Driving Social Media Customers' Purchase Intentions: The Mediation Role of EWOM Credibility

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Abstract

In the era of global networking, the development of social media allows the facilitation of electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) on global and widely accessible platforms. People use such platforms to discuss and share feedback, reviews, or evaluations on products and services with their acquaintances, family, friends, or the public. This study examines the impact of EWOM characteristics (namely, quality/usefulness, quantity/ intensity, valence, and recency) on EWOM credibility and social media customers' purchase intentions, considering the mediation role of EWOM credibility. Study data were collected from 664 customers and analyzed by structural equation modeling. The findings revealed that EWOM characteristics and credibility have significant effects on purchase intention. EWOM quality/usefulness, quantity/intensity, and recency have significant effects on EWOM credibility. Furthermore, EWOM credibility mediates the effects of EWOM quality/usefulness and recency on purchase intention. This study provides empirical evidence that may help researchers and practitioners explore methods to encourage social media customers' purchase intentions.

Keywords: E-Commerce; Social Media; Social Media Marketing; Electronic Word-of-Mouth; Online Purchase Intention; EWOM Credibility; EWOM Quality/Usefulness; EWOM Quantity, EWOM Valence; EWOM Recency.

Introduction

Social media, with its advanced communication capabilities, transparency, and accessibility, has transformed traditional word-of-mouth (TWOM) into EWOM (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Reyes-Menendez et al., 2019). EWOM represents online informal communication that is used by customers to exchange their experiences and opinions (Litvin et al., 2008). Typically, customers inspect online reviews before trusting a local firm. They use various social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube) where EWOM takes place to exchange product information (Dwyer et al., 2007). Therefore, traditional marketing strategies are losing effectiveness as consumers now serve as vehicles for disseminating information (José-Cabezudo & Camarero-Izquierdo, 2012). Due to this trend, marketers have recently shown a prominent interest in EWOM activities to gain more knowledge about customers' needs and preferences (López et al., 2016).

Social media involves user-generated content platforms (such as blogs), online review and rating sites, video-sharing tools, and online communities where users create, edit, or publish material (Prasad et al., 2019). This allows users to create and share various forms of information in a broader context. Social media also permits two-way communication between a business and its customers, with a direct impact on con-

sumer behavior (Umair Manzoor et al., 2020). As companies should take advantage of any opportunity to interact with customers, social media enables greater reach with targeted communication, which ensures that companies' messages are conveyed as intended. It fosters communication of shared ideals, encouraging open expression of opinions and values between marketers and customers (Hansen et al., 2018; Kapoor et al., 2018). Further, social media marketing provides businesses with additional benefits such as increased brand awareness, sales, data allocation for advertisements, and enhanced customer social services (Ceyhan, 2019; Kapoor et al., 2018). Therefore, social media offers prospective purchasers a considerable opportunity to improve consumer perceptions.

Social media has become an influential and pervasive source of EWOM, which has a significant impact on customers' behaviors (Bataineh, 2015; Thoumrungroje, 2014). Customers use EWOM, particularly through reviews and comments, to learn from others' experiences with a product or service. This assists them in evaluating the adequacy of making a purchase, impacting brands' marketing activities (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Many businesses use EWOM to maintain a positive brand image and gain more knowledge about customers' attitudes and behaviors (Bataineh, 2015). Accordingly, EWOM empowers marketers to grasp customers' preferences and improve or create higher-quality offerings to foster their loyalty. This capability enables them to engage their audience effectively through a robust social media marketing strategy and the delivery of exciting content, leveraging the crucial role of EWOM and consumer information sharing across diverse social media platforms.

EWOM represents a crucial research area requiring thorough investigation, particularly within the context of social media, which is extensively utilized by a global user base. The marketing literature has emphasized the importance of EWOM to boost customers' purchase intentions by elevating awareness of brands' offerings (Evgeniy et al., 2019). The impact of EWOM on customers' behaviors depends on EWOM's credibility, which should not be neglected (Cheng & Zhou, 2010a). EWOM's credibility plays a significant role in adopting others' opinions and influencing customers' behaviors (Cheng & Zhou, 2010a; Chua & Banerjee, 2016; Reyes-Menendez et al., 2019), emphasizing the importance of considering how consumers behave toward EWOM. Accordingly, studying the impact of social media EWOM on customers' perceptions of EWOM credibility as well as their purchase intentions is required to understand how their attitudes and behaviors can be shaped.

