



“A Study on Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Social Media and Its Influence on Brand Trust among Online Shoppers”

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Abstract

How to Cite this Article:

G, G. (2026). “A Study on Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Social Media and Its Influence on Brand Trust among Online Shoppers”. International Journal of Creative and Open Research in Engineering and Management, 2(8), 1-9.
<https://doi.org/10.55041/ijcope.v2i8.262>

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<https://doi.org/10.55041/ijcope.v2i8.262>

The emergence of social media and online shopping platforms has greatly affected how consumers get information and assess brands prior to making purchase decisions. Electronic word-of-mouth in the form of online reviews, recommendations, ratings, comments and other consumer-generated content has become a valuable source of information for consumers. This review article discusses the impact of electronic word-of-mouth in social media on brand trust in online shoppers. A systematic literature review approach was employed in examining the available literature on this subject matter from 2018 to 2025. Research articles related to the impact of eWOM on brand trust were critically examined from major academic databases using relevant search terms on eWOM, social media, brand trust, consumer trust and online shopping. The reviewed literature was analyzed using thematic analysis to discover important relationships and patterns. Credible and reliable eWOM is capable of decreasing the level of risk and uncertainty and therefore increasing the level of confidence and trust of consumers in online brands. According to the review, brand trust is one of the factors that can lead to positive results for the consumer such as purchase intention, brand loyalty, repurchase intention, and positive recommendations. Nonetheless, fake reviews, sponsored posts, misleading information, and AI-generated information pose new problems for the credibility of eWOM and consumer

trust. It has been found that there is a lack of research on the link between eWOM and brand trust through social media among online consumers in emerging countries like India.

Keywords: Electronic Word-of-Mouth, eWOM, Social Media, Brand Trust, Online Shoppers, Online Retail, Consumer Trust.



Introduction

The rapid growth of social media has fundamentally transformed the way consumers search for, evaluate, and share information about products and brands. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, X, and other digital communities have become important sources of consumer-generated information in the online retail environment. Unlike traditional advertising, social media enables consumers to communicate their experiences, opinions, recommendations, and complaints directly with other consumers. This consumer-to-consumer communication is commonly referred to as **electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)**. The increasing dependence on online information has made eWOM an important factor influencing consumers' perceptions and evaluations of brands.

Electronic word-of-mouth can be understood as positive or negative statements made by potential, current, or former consumers about a product, service, or company and made available to a large number of people through the Internet. Social media has significantly expanded the reach and speed of eWOM because consumers can easily create, share, comment on, like, and recommend content. Online reviews, ratings, comments, influencer discussions, customer experiences, product recommendations, and user-generated posts can therefore influence how consumers perceive a brand. In the context of online shopping, where consumers cannot physically examine products before purchase, such information can become particularly valuable in reducing uncertainty and supporting purchase decisions.

The importance of eWOM has increased alongside the expansion of online retail. Consumers frequently consult social media content and online reviews before purchasing products, particularly when they are unfamiliar with a brand. Information provided by other consumers may be perceived as more authentic and credible than conventional promotional messages because it is based on actual consumption experiences. Positive eWOM can strengthen favourable perceptions of a brand, whereas negative eWOM can create doubts regarding product quality, reliability, customer service, and overall brand performance. Consequently, the nature and credibility of information circulated through social media can have substantial implications for the development of consumer trust.

Brand trust represents consumers' confidence that a brand is reliable, honest, and capable of fulfilling its promises. Trust is particularly important in online retail because consumers face several forms of uncertainty, including uncertainty regarding product quality, payment security, delivery, returns, privacy, and whether the product received will match its online representation. When consumers trust a brand, they are more likely to consider its products, share positive experiences, and develop longer-term relationships with the brand. In contrast, a lack of trust can discourage consumers from purchasing even when a product is competitively priced or extensively promoted.

