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EWOM and purchase intention: A brief look at the last decade by Bibliometrics

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Abstract

In the last ten years, eWOM has risen to prominence as a result of the proliferation of cellphones, social networking sites, and applications. The concept of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) centers on how consumers' purchase decisions are influenced by their social networks and the information they share. Using bibliometric analysis, this study aims to track developments in the field of research into eWOM and its relationship to consumer desire to buy. One of the most useful methods for summing up relevant information and identifying relevant patterns and future directions is this analysis. In the pursuit of eliminating data redundancy and streamlining the data cleansing procedure, the Scopus database stands as the exclusive resource harnessed, utilizing the precise keyword terms "eWOM" and "purchase intention." This meticulous search yielded a comprehensive collection of 169 scholarly studies spanning the years 2013 to 2023. The focal point of this study lies in the systematic categorization of these articles, facilitated by a range of bibliographic indicators such as publication year, the preeminent research journal, noteworthy authors, language of publication, key terminology, and the frequency of citations received. Moreover, this examination extends beyond these facets, delving into the overarching paradigms and methodologies employed by the papers within the database. This scholarly endeavor significantly contributes to the understanding of the intricate interplay between eWOM (electronic Word-of-Mouth) and consumer intent, adding depth and insight to this dynamic field of study.

Keywords: eWOM, bibliometric, purchase intention

Introduction

The term electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has gained significant traction in tandem with the ascent of social media and online review platforms. Though pinpointing its exact inception is challenging, the utilization of eWOM within social networks commenced a notable rise in the early 2000s, paralleling the emergence of social media giants such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. As these platforms burgeoned in popularity, so did the prevalence of eWOM, with consumers actively disseminating their insights and viewpoints on products and services within their online circles. In contemporary times, eWOM stands as a pivotal expression within the realm of marketing, casting a pivotal influence on the choices consumers make when purchasing.

Sharing unofficial insights about products, brands, and services through word-of-mouth (WOM) communication has long served as an invaluable resource for consumers, aiding them in appraising whether a product aligns with their requisites ^[1]. This dynamic has contributed to the mitigation of uncertainty among consumers when navigating purchasing decisions ^[2]. As the internet has solidified its role as a fount of information and a bustling e-commerce platform, eWOM has evolved into a beacon of guidance for consumers, diffusing through diverse social media channels, discussion forums, blogs, emails, and instant messaging platforms ^[3-7]. Through eWOM, consumers can scrutinize choices, reducing uncertainty in their purchase deliberations. This phenomenon has expedited the dispersion of WOM recommendations, unencumbered by temporal or spatial constraints ^[8]. However, eWOM carries its own suite of risks, primarily stemming from the lack of face-to-face interaction between consumers and eWOM authors online, nurturing an environment of ambiguity.

Inherent risks accompany eWOM due to the virtual disconnection between consumers and eWOM creators, sowing seeds of uncertainty concerning authenticity and truthfulness.

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eWOM authors might hyperbolize product attributes, evaluating them through personal lenses or skewed by incentives for positive appraisals, even fostering deliberate deception. Put succinctly, consumers tread on uncertain terrain when tethering their purchase decisions to eWOM content. Considering the profound sway of eWOM on consumer choices, its impacts have garnered extensive discourse in prior research (e.g., [8-14]). Nevertheless, the domain of purchase intent within the context of eWOM remains relatively underexplored. The factors underpinning consumer trust in eWOM, even in the aftermath of negative encounters, stand as a fertile field for exploration. Conventionally, unfavorable experiences prompt skepticism and erosion of trust in brands. Yet, while certain WOM instances might be contrived, eWOM recommendations endure as a crucial guidepost for consumers wading through purchasing choices [7].

The term eWOM searched by google scholar has 55,600 results was posted (23 April 2023) while in 2000s, when the term eWOM first appeared there were only 17,100 results. So, the number of the results has increased almost 3 times. The trend search for the term "eWOM" is more popular on the whole world also has a strong increase from the end of 2011 until now.

Through the use of Social Networking Site (SNS), individuals have the ability to improve their purchasing decisions by taking advantage of the information, experience, and social knowledge shared by other users. Additionally, users are able to share their own perspectives based on their experiences, thereby enhancing their social presence on SNS and social commerce platforms, ultimately contributing to a more credible online social environment. The favorable impact of this social interaction is crucial in influencing a user's intention to make online purchases, making transactions on social platforms effortless.