EWOM is a multi-dimensional construct that comprises quality/usefulness, quantity/intensity, positive valence, negative valence, and recency characteristics (Cheung et al., 2008; Goyette et al., 2010). Despite this, many studies examined EWOM as a single construct without evaluating the unique effect of each dimension on purchase intention (Chatterjee et al., 2022; Garg & Kumar, 2021; Prasad et al., 2019; Rani et al., 2022; Reza Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012; Sulthana & Vasantha, 2019). On the other hand, many studies included EWOM credibility as a dimension of EWOM (Al-Haddad et al., 2022; Bilal et al., 2022), making the effect of EWOM characteristics on EWOM credibility unclear. Investigating the impact of EWOM characteristics' roles on EWOM credibility is curicular (Siddiqui et al., 2021). Attempting to fill this gap, this study employs the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model to examine the impact of each EWOM characteristics on customers' purchase intentions through EWOM credibility. The S-O-R model explains how individuals' responses (here, customers' purchase intention behaviors) can be shaped by stimulus cues (here, EWOM characteristics) and the organism (here, EWOM credibility) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

Literature Review

The Stimulus-Organism-Response Model

The S-O-R model illustrates that individuals' perceptions towards a setting (stimulus) drive their feelings (organism) and influence their behaviors (responses) (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Prior studies demonstrated that EWOM characteristics represent the stimulus (Carlson et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2014),

customers' attitudes and perceptions (such as EWOM credibility) represent the organism (Lee & Jeong, 2012; Sahoo & Pillai, 2017), and their behavioral intentions reflect their responses (Hu et al., 2016). Regarding the social media context, the information quality of a brand page, EWOM displayed on its page, and social interactions among customers and with brand owners represent environmental characteristics that contribute to generating the stimulus (Carlson et al., 2018; Kunja et al., 2022). This stimulus can then drive customers' positive or negative attitudes, which, eventually, shape their behaviors (such as purchase intention) as a response (Hu et al., 2016; O'Cass & Carlson, 2012; Zhang et al., 2014).

Social Media Customers' Purchase Intention

Purchase intention describes customers' willingness to buy a product from a particular brand after evaluating it (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2010). It reflects consumers' preference to make a purchase based on need, a particular attitude, or both. Social media platforms enable customer-customer and customer-brand interactions, allowing products' online selling, buying, and marketing to take place (Ng, 2013). Therefore, social media customers' purchase intentions can be affected not only by a product's price, quality, discernment, and value observation, but also by other customers' reviews about it. Although favorable EWOM is seen as beneficial for companies, negative comments could cause a company's failure. Hence, customers' EWOM is seen as more powerful than online product advertising, emphasizing its significant impact on social media customers' purchase intentions (Daowd et al., 2021; Umair Manzoor et al., 2020).

Social Media EWOM

The emergence of social media has replaced TWOM with EWOM, which is more easily accessible (Cheung & Lee, 2012). EWOM reflects positive or negative comments about a brand's offerings that may be accessible online by numerous people or organizations (Raymond, 2015). Contrary to TWOM, the EWOM communication system demonstrates significant scalability and rapid dissemination without any closeness between the communicator and the listener. Unlike previous approaches influenced by presentation forsmat, quality, and persistence, EWOM is also more measurable. Hence, it presents a significant shift in individuals' communication, indicating that expressing opinions online has become more convenient (Cheng & Zhou, 2010b; Daugherty & Hoffman, 2014). The marketing literature has demonstrated the multidimensionality of EWOM, including quality/usefulness, quantity/intensity, positive valence, negative valence, and recency (Goyette et al., 2010; Park & Kim, 2008).

1- EWOM Quality/Usefulness

EWOM's quality is characterized by the persuading force of comments based on an informative message (Bhattacherjee & Sanford, 2006). Customers' approval of EWOM channels depends on the quality of the information obtained. In contrast to marketer-generated content, customers perceive interpersonal communication about goods and services as a more reliable information source (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The receiver's evaluation of information quality plays a crucial role in the initial phases of the information persuasion process (Hilligoss & Rieh, 2008). Many consumers assess products' quality based on reviews provided by other customers (Evgeniy et al., 2019). They believe that useful data enhances their ability to make informed choices when selecting online products (Umair Manzoor et al., 2020). Thus, they favor utilizing such data, believing it will help them achieve their objectives.

2- EWOM Quantity/ Intensity

Given the extensive online information sharing, individuals may require a reference when shopping to support their confidence and alleviate concerns about making mistakes. The volume of online reviews and comments serves as an indicator of a product's value and popularity (Teng et al., 2017). EWOM's quantity and volume act as EWOM stimulus cues that increase customers' awareness of a brand's products and

reflect its popularity and sales (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Duan et al., 2008; Evgeniy et al., 2019; Fan et al., 2013; López & Sicilia, 2014). Moreover, it indicates how well-liked a product is in the online marketplace. Therefore, customers' purchasing decisions can be influenced by the volume of reviews from other customers detailing their experiences with the product.