Social media eWOM may contribute to brand trust through several mechanisms. First, information shared by other consumers can provide social validation and reduce perceived risk. Second, repeated positive experiences communicated by independent users may strengthen perceptions of brand reliability. Third, interactive communication through social media allows consumers to observe how brands respond to questions, complaints, and feedback. However, the influence of eWOM is not necessarily positive or uniform. Fake reviews, sponsored content, manipulated ratings, misleading recommendations, and exaggerated claims can reduce the credibility of online information. Therefore, consumers may evaluate the **credibility, quality, relevance, and authenticity** of eWOM before incorporating it into their perceptions of a brand.

The relationship between eWOM and brand trust is particularly relevant in the Indian online retail market, where consumers increasingly use digital platforms as part of their shopping journey. The expansion of smartphones, social networking platforms, digital payments, and online marketplaces has created an environment in which brand-related information is continuously generated and circulated. Consumers in Karnataka represent an important segment of this changing digital marketplace, with online shoppers exposed to a wide range of consumer reviews, recommendations, influencer content, and brand-related discussions. Understanding how such information contributes to consumer trust can therefore provide useful insights for online retailers and marketers.



Despite the growing importance of social media eWOM, the credibility of online information remains a significant concern. Consumers may encounter both genuine and commercially motivated content while evaluating brands. This creates a need to understand whether exposure to eWOM actually strengthens consumers' trust in brands and which characteristics of eWOM are most influential. From a managerial perspective, understanding this relationship can help online retailers develop more effective social media strategies, encourage authentic consumer participation, respond appropriately to negative feedback, and build stronger relationships with customers.

Therefore, the present study focuses on **“Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Social Media and Its Influence on Brand Trust among Online Shoppers.”** The study seeks to examine how consumers' exposure to and evaluation of eWOM on social media influence their trust in online retail brands. By examining this relationship, the study aims to contribute to the growing body of research on digital consumer behaviour and provide practical implications for marketers seeking to build credible and trustworthy brands in an increasingly social-media-driven online retail environment.

Literature Review

1. Seo and Park (2018) studied the impact of information characteristic of airline social media on eWOM, brand equity, and trust. This study focused on three main information characteristics of social-media information that include information quantity, information quality, and information credibility. Through data gathered from 430 airline passengers and structural equation modeling, they found out that information quantity and quality had a significant impact on eWOM. Furthermore, they concluded that eWOM significantly impacted brand awareness and brand image, as well as eWOM and brand image significantly impacted trust. This study indicates the influence of information quality and quantity on consumers' perception and trust.

2. Rao and Rao (2019) explored the relationship between eWOM credibility and consumer purchase intention on Facebook fan pages, focusing on consumer electronics as their specific domain. This study focused on trust in the seller and brand image as mediating factors between eWOM credibility and consumer purchase intention. This research implies that consumers do not just accept any online recommendations made by other people, but eWOM credibility has an effect on how consumers evaluate brands and sellers.

3. Ismagilova et al. (2019/2020) performed a meta-analysis of the impact of eWOM communications on purchase intention. In this case, the researchers synthesised findings of previous studies on eWOM instead of concentrating on the results of research conducted in relation to a certain product or platform. As a result, it was proved that eWOM is a valuable digital source of information able to influence consumer behavior and purchase intention. It may be used to prove theoretical significance of eWOM in consumer decision making.

4. Bilgihan et al. (2020) researched the relationships between e-servicescape, customer reviews, trust, loyalty, and eWOM in the context of customers of an online retailer. In this case, the researchers considered email and social network users and two types of eWOM, which were email communication and social network posting. According to the results of the research, customer reviews represent an important element of the online shopping experience, while e-servicescape has a positive influence on trust. Trust has a positive influence on eWOM and customer loyalty.

5. Wang, Zhang, Li & McLeay (2021) investigated the effect of organisational crisis responses on eWOM and trust recovery via social media. The research was centered around understanding how organisations could respond to the consumer concerns caused by the crisis and regain their trust through the social media communication. The research shows that social media communication not only serves as the tool of eWOM generation but also can be helpful in the process of consumer trust rebuilding when the organisational reputation suffers.