Increasing user involvement can transform the process of online purchasing into a more socially-driven experience, while also providing companies with a means to connect more closely with their customers. Therefore, businesses strive to create the most engaging social experiences possible for both current and potential customers, with the goal of stimulating their intention to make purchases. As purchase intention increases in an online environment, so do interactions between consumers and both other consumers and the brand itself. As such, the more connected consumers are to a company, the more likely they are to have a positive purchase intention, make favorable purchasing decisions, and engage in repeat purchases. eWOM refers to the sharing of opinions, experiences, and information about products, services, or brands through digital channels such as social media, online reviews, forums, blogs, and other forms of user-generated content. eWOM has become increasingly important for businesses as it can influence consumer behavior and purchase intention, both positively and negatively. It is a powerful marketing tool that allows consumers to express their views and share their experiences with a potentially large audience, creating buzz and generating awareness for products or services. Researchers have investigated a strong influence with eWOM and purchase intention.

The article aims to explore the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention, which has not been extensively studied through bibliometric analysis. The study focuses on analyzing keywords, citations, and general themes of 169 articles published in from 2013 to 2023. The analysis aims

to answer questions related to the development of the topic, highly cited publications and authors, highly cited journals, the most cited countries/regions, other important keywords, and major themes in the field. The analysis can provide valuable insights into the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention and guide future research in this area.

How is the yearwise development of the topic?

What are the most highly cited publications and authors?

What are the most highly cited journals?

Which country/region has the most cited publications?

What are the other important keywords in the field?

What are the major themes of the field?

The structure of our study is as follows: In the upcoming section, a concise summary of the literature on purchase intention and eWOM is presented. Following that, the third section is focused on the methodology used and the obtained results. The last section of the article presents a conclusion that combines theoretical and practical implications along with the study's limitations. Additionally, future areas for research are also considered in this final part.

Literature Review

According to a recent report by Yusuf, Che Hussin [15], it has been identified that eWOM (electronic word-of-mouth) influence on social media has a significant impact on consumers' purchase intentions. Several studies have also examined the effect of eWOM comments on social networking sites (SNS) like Twitter and Facebook, and their influence on purchase intentions [16]. In the 2000s, eWOM emerged on Instagram, which is considered one of the most influential SNS platforms [17]. Nowadays, almost all companies have a presence on social media, and 89% of marketing managers interact with customers through these platforms (World Digital report). Therefore, eWOM has become a crucial marketing method for enterprises to increase brand awareness. Positive eWOM enhances brand credibility, while negative eWOM can have a negative impact [18]. Some studies have also demonstrated the relationship between eWOM and brand credibility [19]. As of January 2021, there are 4.66 billion internet users worldwide, with 4.20 billion users on social media (World Digital report). With the growing number of social media users, the research related to eWOM has expanded into various fields such as Tourism, Fashion, and Computer Information Systems since 2018 (table 2).

Consequently, numerous studies have found that eWOM significantly influences purchase intentions, especially within the context of social media. This empirical relationship is illustrated in the VOS viewer through author keyword linking using bibliometric methods (figure 4). Consumers rely on eWOM to form opinions about brands or organizations and evaluate the credibility of shared information. In the customer decision-making process, eWOM plays a crucial role as customers explore alternatives and seek eWOM about those alternatives to make their final decisions. Notably, eWOM's impact extends beyond the business and retail sectors, and it is increasingly significant in areas such as Tourism [20]. From 2019 to 2020, there were 10 articles related to the tourism field, which were cited in over 20 papers, highlighting the credibility of these articles. The most cited eWOM articles are typically found in the hospitality and computer information system fields (table A1).

Consequently, companies should pay increased attention to the influence of eWOM, particularly through social media,

as it significantly impacts repurchase intention. In summary, recent research highlights the significant impact of eWOM and purchasing decisions, leading companies to prioritize consumers' needs and preferences. Therefore, this study aims to examine key research findings and insights from 2013 to 2023 regarding the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention.