3- EWOM Valence

Customers' social interactions on social media platforms facilitate experience sharing, which may hold positive and negative valence (Hajli, 2020). EWOM positive valence involves positive declarations about a product, aiming to encourage other customers' purchase intentions, while EWOM negative valence includes adverse declarations intended to warn customers against purchasing a product (Hajli, 2020). Prior studies have demonstrated that customers' reviews on company websites or social media pages significantly impact future sales for businesses (Hajli, 2020; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Roy et al., 2017). Frequent negative comments or reviews can harm a company's sales, while the absence of negative reviews may raise customer doubt (Khwaja et al., 2020). Therefore, EWOM valence reflects online reviews' nature, whether positive or negative, influencing customers' purchase intentions (Roy et al., 2017).

4- EWOM Recency

The recency of a review is determined by the date it was posted, reflecting the most up-to-date information (Xie, Chen, & Wu, 2016). It makes sense to consider the time difference between the date on which a purchase decision is being made and the date on which a review was published online. Generally, prospective customers believe that the most recent reviews are more valuable when making decisions. Therefore, the trustworthiness and sincerity perception of a review are inversely proportional to the time between the posting date and the purchase decision date (Lee, Law, & Murphy, 2011). Comparing reviews based on their dates and observing shifts in opinions from older reviews to the most recent ones can help determine whether a property cares about its improvement and the posted remarks (Xie et al., 2016).

EWOM Credibility

EWOM credibility describes the degree to which online reviews are regarded as fact-based, accurate, trustworthy, and convincing (Daowd et al., 2021; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Thomas et al., 2019). It reflects customers' assessments of information's reliability and trustworthiness as recommended by others' experiences and knowledge (Rieh, 2010). Contrary to conventional marketing and advertising systems where customers can physically evaluate and inspect the product before performing payment transactions, online customers rely on product reviews provided by others and the credibility of these reviews. This distinction creates uncertainty, a lack of control, and the potential for anonymity or deception, as customers fear receiving products different from those presented on a firm's websites or social media pages. This challenge is associated with online marketing or shopping, especially on social media sites. Consequently, customers consistently seek to establish credibility and trust before proceeding with online purchases, a process facilitated by searching for online reviews and ratings left by previous customers.

Hypotheses Development
EWOM Characteristics, EWOM Credibility, and Customer Purchase Intention

The decision-making process is based on the quality of EWOM's message, deeming it worthless and lacking value if it lacks reliable and authentic information (Khwaja et al., 2020). Previous studies found positive correlations between the quality and usefulness of information in EWOM about a product and consumers' purchase intentions (Bilal et al., 2022; Sohaib et al., 2018). Evgeniy et al. (2019) and Cheung (2014) asserted that EWOM's quality/usefulness is essential to encouraging customers' purchase intentions. Fure

thermore, Matute et al. (2016) and Daowd et al. (2021) indicated that the quality of reviews presented on vendors' websites, blogs, and social media posts impacts customers' perceptions of their credibility and EWOM adoption, subsequently affecting their purchase intentions. Accordingly, this study hypothesized the following:

> *H1: EWOM's quality/usefulness positively influences social media customers' (a) perceptions of EWOM credibility and (b) purchase intentions.*

Furthermore, the significant correlations between EWOM's quantity/intensity with EWOM credibility and purchase intention were indicated in previous studies (Evgeniy et al., 2019; Reyes-Menendez et al., 2019; Thomas et al., 2019). When a product has a large number of reviews, customers perceive that many others have purchased it. Consequently, the quantity of EWOM influences their perceptions of EWOM's credibility (Fan et al., 2013). Customers consider the volume of online reviews to be more informative and become more interested in adopting EWOM (Reyes-Menendez et al., 2019). Moreover, the quantity of information obtained affects their perceptions of its value and usefulness, which thereby increases their intentions to repurchase vendors' products (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Matute et al., 2016). According to this, the following hypotheses were developed:

> *H2: EWOM's quantity/intensity positively influences social media customers' (a) perceptions of EWOM credibility and (b) purchase intentions.*

