

How eWOM Influences Moroccan Consumers' Buying Decisions? Exploring The Power of Reviews, Influencers, and Social Media

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on the purchase decision of Moroccan consumers, focusing on online reviews, influencer recommendations, and social media comments. Using a quantitative approach with an online questionnaire addressed to 100 Moroccan consumers, the results show that these three factors significantly influence purchasing decisions, with respective path coefficients of 0.52, 0.47, and 0.61. The study reveals that businesses should encourage positive reviews, proactively manage negative feedback, collaborate with credible influencers, and foster interactions on social media. eWOM plays a key role in Moroccan consumers' purchasing decisions, and strategically managing these elements can enhance engagement and positively influence buying behaviors.

Keywords: E-WOM; purchase decision; Online reviews; Influencer recommendations; Social media comments

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1. Introduction

With the rise of digitalization, the world of commerce has undergone a profound transformation, disrupting traditional consumer decision-making processes (Verhoef et al., 2021). Word-of-mouth, long regarded as an influential method of information dissemination, has now reinvented itself in its electronic form, eWOM (electronic Word-of-Mouth) (Verma & Yadav, 2021). Thanks to online reviews and ratings, social media comments, and influencer recommendations, consumers now have access to a multitude of information sources that influence their purchasing decisions (Gonçalves et al., 2024). This evolution is particularly noticeable in Morocco, where the population, especially the young and connected, is increasingly responsive to digital recommendations (Ganoune & Ait Youssef, 2024).

In this context, the key question arises: to what extent does eWOM impact Moroccan consumers' purchasing decisions? As the Internet and social media have become essential spaces for exchanging opinions, it is crucial to understand how these new forms of word-of-mouth truly influence purchasing behaviors in Morocco's rapidly growing digital market.

To address this issue, this study will be structured around three main parts: the first part will be devoted to a literature review on the eWOM concept and its effects on purchasing decisions. The second part will detail the methodology used, notably a quantitative approach based on a questionnaire addressed to 100 Moroccan consumers. Finally, the analysis of the results will allow us to discuss the observed impacts and provide practical recommendations for Moroccan businesses seeking to better understand and exploit the influence of eWOM on their consumers.

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2. Research Method

2.1. Literature Review

Word-of-Mouth (WOM)

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is traditionally defined as a process where individuals share information about products or services, primarily through informal communication (Tazi, 2023). This process relies on the credibility of the source, personal experiences, and trust between individuals. WOM has long been recognized as an important factor in the purchasing process, especially for complex or risky consumption decisions (Huete-Alcocer, 2017).

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) refers to the exchange of opinions, experiences, and information between consumers via digital platforms such as e-commerce websites, social media, or blogs (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). This phenomenon has been amplified with the advent of the Internet and social media, transforming traditional word-of-mouth into large-scale and instantaneous communication. According to López and Sicilia (2014), eWOM can be more influential than traditional advertising due to its spontaneous nature and the trust that consumers place in the opinions of other consumers.

Purchase Decision

A purchase decision is a complex process that involves several key steps. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), the first step involves recognizing a need, followed by the search for relevant information. Once the information is gathered, the consumer evaluates the different alternatives available on the market, considering factors such as price, quality, and product features. Finally, after evaluating the alternatives, the purchase decision is made. Solomon (2017) and Schiffman and Kanuk (2010) add that consumer behavior is influenced by a combination of internal factors, such as motivation and perception, and external factors, such as recommendations from acquaintances or advertising messages. This process can also be influenced by previous experiences, expectations, and social pressure, as highlighted by Engel et al. (2011).

The Role of Online Reviews and Ratings on E-commerce Websites

Online reviews and ratings on e-commerce websites have a significant impact on consumers' purchase decisions. Several studies, including one by Von-Helversen et al. (2018), have demonstrated that products with positive reviews are more likely to be purchased. Consumers increasingly rely on reviews from other users to make informed decisions. Indeed, peer reviews are often seen as more reliable than traditional advertising. However, the impact of online reviews is not limited to positive reviews. Varga and Albuquerque (2024) highlighted that negative reviews can have an even stronger effect. They often lead to questioning and a need for additional information, prompting consumers to explore product features more deeply before making a choice. Both positive and negative reviews play a crucial role in the purchase process, affecting trust and product perception.