6. Kumar et al. (2021) investigated how eWOM credibility is generated on social networking sites in the Indian context and how it impacts the brand image and online purchase intention. The researchers collected the sample of 256



participants from four Indian cities and used structural equation modelling for the analysis. In the course of the research, eWOM-related variables such as consumer involvement, trust, recommendations, and message content were taken into consideration. The results revealed that social networking activities lead to eWOM credibility, which, in turn, impacts brand image and purchase intention. The study is especially valuable for you because it uses the data from Indian consumers.

7. Chen, Wu, and Chi (2022) examined the effect of various social-media marketing practices on online brand trust in Instagram. The researchers evaluated three kinds of social-media marketing activities: internet celebrity endorsements, official website messages, and eWOM. In addition, they examined the mediating effects of brand image and brand familiarity on the impact of social-media marketing activities on online brand trust. Based on the data collected from 500 online surveys and structural equation modelling analysis, the study revealed that brand image and brand familiarity significantly mediated the effect on online brand trust.

8. Sohaib and Han (2023) explored the impact of social media marketing, eWOM, brand trust, brand loyalty, and value co-creation by fashion-brand customers in China. The dimensions considered for social-media marketing included entertainment, customization, interaction, eWOM, and trendiness. Using PLS-SEM technique, the researchers observed that social media marketing had a positive effect on brand trust, brand loyalty, and value co-creation. Similarly, brand trust was a significant predictor of brand loyalty and value co-creation. The study shows that eWOM and other social-media activities can help in creating a better consumer–brand relationship.

9. Le et al. (2024) explored the contribution of eWOM characteristics towards trust and brand equity in the context of online reviews. The study involved qualitative and then quantitative research where 410 people took part and the structural equation modeling technique was applied. Among the eWOM characteristics considered in the study were the quality of content, quantity of reviews, norm conflict, sponsorship of reviews and expertise of the sources. The researchers have found that these characteristics impact the credibility and trustworthiness of eWOM. This study will be useful for your project as it considers how characteristics of eWOM can be used to build trust.

10. Benamen, Huwae, and Saptенno (2024) investigated the impact of eWOM and brand image on the purchase decision and brand trust as a mediator among Xiaomi smartphones users. A quantitative research design and PLS analysis were used in the study. The results show that there was a positive and significant effect of eWOM on brand trust. Brand image also positively affected brand trust and the latter positively impacted the purchase decision. The study revealed that there was mediation of the relationship between eWOM and purchase decision through brand trust.

11. Hutabarat, Winarno, and Idhoh (2025) conducted a study about the effects of Instagram marketing and social media-based eWOM on buying behavior, with brand image and brand trust acting as the mediators. The research involved a quantitative survey, which was complemented by SEM. It was discovered that Instagram marketing and eWOM had a significant effect on buying behavior through direct and indirect effects via brand image and brand trust. This is very pertinent to your proposed framework since it covers social media, eWOM, brand trust, and consumer buying behavior.

Research Gap

Although electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has received considerable attention in digital marketing research, existing studies have primarily examined its influence on **purchase intention, purchase decisions, brand image, brand equity, brand attitude, and customer loyalty**. Several studies have established that online reviews, recommendations, and consumer-generated content can influence consumer evaluations and behavioural intentions. However, comparatively less attention has been given to understanding **brand trust as a specific outcome of social-media-based eWOM**, particularly in the context of online shopping. Existing research often treats trust as a mediator, a general form of online trust, or trust in the seller or platform, rather than clearly distinguishing it from **trust in the brand itself**.