Regarding EWOM's valence, Kudeshia and Kumar (2017) and Hajli (2020) indicated that positive EWOM significantly influences customers' attitudes towards a brand and their purchase intentions. When a large number of customers positively recommend a product, their recommendations affect other customers' purchase decisions (Sundar et al., 2008). Through customers' numerical ratings, EWOM valence is revealed, depicting the nature of online reviews in the form of negative or positive comments. Both the positive and negative valence of EWOM assist customers in evaluating brands' offerings, and the volume of provided reviews impacts customers' perceptions of EWOM's credibility (Öğüt & Onur Taş, 2012; Stephen, 2016). In the hospitality context, Xie et al. (2011) observed that consumers' booking intentions are significantly more influenced by negative EWOM than positive EWOM. Similarly, Ladhari and Michaud (2015) found that while both positive and negative online reviews raise consumer awareness of a hotel's existence, negative evaluations tend to influence customer opinions more strongly. Consequently, this study suggested the following:

> *H3: EWOM's positive valence positively influences social media customers' (a) perceptions of EWOM credibility and (b) purchase intentions.*

> *H4: EWOM's negative valence negatively influences social media customers' (a) perceptions of EWOM credibility and (b) purchase intentions.*

Prior studies have also highlighted the importance of online review timeliness, specifically EWOM recency (Cheung, 2014; Filieri & McLeay, 2014). In the hospitality context, Xie et al. (2016) observed that customers prioritize the most recent and comprehensive reviews on vendors' websites before making purchase decisions. Lunyai et al. (2021) found that the timeliness of online reviews affects customers' attitudes towards EWOM and their intentions towards online airline ticket purchasing. Moreover, Cheung (2014) argued that EWOM timeliness significantly influences customers' perceptions of its information usefulness, which consequently affects their purchase intentions. Accordingly, this study suggested the following:

> *H5: EWOM's recency positively influences social media customers' (a) perceptions of EWOM credibility and (b) purchase intentions.*

EWOM Credibility and Customers' Purchase Intentions

EWOM offers the best opportunity to determine how impactful EWOM is on consumers' purchase intentions. Previous studies indicated a strong association between EWOM credibility and customers' purs chase intentions (Bilal et al., 2022; Durmaz & Yüksel, 2017; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Kajtazi & Zeqiri, 2020). Moreover, Kajtazi and Zeqiri (2020) found that customers' perceptions of online reviews' trustworthiness significantly influence their purchase intentions. Recently, customers increasingly rely on social media as a reliable source of information to learn about new businesses and products (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). If customers perceive information on social media as trustworthy, they are more likely to interact with it, evaluating brands and their offerings based on others' experiences. During this propensity phase, they place a high value on reliable information, and if they perceive EWOM as credible, it motivates their immediate purchase intentions and actions (Daowd et al., 2021; Evgeniy et al., 2019; Yaylı & Bayram, 2012). Drawn from Mehrabian and Russells' (1974) S-O-R model, Kunja et al. (2022) suggested that the impact of EWOM characteristics (the stimulus) on customers' purchase intentions (the response) is mediated by their perceptions and attitudes (the organism state). Accordingly, this study hypothesized the following:

H6: EWOM Credibility positively influences social media customers' purchase intentions.

H7: EWOM credibility mediates the effects of EWOM's (a) quality/usefulness, (b) quantity/ intensity, (c) positive valence, (d) Negative valence, and (e) recency on purchase intention.

Research Methodology

Measurements

This study's questionnaire comprised questions about respondents' demographic data (e.g., age, gender, income, and education level) and the variables' indicators. The variables' indicators were adapted from pre-developed validated scales in previous studies: EWOM quality/usefulness (with three indicators) (Park et al., 2007; Sardar et al., 2021), EWOM quantity/intensity (with two indicators) (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Cheung et al., 2009), EWOM positive and negative valence (with two indicators for each valence type) (Goyette et al., 2010; Hajli, 2020), EWOM recency (with two indicators) (Cheung et al., 2008; Cheung, 2014), EWOM credibility (with three indicators) (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Qiu et al., 2012), and purchase intention (with five indicators) (Chih et al., 2013; Hsiao et al., 2010). All the indicators were rated based on a five-point Likert scale that varied from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

Data Collection and Participants

An online survey was created on Google Forms, and its link was distributed to social media customers via platforms' direct messages. A pilot test was conducted with 20 customers to ensure the clarity of the survey questions, as recommended by Julius (2005). The pilot test yielded good estimates of the variables' reliability and validity. Thereafter, the actual data collection process started in January 2023 and took three months to complete. Out of 696 received responses, 32 responses of omission and illogical responses were dropped, yielding 664 valid responses that were ready for the data analysis process.

