing reviews across multiple platforms or checking reviewer credibility. Consumers showed greater trust in reviews that appeared authentic; showing real people going through real things which was supported by both positive and negative comments.

4. To propose recommendations and strategies on how to improve trust and eWOM credibility in digital marketing settings

Based on the findings, it is recommended that companies enhance transparency and encourage genuine customer feedback to improve eWOM credibility. Strategies such as responding to reviews, monitoring online platforms, and discouraging fake reviews can strengthen trust. Building long-term relationships with customers and maintaining honest digital communication were found to be essential for effective eWOM management.

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research project discussed the impact of online word-of-mouth on consumer purchasing decisions. The study identified the dimensions and factors that influence consumers through online word-of-mouth, specifically opinions, ratings, reviews, and other online content, and the extent to which this impacts their purchasing decisions, whether positively or negatively.

The study also explored the impact of online word-of-mouth on consumer purchasing decisions. In the first chapter, we provided a comprehensive overview of the topic of electronic word-of-mouth, outlining the research problem, four study objectives, and four research questions. We also discussed the importance of our study, which focuses on the impact and effectiveness of electronic word-of-mouth, and presented a model diagram of the elements of electronic word-of-mouth marketing on consumer decisions.

In the second chapter, we reviewed previous studies conducted on samples of people, leading to several findings closely related to our main topic: the impact of electronic word-of-mouth on consumer purchasing decisions. We also compiled 16 literature reviews on the subject. Furthermore.

the third chapter served as our initial step in designing the research, defining the study population and the sample group to whom we would pose our questions. This allowed us to arrive at our own group study results on our main topic. We also compiled the analytical and data collection methods we used and will use, and discussed the legal and social issues, as well as the necessary documentation. Research tools and all their tests.

In Chapter Four, we began analyzing the data and results obtained from the questionnaire we had previously posed. We then analyzed the responses from our target population and the sample we selected, which consisted of a minimum of 70 individuals. This led to broad findings, and through the results presented in Chapter Four and the individuals' responses, we gained a deeper understanding of the impact of electronic word-of-mouth on consumers' purchasing decisions, revealing a direct and correlational relationship.

Finally, in Chapter Five, we concluded the chapters with a summary of the results and suggestions related to our research on the impact of electronic word-of-mouth. Finally, we discussed how we can benefit from this research and how we can utilize it in future research.

5.4 Recommendations

1. Promote Real Authentic Customer Feedback

The companies must make sure customers leave reviews which are then verified by the purchasing processes, because this will boost the credibility of the eWOM. The validation procedure serves in the removal of fake or manipulated comments, providing the consumer with the opportunity to rely on the comments of the users. Trust and reputation in an Omani market environment is an important factor in the opinion of influencing the consumer. In such an environment, sincere remarks will be reassuring to the customers in choosing to make purchases, particularly high-priced commodities.

2. Monitor and Manage Online Review Websites on a Regular Basis

To identify false, overstated, and deceptive consumer WOM, firms need to embark on continuous online surveillance over the digital platforms. Moderation tools and customer experience teams should also be used by companies to ensure deceptive negative content created by consumers is removed, and that false information is also addressed. Those practices will enable the firm to avoid any harm to their reputation and fast spread of false consumer WOM. Addressing cordially will also demonstrate professionalism in reacting to the consumer's negative WOM.

3. Process Customer Feedback Positively

Companies are encouraged to communicate with their customers by engaging them in the reaction to their positive and negative feedback.

Reactions by the companies such as responding to negative comments indicate to the customers that they are important in the business and that their opinions and sentiments are considered. In this way, negative word of mouth impacts will be minimized, and positive impressions will be developed by customers toward the company. As a result, customer loyalty is achieved.

4. Ethical Disclosure in Influencer Paid Promotions

Proper disclosure of sponsored content, partnerships and endorsement deals should be provided by the brands in a manner that they do not present misleading impressions to the consumers. Ethical disclosure provides the customer with a way to decouple endorsable content and peer opinion regarding a specific product or service particularly in an online context where different types of influencer marketing are prevalent. Having the advertised content marked properly facilitates ethical marketing as well as brand integrity in marketing.

5. Establishing Trust Through Relationship Building

Businesses are supposed to aim at creating customer relationships in the long term. This could be achieved through offering uniformity in the provision of service and communication.

Besides, companies must also reward loyal customers as a way of building long term relationships. If rewards aren't feasible, simple messages on a customer's birthday could have a positive long-term impact. In addition to the customer feeling special, their brand perception and brand loyalty will be deepened by such actions. In this way, through attaching emotions to customers using such initiatives, customers are more likely to circulate positive word of mouth, increasing brand awareness.

5.5 Limitations

This study faced several limitations while examining eWOM and its effect on consumer decision making. First, the sample size was limited to only 71 respondents, which may reduce the generalizability of the findings to a broader population and then second, data was collected using a self administered questionnaire, meaning responses may be influenced by personal bias, and third, time constraints limited the depth of analysis and the ability to include additional variables that could further explain consumer behavior. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the results and drawing conclusions from the study.

5.6 Future research

Future research on electronic word of mouth (eWOM) and its effect on consumer decision making can be widely improved by small

changes like expanding the scope and depth of analysis, for example. Using a larger range and more diverse sample size across different regions that are in Oman would also enhance the generalizability of the previously gathered findings. Future studies that could be done by researchers could also adopt a mixed method type approach by combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to gain a further deeper insight into consumer perceptions and trust formation. These improvements mentioned would contribute on top of each other to give insights that are more accurate for businesses to use and read upon.

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