A second gap concerns the **credibility and quality of eWOM**. Previous studies have examined individual characteristics such as information quality, source credibility, review quantity, review valence, reviewer expertise, and message relevance. However, these factors have often been investigated separately across different platforms, industries, and consumer groups. There is therefore a need to synthesize the existing findings and understand how these characteristics collectively determine whether consumers perceive social-media eWOM as credible and subsequently develop trust in a brand. This is particularly important because the increasing availability of sponsored content, influencer recommendations, fake reviews, and AI-generated content makes it more difficult for consumers to distinguish authentic eWOM from commercially motivated information.

Another gap relates to the online retail industry in developing countries. Although many studies have analyzed eWOM within particular industries or in developed countries, the findings may not be easily translatable to consumers in emerging digital economies. While studies on eWOM among Indian consumers do exist, there is still limited literature synthesizing the impact of social media eWOM, eWOM credibility, and brand trust among online shoppers specifically from India. Limited research has been done in relation to consumer markets within regions such as Karnataka.

As a result, this paper helps bridge the existing knowledge gaps by providing an in-depth review of the existing literature about the effect of eWOM on brand trust among online shoppers. This review includes the existing body of knowledge regarding eWOM features, credibility, quality of information, social media communication, and consumer trust. Specifically, the review focuses on understanding the impact of these concepts on brand trust. The review also provides direction for future empirical work in relation to emerging areas such as fake reviews, sponsored recommendations, influencer-created eWOM, and AI-generated content.

Objectives of the Research

The current literature review paper is intended to analyze the available literature on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on social media and its impact on brand trust of online shoppers. More specifically, it is important to investigate the role of electronic word-of-mouth in forming consumers' perceptions and evaluations of online brands. It is further necessary to identify the factors such as information quality, source credibility, review relevance, review valence, and authenticity that have an effect on the credibility of eWOM on social media. Additionally, it is crucial to analyze the connection between social-media-based eWOM and brand trust of online shoppers.

Research Methodology

The current paper employs the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology in order to analyse the literature available about the effect of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social media on brand trust in the case of online shoppers. It is believed that the choice of the systematic review methodology is the right one due to the fact that this approach implies structured identification, evaluation and synthesis of all scholarly papers which can be considered as related to the research topic. The period under analysis is 2018-2025 as the present study is supposed to highlight recent changes in the sphere of social media marketing, electronic word-of-mouth, online consumers' behaviour and brand trust in online retailing.

It is necessary to note that the selection of the relevant literature has been performed through such academic databases as Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Emerald Insight, Wiley Online Library, Taylor & Francis and Google Scholar. The keywords "electronic word-of-mouth", "eWOM", "online word-of-mouth", "social media", "social



networking sites”, “brand trust”, “online brand trust”, “consumer trust”, “online shoppers”, “online shopping”, “online retail” and “e-commerce” have been combined using the Boolean operators such as AND and OR.

Articles reviewed were those published between 2018 and 2025, in the form of peer-reviewed journal articles written in English. Articles were selected if they investigated the concepts of electronic word-of-mouth, social media communication, eWOM credibility, information quality, consumer trust, brand trust, online shopping, or other dimensions of online consumer behavior. Empirical and review articles on the subject matter were both reviewed to get an overview of the field. Articles published before 2018, articles with duplications, conference papers, book chapters, dissertations, non-peer-reviewed journals, and articles with no substantial contribution to the topic of eWOM, social media, brand trust, and online consumer behavior were omitted.

Information in relation to the authors of the selected articles and their publication date, research objectives, geographical setting of the study, theory used, variables/concepts, research methods employed, sample characteristics, analysis techniques, key results, limitations, and recommended future research directions were extracted for comparison and synthesis. Particular attention was paid to the impact of eWOM credibility, information quality, source credibility, review characteristics, social-media communication, and brand trust on online shopping behavior.

Subsequent analysis of the literature involved the use of thematic synthesis, where the selected literature studies were categorized based on the themes addressed in each study. Key themes that emerged from the analysis include eWOM and consumer behavior, eWOM credibility and information quality, use of social media as a platform for eWOM, eWOM and brand trust, and brand trust and online consumer behavior.