Table 1 illustrates the respondents' demographic distribution, revealing that a majority (71.1%) fell

Table 1 Participants' Characteristics

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	272	41.0
	Female	392	59.0
Age	15-25	472	71.1
	26-36	62	9.3
	37-47	130	19.6
Highest educational level	Undergraduate	266	40.1
	Graduate	250	37.7
	Postgraduate	148	22.3
Income/month	Less than 10,000 EGP	454	68.4
	from 10,000 to less than 20,000 EGP	120	18.1
	from 20,000 to less than 30,000 EGP	58	8.7
	More than 30,000 EGP	32	4.8
Social media platforms	Facebook	590	88.9
	Instagram	592	89.2
	YouTube	458	69.0
	Snapchat	370	55.7
	LinkedIn	176	26.5
	Twitter	192	28.9

within the 15-25 year age range, while 9.3% and 19.6% belonged to the age ranges of 26-36 and 37-47 years, respectively. Of the respondents, 59% were female, and 41% were male. Educational backgrounds varied, with 40.1% undergraduates, 37.7% graduates, and 22.3% postgraduates. Regarding monthly income, 68.4% earned less than 10,000 EGP, 18.1% earned between 10,000 and 19,999 EGP, 8.7% earned between 20,000 and 29,999 EGP, and 4.8% earned more than 30,000 EGP. Furthermore, the respondents were users of different social media platforms: 88.9% were Facebook users, 89.2% were Instagram users, 69% were YouTube users, 55.7% were Snapchat users, 26.5% were LinkedIn users, and 28.9% were Twitter users. This study targeted Egyptians who are followers of many brands on different social media platforms without focusing on a specific product category to provide deeper insights into social media customers' purchase intentions.

Results

The SPSS software was used to inspect the variables' correlations and descriptive statistics. Table 2 presents significant correlations among the study variables. EWOM credibility is positively correlated to EWOM quality/usefulness (r = 0.329), EWOM quantity/intensity (r = 0.297), EOWM positive valence (r = 0.286), EOWM negative valence (r = 0.191), and EWOM recency (r = 0.371). Moreover, purchase intention is positively correlated to EWOM credibility (r = 0.475), EWOM quality/usefulness (r = 0.630), EWOM quantity/intensity (r = 0.601), EOWM positive valence (r = 0.655), EOWM negative valence (r = 0.562), and EWOM recency (r = 0.606). As shown in Table 3, the variables' mean values ranged from 2.97 to 3.72, with standard deviation (SD) values ranging from 0.71 to 0.91.

The SmartPLS software was then used for analyzing the measurement and structural models of the study variables. As shown in Table 3, all composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values exceed the threshold values of 0.70 and 0.50, respectively (Hair et al., 2014). Factor loading values of variables' indicators exceed the threshold values of 0.708 (Hair et al., 2014), except for INT5, which was retained as the AVE value of the purchase intention variable reached the threshold value, as recommended by Hair et al. (2014). These results explain the establishment of the internal reliability and convergent validity of the study variables. As presented in Table 4, the results of the Fornell-Larcker criterion reveal that the AVE's square root value of each

Table 2 Correlations

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
EWOM quality/usefulness	1						
EWOM quantity/intensity	0.650**	1					
EWOM positive valence	0.644**	0.670**	1				
EWOM negative valence	0.539**	0.559**	0.506**	1			
EWOM recency	0.534**	0.487**	0.519**	0.551**	1		
EWOM credibility	0.329**	0.297**	0.286**	0.191**	0.371**	1	
Purchase intention	0.630**	0.601**	0.655**	0.562**	0.606**	0.475**	1

** $p < 0.01$

Table 3 Descriptive and Measurement Model Results

Variables	Indicators	Loadings	Mean	SD	CR	AVE
EWOM quality/ usefulness	QU1	0.84	3.66	0.87	0.88	0.70
	QU2	0.82				
	QU3	0.86				
EWOM quantity/ intensity	QI1	0.90	3.72	0.89	0.87	0.77
	QI2	0.85				
EWOM positive valence	PVA1	0.90	3.67	0.91	0.87	0.77
	PVA2	0.86				
EWOM negative valence	NVA1	0.87	3.64	0.86	0.85	0.73
	NVA2	0.84				
EWOM recency	RE1	0.88	3.41	0.79	0.82	0.69
	RE2	0.78				
EWOM credibility	CR1	0.85	2.97	0.79	0.86	0.67
	CR2	0.84				
	CR3	0.77				
Purchase intention	INT1	0.72	3.46	0.71	0.86	0.54
	INT2	0.75				
	INT3	0.78				
	INT4	0.76				
	INT5	0.66				

Table 4 Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
EWOM credibility	0.82						
Purchase intention	0.48	0.74					
EWOM negative valence	0.19	0.57	0.86				
EWOM positive valence	0.29	0.66	0.51	0.88			
EWOM quality/usefulness	0.34	0.63	0.54	0.65	0.84		
EWOM quantity/intensity	0.30	0.62	0.56	0.69	0.67	0.88	
EWOM recency	0.37	0.63	0.56	0.55	0.55	0.52	0.83

variable yields a higher value than its correlation values with the other variables, illustrating that the discriminant validity issue does not exist.