Method

Employing a quantitative and objective methodology, bibliometric analysis serves as a valuable tool to scrutinize research domains and pinpoint burgeoning subjects. Its application spans an array of related fields, including eWOM and marketing. In a bid to unearth forthcoming trajectories and insights within the realm of eWOM and purchase intent, a comprehensive bibliometric analysis was executed. This meticulous evaluation encompassed an extensive examination of literature, research outputs, authors, and citations, all predicated on a dataset of 169 research papers culled from the Scopus database. The search protocol hinged on the strategic deployment of "eWOM" and "purchase intention" keywords across titles, keywords, and abstracts. The temporal ambit of analysis was defined as the interval from 2013 to 2023, a temporal window carefully chosen to unravel trends and the holistic purview of this thematic expanse. The strategic application of these keywords ensured the inclusion solely of papers intrinsically linked to the dynamic interplay between eWOM and

purchase intent, delivering a targeted and focused analysis.

Results

The investigation delved into research documents from diverse corners of the globe and spanning various languages, aiming to delve into the realm of eWOM and its interplay with purchase intent. The scrutiny encompassed research spanning the period between 2013 and 2023, meticulously tracking the trajectory of advancements in this domain. The scholars meticulously extracted the annual output of scientific contributions, thereby cultivating a deeper comprehension of the intricacies of eWOM within the marketing sphere. While the surge in scholarly publications on this subject commenced slightly before 2013, the timeline encompassing 2013 to 2023 was judiciously chosen to discern the ebbs and flows of research patterns, revealing a crescendo in output leading up to 2022. The comparative dearth of research papers in 2013 could be ascribed to the nascent stage of social networking during that era. The zenith of research output manifested between 2020 and 2022, mirroring the substantial surge in eWOM research, notably catalyzed by the global confinement measures. This upsurge in research activity could also be accredited to the expanding global user base. The visual representation in Figure 1 provides a clear depiction of the annual distribution of published research articles, showcasing a zenith in 2022 and a nadir in 2013.

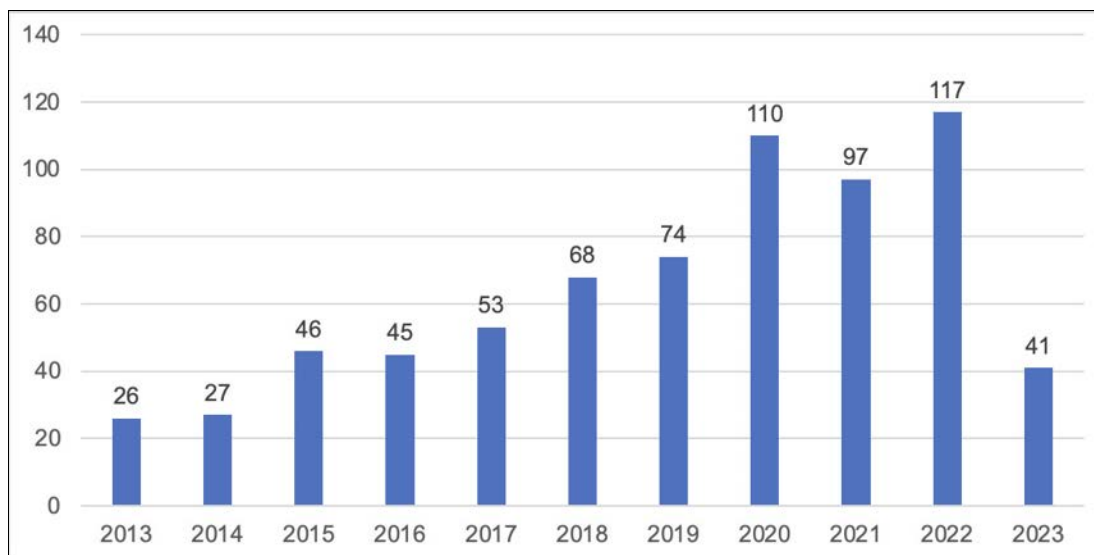


Fig 1: Yearwise publication of research papers from 2013 to 2023.