In general, the methodology ensures that the study goes beyond just analyzing individual studies and allows for an understanding of how eWOM through social media could help build consumer trust towards online brands. Overall, the methodology offers a structured way of synthesizing existing knowledge on the connection between electronic word-of-mouth and brand trust among online consumers. In addition, the methodology helps to identify the gaps in theory, context, and methodology, and thus serves as the basis for formulating future research directions.

Theme Analysis

The thematic analysis of the relevant literature indicates that there are some major themes regarding electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on social media and the role of eWOM in brand trust in online shoppers. The first theme is that of credibility of eWOM information. Studies have shown that consumers do not accept information available on social media platforms automatically; rather, they analyze it in terms of its accuracy, relevancy, completeness, credibility, and authenticity. High credibility information tends to be more useful and reliable, reducing consumer uncertainty during online purchases.

The second theme is that of social media as a means of communication for eWOM. There are many social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and others where consumers get an opportunity to communicate their experiences and share reviews, recommendations, comments, and opinions about products or services. This interactivity of the platforms makes it possible for the eWOM to spread very fast among a large number of consumers.

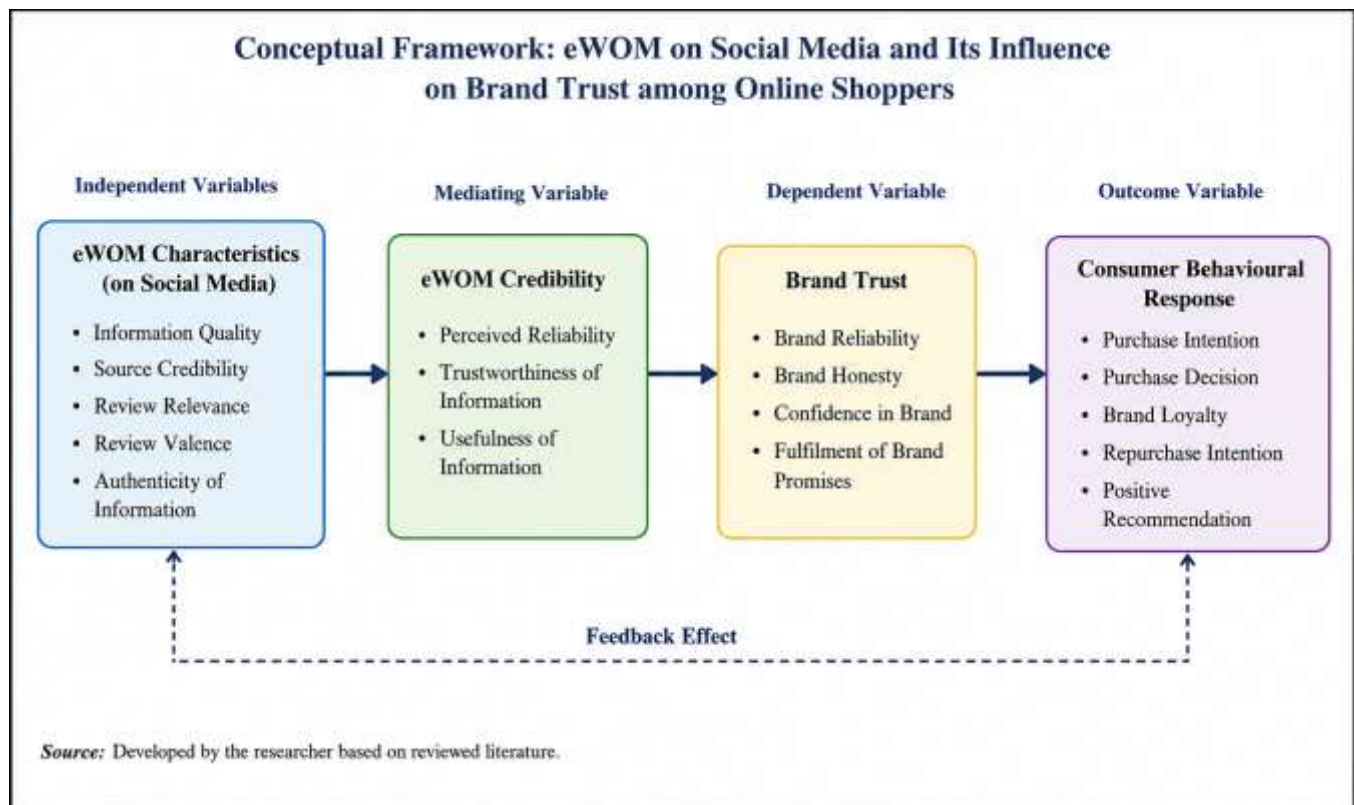
The third theme is eWOM and brand trust. The literature revealed that credible and positive eWOM can enhance consumers' trust in a brand. As consumers receive trustworthy information from other consumers, it can help to reduce their perceived uncertainty and risks, which can positively affect their brand trust. Contrarily, if the information received is misleading or if there are fake reviews, too much marketing content or negative experience on the side of the consumers, then it is more likely that consumers will develop negative perceptions of the brand.