Before running the structural model assessment, the lateral collinearity between study variables was inspected. As shown in Table 5, all values of the variance inflation factor (VIF) are less than the value of five, revealing the absence of the lateral collinearity issue (Hair et al., 2014). As presented in Figure 1–Table 5, the results of the structural model assessment revealed that EWOM credibility is significantly and positively influenced by EWOM quality/usefulness ($\beta = 0.162$, t = 3.05, p < 0.001), EWOM quan-

Figure 1 Path coefficients of direct effects

tity/intensity ($\beta = 0.105$, t = 1.81, p < 0.05), and EWOM recency ($\beta = 0.284$, t = 284, t = 5.81, p < 0.001). However, the results found a significant negative relationship between EWOM credibility and EWOM negative valence ($\beta = -0.129$, t = 2.64, p < 0.001) and an insignificant relationship between EWOM credibility and EWOM positive valence ($\beta = 0.026$, t = 0.52, p > 0.05). The five EWOM dimensions explained 17% of the variance in EWOM credibility.
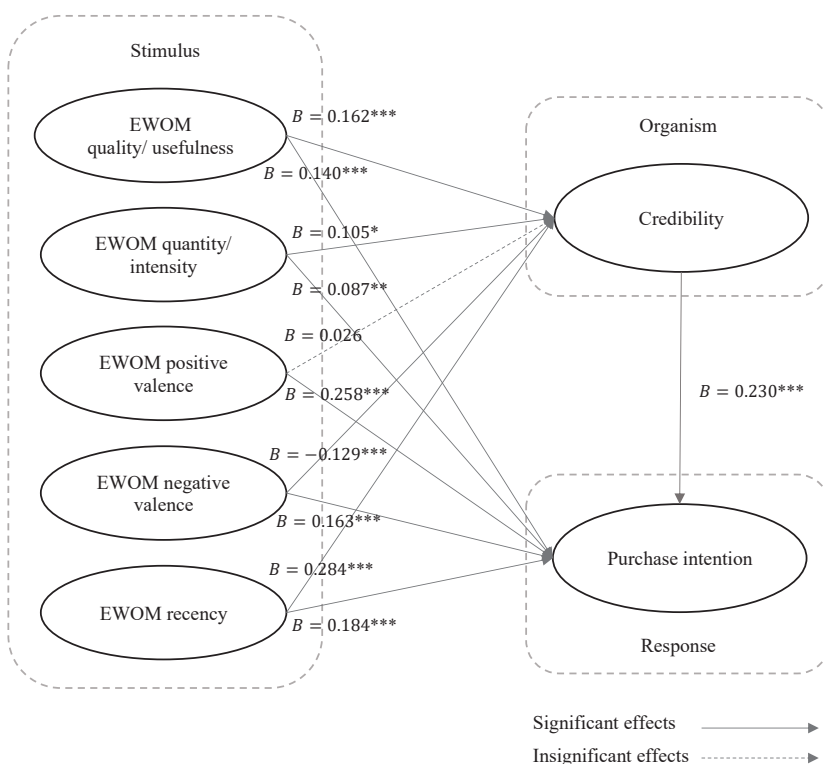
Table 5: Hypotheses Testing

Relationships	β	SE	t-value	Bootstrapping 95% LL	UL	P-value	R²	VIF
Direct effects								
EWOM quality/usefulness → EWOM credibility	0.162***	0.05	3.05	0.07	0.25	0.00	0.17	2.24
EWOM quantity/intensity → EWOM credibility	0.105*	0.06	1.81	0.01	0.20	0.03		2.40
EWOM positive valence → EWOM credibility	0.026	0.05	0.52	-0.06	0.11	0.30		2.30
EWOM negative valence → EWOM credibility	-0.129***	0.05	2.64	-0.21	-0.05	0.00		1.76
EWOM recency → EWOM credibility	0.284***	0.05	5.81	0.21	0.37	0.00		1.77
EWOM quality/usefulness → Purchase intention	0.140***	0.04	3.52	0.07	0.21	0.00	0.63	2.27
EWOM quantity/intensity → Purchase intention	0.087**	0.03	2.51	0.03	0.14	0.01		2.41
EWOM positive valence → Purchase intention	0.258***	0.04	6.69	0.19	0.32	0.00		2.30
EWOM negative valence → Purchase intention	0.163***	0.04	4.62	0.10	0.22	0.00		1.78
EWOM recency → Purchase intention	0.184***	0.04	5.08	0.12	0.24	0.00		1.87
EWOM credibility → Purchase intention	0.230***	0.03	7.55	0.18	0.28	0.00		1.21
Indirect effects								
EWOM quality/usefulness → EWOM credibility → Purchase intention	0.037***	0.01	2.76	0.02	0.06	0.00		
EWOM quantity/intensity → EWOM credibility → Purchase intention	0.024*	0.01	1.77	0.00	0.05	0.04		
EWOM positive valence → EWOM credibility → Purchase intention	0.006	0.01	0.51	-0.01	0.02	0.31		
EWOM negative valence → EWOM credibility → Purchase intention	-0.030**	0.01	2.48	-0.05	-0.01	0.01		
EWOM recency → EWOM credibility → Purchase intention	0.065***	0.01	4.51	0.04	0.09	0.00		