In the last decade, a total of 169 articles focused on eWOM and its impact on purchase intention were published in various journals available in the Scopus database. This selection process aimed to ensure the inclusion of reliable and high-quality articles providing accurate insights into the trends and key concepts related to eWOM and purchase intention. Among the journals considered, The Journal of Business Research had the highest number of contributions. Other significant contributions were made by the journals listed in Figure 2. The leading journal published 8 research papers during the decade. The Journal of Retailing and Consumer Service, as well as the Journal of Marketing Communication, followed closely with seven articles each. Additionally, several Hospitality and Tourism-related journals published four to five articles on the topic. While

the chosen keywords were "eWOM" and "purchase intention," the initial focus of the Business Research journals revolved around the effectiveness of eWOM in enhancing customer service within business contexts (citation). Subsequently, journals specializing in Fashion, Computer Information Systems, and Electronic Commerce addressed the issue. It is worth noting that there may be other magazines not included in our database that explore different research fields related to this topic, such as fashion and information systems, thereby contributing to the existing literature. The prominence of specific journals highlighted in Figure 2 aligns with the typical development pattern observed in emerging business-related topics within academic literature. This pattern has been documented in previous studies across various similar areas.



Fig 2: Ranking of the top 10 journals with the most articles on eWOM and purchase intention by number of articles published between 2013 and 2023.

According to the bibliometric study, no single author stands out as particularly influential in the field of eWOM and purchase intention research papers because they all contribute to the field in roughly the same number publications. Figure 3 displays the authors who publish the most on e-commerce. The majority of the top 10 researchers are from China. Followers of the top 10 include scientists from the USA. The first two countries' advanced level can be attributed to a number of factors, including their higher

research expenditures and their encouragement of the transition to the digital economy, both of which contribute to the rapid development of social platforms and the support from online commercial activities in these nations. Also, there are there are approximately 124 universities in these two nations that are ranked among the top 500 for the number of patent applications in novel technologies and artificial intelligence.