The fourth theme is about brand trust and consumer behavior. A number of scholars have shown that brand trust is positively related to purchase intention, purchase decision, loyalty, repurchase intention, and positive recommendations by consumers. It means that eWOM can influence consumers' behavior directly or indirectly by developing trust in the brand. In general, it can be seen from the literature that eWOM credibility and information quality are crucial mechanisms for creating brand trust in social-media communication for online shoppers. However, further investigation of the issue is needed to examine the role of eWOM in brand trust in different social-media platforms.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the link that is being established between electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) through social media and brand trust in online customers. This conceptual framework is based on the assumption that the features of electronic WOM such as information quality, source credibility, relevancy of reviews, positivity of reviews, and authentic reviews have an impact on the credibility of electronic WOM. If consumers consider social media information to be credible and reliable, it would increase their confidence level regarding the brand and eventually lead to brand trust.



Explanations

The framework postulates that the features of eWOM influence the process in which consumers assess information available on social media. Information with high quality, high credibility, relevance, authenticity, and positivity is likely to enhance the credibility of eWOM. Increased eWOM credibility helps in reducing consumers' uncertainties and boosting their confidence in the brand, hence creating brand trust. Increased brand trust is likely to result in consumer behavioral responses such as purchase intentions, loyalty, repurchase, and recommendations. The suggested framework creates the overall process as follows: eWOM Features → eWOM Credibility → Brand Trust → Consumer Behavioral Response.



Research Directions for the Future

Future research should be carried out on the effects of eWOM in different social media sites because consumers have different reactions to eWOM in Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and short video social media sites. There is need for future research into contemporary problems like the effects of false review sites and artificial intelligence generated eWOM among others. Comparative studies in different age groups, locations, and consumer segments would also help in deepening knowledge about eWOM and brand reputation. In India, research into online consumers in Karnataka region will be helpful.

Discussion

The reviewed literature demonstrates that **electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on social media has an important role in shaping consumers' perceptions and trust toward online brands**. Consumers increasingly depend on reviews, recommendations, ratings, comments, and user-generated content when evaluating products and brands before making online purchases. However, the influence of eWOM depends largely on its perceived credibility, information quality, relevance, and authenticity. Credible and positive eWOM can reduce perceived risk and uncertainty by providing consumers with experiences from other users, thereby strengthening their confidence in the brand. In contrast, misleading information, fake reviews, excessive promotional content, and negative consumer experiences can weaken brand trust. The literature therefore suggests that **eWOM credibility acts as an important link between social-media information and consumers' trust in a brand**.