* p < 0.05; **p£ 0.01; ***p < 0.001; SE = standard error; LL = Lower level; UL = Upper level.

The results also revealed that purchase intention is significantly and positively influenced by EWOM quality/usefulness ($\beta = 0.140$, t = 3.52, p < 0.001), EWOM quantity/intensity ($\beta = 0.087$, t = 2.51, p at 0.01), EWOM positive valence ($\beta = 0.258$, t = 0.6.69, p < 0.001), EWOM negative valence ($\beta = 0.163$, t = 4.62, p < 0.001), EWOM recency ($\beta = 0.184$, t = 5.08, p <0.001), and credibility ($\beta = 0.230$, t = 7.55, p < 0.001), explaining 63% of the variance in purchase intention.

Lastly, the mediation analyses indicated that credibility partially mediates the effects of EWOM quality/usefulness ($\beta = 0.037$, p < 0.001), EWOM quantity/intensity ($\beta = 0.024$, p < 0.05), EWOM negative valence ($\beta = -0.030$, p at 0.01), and EWOM recency ($\beta = 0.065$, p < 0.001) on purchase intention. However, the results found that credibility insignificantly mediates the effects of EWOM positive valence ($\beta = 0.006$, p > 0.05) on purchase intention.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicated that EWOM's quality/usefulness positively influences EWOM credibility and purchase intention, illustrating that the more social media customers perceive that social media reviews about a particular brand's offerings are informative, the more they perceive that these reviews are credible and they intend to purchase from the brand. EWOM quality is one of the critical factors that contribute to increasing customers' perceptions of EWOM credibility and value and encouraging their purchase intentions (Al-Haddad et al., 2022; Bilal et al., 2022; Daowd et al., 2021; Evgeniy et al., 2019)

The results also revealed that EWOM's quantity/intensity positively influences EWOM's credibility and purchase intention. This illustrates that social media customers in Egypt perceive EWOM's credibility and intend to purchase from a particular brand when they find a large volume of reviews about its offerings. Cheung and Thadanis' (2012) noted that the volume of recommendations, reviews, or comments acts as stimulus cues in EWOM communication. When customers find many reviews or comments about a product/service, they think that this product/service is demanded and consequently affects their purchase decisions and intentions (Evgeniy et al., 2019; Fan et al., 2013; López & Sicilia, 2014; Reyes-Menendez et al., 2019).

Surprisingly, the results indicated that EWOM's positive valence has an insignificant influence on EWOM's credibility, however, it is the primary force that motivates customers' purchase intentions with a high path coefficient ($\beta = 0.258$). This illustrates that social media customers in Egypt don't evaluate EWOM's credibility by other customers' positive reviews about a brand's offerings, but these reviews only influence their intentions to purchase its products. This can be explained through how social media customers in Egypt pay more attention to the number of products with positive reviews and the desire to obtain these products. Customers' purchase decisions and intentions are affected by the quantity of other customers' positive rates of a brand's products which has a significant impact on increasing their purchase intentions (Hajli, 2020; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Roy et al., 2021; Sundar et al., 2008).

Furthermore, the results showed that EWOM's negative valence negatively influences EWOM's credibility but positively influences customers' purchase intention, demonstrating that social media customers in Egypt have intentions to purchase a brand's products even if there are negative reviews about them. One possible explanation for this is that customers evaluate the overall reviews of the product, which may contain more positive reviews than the negative ones, specifically when they are generated by unknown sources. Customers are likely to choose online products with a large number of positive comments (Roy et al., 2017). Reimer and Benkenstein (2016) found that negative reviews which are provided by untrusted sources increase customers' purchase intentions. Accordingly, the impact of EWOM's negative valence on customers' purchase intentions will be less significant if the source of the review is unknown and untrustworthy (Reimer & Benkenstein, 2016).