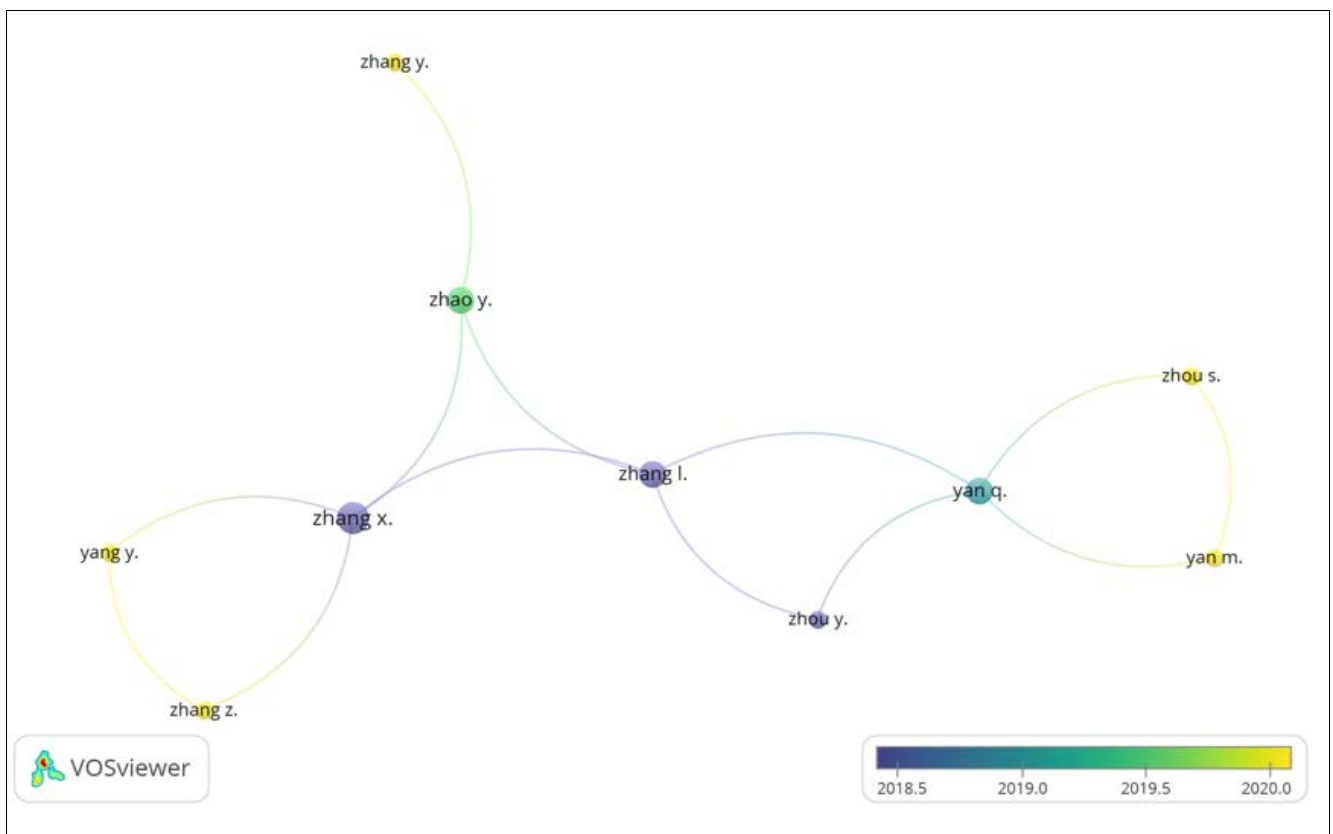


Fig 3: Top 10 authors with the highest numbers of eWOM and purchase intention related articles.

Between 2013 and 2023, keywords were analyzed for a total of 169 articles with keyword-containing records in the Scopus database. There were 577 keywords enumerated, of which 96 (17%) were repeated. Figure 4 depicts the

keywords employed. "eWOM" (used fifty-one times) tops the list, followed by "social media" (used twenty-five times), "purchase intention" (used nineteen times), "online reviews" (used eleven times), and "trust" (used nine times).