In addition to these results, the evidence also suggests that brand trust is an important variable that acts as a link between eWOM and positive consumer reactions. If a customer feels that the brand is trustworthy, sincere, and able to keep its promises, then he/she will be more prone to form purchase intentions, loyalty, repurchasing intentions, and good referrals. However, although there have been extensive studies on the association of eWOM with purchase intentions, brand image, brand equity, and loyalty, there have not been enough studies done on brand trust as the focal point of eWOM in social media, especially in the context of online customers from emerging markets like India. Thus, further research on the relationship between eWOM characteristics, credibility, and brand trust needs to be done.

Implications

There are significant theoretical and practical implications associated with the digital marketing and online retailing from the standpoint of the paper. In the theoretical context, the study findings point out that eWOM credibility, information quality, and source credibility are key constructs that contribute to explaining the role of social media communication in building up brand trust. The developed framework is a good starting point for future empirical research on the issue of the relationship between the characteristics of eWOM, its credibility, and brand trust among online customers. In the managerial context, the online retailers should pay their attention to the creation and promotion of truthful customer reviews and user-generated content. Companies should also be engaged in monitoring the negative eWOM and dealing with customer problems. Special emphasis should be made on the management of such problems as fake reviews, misguiding recommendations, and sponsored posts without disclosure.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the current review that eWOM on social media has become an important source of information for online consumers and plays an essential role in building brand trust. People use reviews, recommendations, ratings, comments, and other forms of user-generated content in order to evaluate products and brands prior to purchasing. It follows from the reviewed literature that the power of eWOM depends greatly on the quality and credibility of



information on social media. When people believe eWOM to be authentic, it helps decrease their risk and uncertainties related to online shopping and increases brand trust.

Moreover, the review shows that brand trust acts as an important connection between social media communication and consumer behavior. Consumers' willingness to buy, loyalty, repurchase intentions, and willingness to make recommendations are more probable in case of the brand they perceive to be trustworthy. At the same time, the growing amount of fake reviews, sponsored recommendations, and misleading information has a negative impact on the credibility of eWOM and brand trust as well. Hence, online sellers have to pay attention not only to the amount of eWOM but its quality as well.

Generally speaking, however, there is a gap within the literature regarding the impact of eWOM on brand trust, which needs to be considered more in future studies. The impact of eWOM on brand trust should be studied in relation to different types of social media websites, consumer demographics, industries, as well as emerging markets. For instance, empirical analysis concerning the credibility of social media eWOM and brand trust among online consumers in India and Karnataka can contribute significantly to the literature on the subject. Hence, the review presented in the paper lays a good foundation for future research on the influence of credibility of eWOM on consumer–brand relationships.

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- **Tan (2023)** examined customer participation, positive eWOM intention, **online brand community trust**, and repurchase intention. The study specifically investigated whether online brand-community trust mediates the relationship between customer participation and repurchase intention.
DOI: 10.1080/13527266.2023.2177709



- **Handoyo (2024)** conducted a **meta-analysis** examining trust, perceived risk, security, and eWOM in e-commerce. The findings showed that trust, perceived risk, perceived security, and eWOM significantly influence consumers' e-commerce purchasing decisions. This is a strong supporting study for establishing the importance of eWOM and trust in online retail.

DOI: [10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e29714](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e29714)

- **Le et al. (2024)** examined how eWOM characteristics such as **content quality, number of reviews, norm conflict, and sponsored recommendations** contribute to trust in online reviews and ultimately brand equity. Data from 410 respondents were analysed using SEM. This is one of the **closest studies to your proposed topic** because it directly investigates how characteristics of eWOM contribute to trust.

DOI: 10.1177/21582440241292815

- **Siddiqui et al. (2024)** examined the relationship between **eWOM, information quality, security, and online purchase behaviour**, with e-trustmarks as a moderating factor. The research used data from 1,993 e-commerce consumers and PLS-SEM. The study found that e-trustmarks strengthen the positive effects of eWOM, security, and information quality on online trust.

DOI: 10.1108/JAMR-04-2024-0149