The study findings found that EWOM's recency not only positively influences EWOM credibility, but also purchase intention with a high path coefficient (β = 0.284), illustrating that the more online reviews of a particular product are recent, the more social media customers in Egypt perceive their credibility and intend to purchase it. The literature provides little evidence regarding the impact of EWOM recency on customers' perceptions of its credibility and purchase intentions, highlighting the importance of the current study's findings which demonstrated that EWOM recency is the most important driver of EWOM credibility and significantly influences social media customers' purchase intentions. In customer-to-customer contexts, customers inspect EWOM's timeliness to build trust in its information and this affects their purchase intentions (Alversia, 2019; Fu et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2022).

The significant relationship between EWOM credibility and customers' purchase intentions has been proven in the current study, illustrating that increasing social media customers' credibility of a brand's product reviews contributes to increasing their intentions to purchase it. The availability of customers' opinions and reviews about a brand's products offer suggestions for improving the product creation process, and trustworthy reviews assist customers' purchasing decisions (Rathore et al., 2016).

Lastly, the findings indicated that EWOM credibility mediates the effects of EWOM's quality/usefulness, quantity/intensity, negative valence, and recency on customers' purchase intentions. The S-O-R perspective articulates that stimulus cues influence individuals' behaviors through the cognitive or emotional states they hold (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In the customer-to-customer context, customers' attitudes towards EWOM are affected by its characteristics which, in turn, contribute to increasing or decreasing their purchase intentions (Fu et al., 2011; Matute et al., 2016; Zainal et al., 2017).

The findings found an insignificant mediating role of EWOM credibility in the relationship between EWOM's positive valence and purchase intention. The possible reason for this is that social media customers in Egypt pay more attention to the product itself and their desire to obtain it rather than its positive reviews and their credibility. Roy et al. (2021) argued that the nature of the product is more important for customers than the type of EWOM's valence.

In sum, the findings of this study emphasize the significant roles played by EWOM characteristics and credibility in driving social media customers' purchase intentions. the findings of this study imply that marketers and sellers can begin by concentrating on EWOM through different methods by always encouraging consumers to leave a review after purchasing online product or trying a service.

Practitioners in the social media field must insist on how to enhance EWOM credibility by always making sure that reviews are credible, reliable, and accurate via regular editing and revising reviews and comments of customers (Tien et al., 2019). In addition to involving the influencer or reviewer who has the knowledge to capture the customers' attention, the company should encourage the present customers to give their honest experiences with the product or service. For attracting more customers to visit their website or leave reviews, the business should focus more on this aspect.

Conclusion and Limitations

This study examines the impact of EWOM dimensions (namely, quality/usefulness, quantity/intensity, positive valence, negative valence, and recency) on social media customers' perceptions of EWOM credibility and purchase intentions, considering the mediation role of EWOM credibility. It is a crucial subject that has not yet received enough attention in the literature, specifically in the Egyptian context. The study findings revealed that EWOM dimensions have a significant positive impact on EWOM credibility and purchase intention, except for the impact of EWOM's positive valence on EWOM credibility. Furthermore, EWOM credibility mediates the effects of EWOM's quality/usefulness, quantity/intensity, negative valence, and recency on purchase intention. Therefore, study findings add to the literature new evidence regarding

the unique effect of EWOM's characteristics on EWOM credibility and social media customers' purchase intentions, considering the mediation role of EWOM credibility. Practically, this study can provide practitioners in Egypt with deeper insights regarding how EWOM characteristics and credibility can encourage social media customers' purchase intentions.

Despite these theoretical and practical implications, this study has some limitations. The sample size of this study was limited, suggesting future research that may undertake a larger sample size from Egypt. According to study findings, social networking site usage among Egyptian customers appeared to be very high. As a result, marketers need to identify the best platforms where their potential customers interact. Besides, because there are differences in how different nationalities perceive things, Egyptians may perceive things differently than people from other countries because of how their country may view the internet, social media, and online shopping differently. Hence, results could be limited and restricted to Egypt. The current study adopted the cross-sectional research design by which its data were collected at one time, recommending future longitudinal and qualitative research to provide a deeper understanding. Future studies could benefit from additional contextual factors, such as concentrating on a specific type of product or service to know the consumer's actual level of involvement and purchase intentions toward certain products and services. Finally, this study only focused on investigating the impact of EWOM dimensions on EWOM credibility and purchase intention variables. However, it did not examine how customers' demographics, such as age, gender, and income level, can affect their purchase intentions, suggesting further research to cover these elements in future research.

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