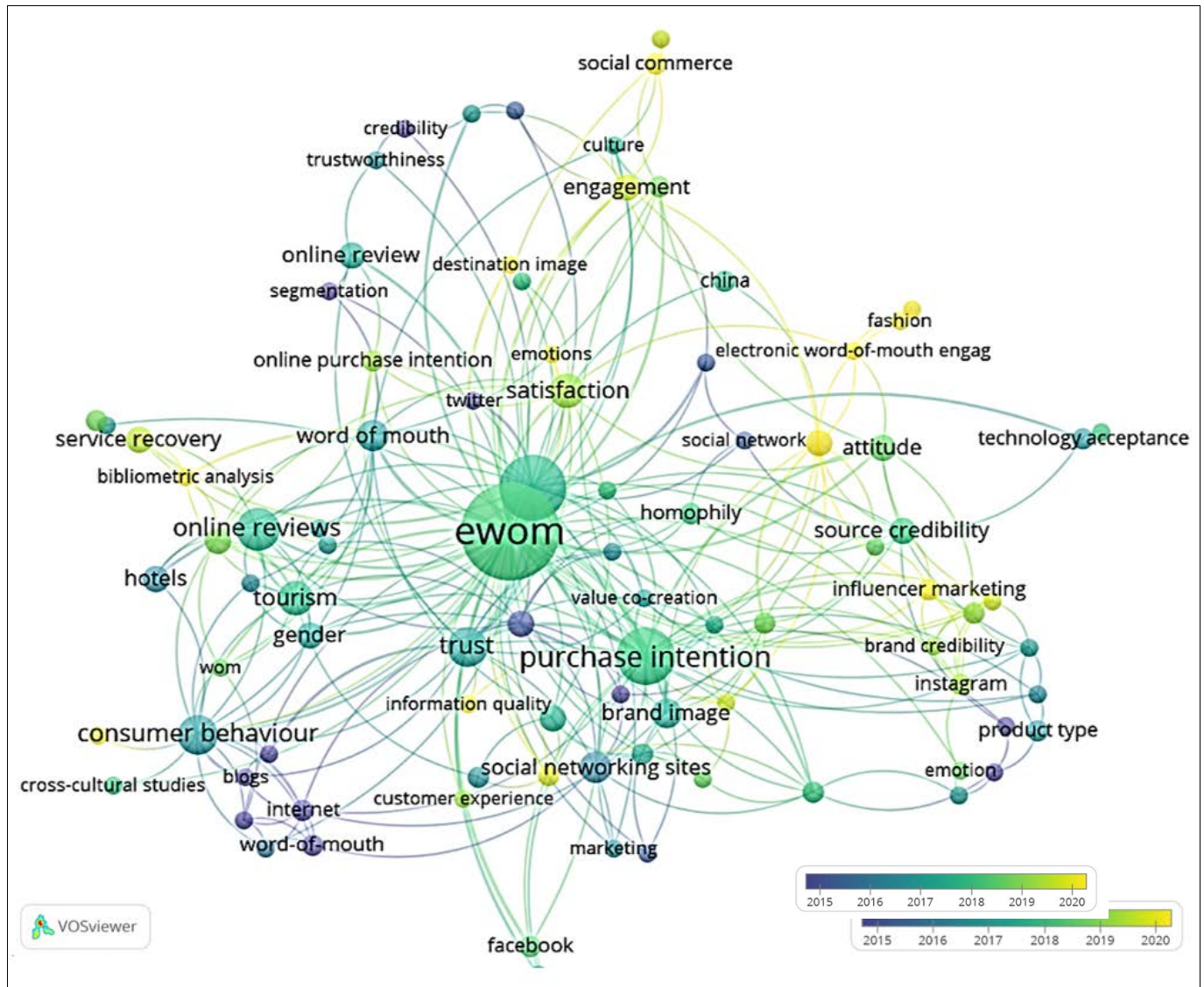


Fig 4: Keyword co-occurrence network visualization

Illustrated in Figure 4, a bibliometric investigation was carried out to explore the trajectory of social media and e-commerce's evolution, employing the two most prominent keywords. Utilizing the VOSviewer software, bibliometric networks were visually depicted, employing "eWOM" and "purchase intention" as the central research focal points. To gain a deeper grasp of the shifting trends within the domain and to pinpoint potential avenues for future inquiry, we can employ related keywords to construct a visual depiction of the network of emerging keywords around our primary

terms. A plethora of methodologies exists for gauging an article's significance and impact within its field; nonetheless, one of the most straightforward and objective approaches involves evaluating the count of citations it has garnered [21]. Founded on this premise, it becomes feasible to apprehend the groundbreaking articles, their sway over the field's dynamics, and the trajectory of research progression. In this vein, Table 1 presents a compilation of the ten articles most frequently referenced within the span from 2013 to 2023.

Table 1: The top ten most-cited articles. [22-31]

Author(s) and Year	Journal	Article	Number of Citations
Serra Cantallops A., Salvi F. (2014) [22]	International Journal of Hospitality Management	New consumer behavior: A review of research on eWOM and hotels	525
Erkan I., Evans C. (2016) [30]	Computers in Human Behavior	The influence of eWOM in social media on consumers' purchase intentions: An extended approach to information adoption	518
Djafarova E., Rushworth C. (2017) [29]	Computers in Human Behavior	Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase	487

		decisions of young female users	
Mauri A.G., Minazzi R. (2013) ^[28]	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Web reviews influence on expectations and purchasing intentions of hotel potential customers	426
Dwivedi Y.K., Ismagilova E., Hughes D.L., Carlson J., Filieri R., Jacobson J., Jain V., Karjaluo H., Kefi H., Krishen A.S., Kumar V., Rahman M.M., Raman R., Rauschnabel P.A., Rowley J., Salo J., Tran G.A., Wang Y. (2021) ^[27]	International Journal of Information Management	Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions	398
Jin S.-A.A., Phua J. (2014) ^[31]	Journal of Advertising	Following celebrities' tweets about brands: The impact of Twitter-based electronic word-of-mouth on consumers source credibility perception, buying intention, and social identification with celebrities	374
See-To E.W.K., Ho K.K.W. (2014) ^[26]	Computers in Human Behavior	Value co-creation and purchase intention in social network sites: The role of electronic Word-of-Mouth and trust - A theoretical analysis	364
Al-Debei M.M., Akroush M.N., Ashouri M.I. (2015) ^[25]	Internet Research	Consumer attitudes towards online shopping: The effects of trust, perceived benefits, and perceived web quality	244
Kim A.J., Johnson K.K.P. (2016) ^[24]	Computers in Human Behavior	Power of consumers using social media: Examining the influences of brand-related user-generated content on Facebook	228
Hsu C.-L., Lin J.C.-C., Chiang H.-S. (2013) ^[23]	Internet Research	The effects of blogger recommendations on customers' online shopping intentions	213

The most frequently mentioned article within the time frame was one that appeared in 2014. The top article on the list was "New Consumer Behavior: A Review of Research on eWOM and Hotels" by Cantalops and Salvi ^[22] (525 times), which was followed by "The Influence of eWOM in Social Media on Consumers' Purchase Intentions: An Extended Approach to Information Adoption" by Erkan and Evans ^[30] (518 times), and "Exploring the Credibility of Online Celebrities' Instagram Profiles in Influencing the Purchase Decisions of Young Female Users" by Djafarova and Rushworth ^[29] (487 times). The top 10 journals and these three papers demonstrate the importance of eWOM in the social media space, particularly for the "tourism" industry, which is prominently featured in Figure 4.

In order to enrich our analysis based on yearwise publication, most frequent journals, authors, citation frequencies, and visualization of keyword network, we also investigated the general theme and method of 169 articles in our database (Appendix A Table 1). This will inform about the most researched domains at eWOM and purchase intention intersection.

Due to the growth of internet and e-commerce, eWOM have exploded in popularity since 2013. Consumers' purchasing habits are becoming increasingly influenced by eWOM, particularly through the mutual influence process between users and their credibility. This is supported by the four themes, all of which derive from user interaction.

Conclusion

The primary goal of this research was to improve understanding of eWOM and how it relates to consumers' propensity to make a purchase, drawing from existing literature on the topic. The bibliometric approach allows us to zero in on a specific subset of the literature by providing detailed statistics on how and where that material is growing.

From 2013 to 2022, we analyzed the bibliometrics of papers covering the topics of eWOM and purchase intention. Articles about "eWOM" and "purchase intention" often use the terms "social media", "online reviews" and "trust" as their

primary keywords. The Journal of Business Research, the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, and the Journal of Marketing Communication were the top three publications containing articles in this field.

Four main themes relating to user interaction have arisen from an analysis of the articles contained in the chosen database, providing fresh insights and expanding our understanding of the field as a whole. Using eWOM is a relatively new method of conducting business, yet it is already having a significant impact on the tendency of customers to make purchases, especially due to the level of trust it provides.

This research summarizes eWOM concept and the consumer's purchase intention, demonstrating the growth of the sector and new avenues for researchers and practitioners using bibliometric data and overarching themes. We analyzed the 169 studies included in our work to identify four overarching topics that have caught the attention of the academic community and that demonstrate the development and trends in the field. Find the missing pieces of the puzzle that is purchase intent and e-commerce by reading these leading publications and discussing these related issues.

This study emphasized that eWOM an influence purchase intention in several ways. Firstly, eWOM can provide consumers with additional information and opinions about a product or service, which may affect their perception of the product's quality, usefulness, and value. Positive eWOM can create a sense of trust and credibility towards the product, which can increase purchase intention. Conversely, negative eWOM can lead to a decrease in purchase intention, as consumers may perceive the product negatively. Besides, eWOM allows consumers to access a larger pool of information about a product or service, which can help them make more informed purchase decisions. With the growth of social media and online review platforms, consumers have more opportunities to read reviews and ask questions about products and services. This increased access to information can help to build trust and increase the perceived credibility of the product or service. In addition, eWOM can also facilitate social influence and social proof. Consumers may be more likely to make a purchase if they see that others

have already purchased and reviewed the product or service positively. This social proof can help to increase the perceived credibility of the product or service and influence purchase intention. However, when eWOM lacks credibility, it can lead to a decrease in purchasing intention because consumers may not trust the information provided. If they believe the reviews are fake, biased, or unreliable, they may not consider them when making purchasing decisions. This lack of credibility can be caused by a variety of factors such as fake reviews, biased reviewers, or a lack of information about the reviewers. Consumers are more likely to rely on eWOM when they believe it is credible and trustworthy, which can increase their purchasing intention. Conversely, if they do not trust the information provided, they may choose not to make a purchase or seek out alternative sources of information. Therefore, credibility is an important factor in the relationship between eWOM and purchasing intention.

This study has some limitations that should be considered. To begin, one of the most important academic databases, Scopus, was used to access the scholarly articles that formed the basis of our work. However, some large databases were left out in order to streamline the process and gain a broader view. With the citation index, the quality of the articles used in the analysis is ensured, and the bibliometric analysis indicators are bolstered. Second, these were the sole keywords used to narrow the scope of the search to papers specifically related to the topic of eWOM and purchase intention. Although "social media" and "online reviews" were used to keep the analysis manageable, the analysis found that "trust" is more broadly applicable to eWOM. Finally, these words can be swapped for one another to promote a comparable topic of study.

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