The Role of Influencer Recommendations and Their Impact on Purchase Decisions

Influencers have growing power over consumers' purchasing decisions, particularly due to their ability to reach a wide audience via social media. Research by Kumar et al. (2024) shows that influencer recommendations have a substantial impact, especially when influencers are perceived as authentic and credible. Consumers are more likely to follow influencer recommendations when they believe the influencer possesses expertise in a particular domain or when they identify with the influencer's values. This has a direct effect on purchasing behavior, as consumers tend to trust the opinions of individuals they perceive as thought leaders or experts in a specific field, as shown by Venciute et al. (2023). Therefore, the credibility of the influencer and their relationship with their audience play a key role in the effectiveness of their recommendations (Kwiatek et al., 2021).

The Impact of Social Media Comments on Purchase Decisions

Social media platforms have become essential spaces where consumers exchange opinions about products. According to Chu (2024), comments shared on these platforms have a direct impact on purchase decisions, particularly because they provide a form of social validation. When multiple users express positive or negative opinions about a product, it influences the perceptions and attitudes of other consumers. Furthermore, comments allow for sharing personal experiences, which strengthens the credibility of products or services (Chakraborty & Bahat, 2018). The viral effect of these exchanges can also amplify their reach, quickly and widely altering the perception of a product or brand. Companies need

to be aware of the impact of these social interactions on their products, as they have considerable persuasive power over consumers' purchase decisions.

Based on this literature review, the following hypotheses can be proposed:

- ✓ Hypothesis 1: Online reviews and ratings on e-commerce websites have a significant positive impact on consumers' purchase decisions.
- ✓ Hypothesis 2: Influencer recommendations have a significant positive effect on consumers' purchase decisions.
- ✓ Hypothesis 3: Comments on social media have a direct and significant impact on consumers' purchase decisions.

The conceptual framework can be presented in the following figure:

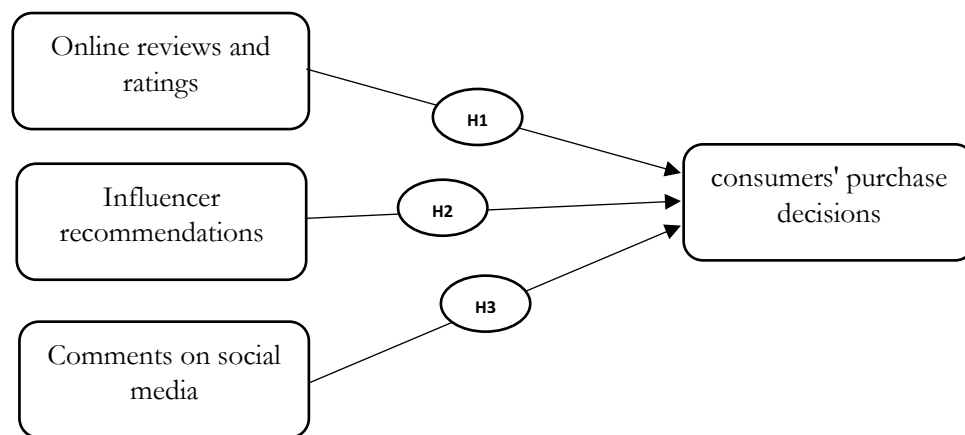


Figure 1. The conceptual framework of the study
Source : (Bouaddi and al., 2025)

2.2. Materials and Methods

This study adopted a quantitative approach to analyze the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on the purchase decision of Moroccan consumers. The quantitative approach enabled the collection of objective and measurable data, thus facilitating the analysis of relationships between various variables, such as online reviews, influencer recommendations, social media comments, and their influence on consumer purchase decisions.

The study sample consisted of 100 Moroccan consumers selected based on their active use of e-commerce platforms and social media. This sample size was chosen to ensure that the respondents had relevant experience with the different types of eWOM examined. This approach allowed for obtaining results that were representative of the purchasing behavior of Moroccan consumers active in digital environments.

The sampling method used was non-probability snowball sampling. This approach was selected because it is particularly suitable in contexts where access to a complete database of consumers is challenging. Initial respondents, familiar with e-commerce platforms and social media, were asked to recommend other participants who met the study's criteria. This process allowed for the efficient recruitment of additional respondents, creating a network of participants with similar characteristics regarding eWOM usage.

Data were collected using an online questionnaire specifically designed for this study. The questionnaire included closed-ended questions and Likert-type scales to measure the impact of various aspects of eWOM (online reviews, influencer recommendations, and social media comments) on purchase decisions. The questionnaire was distributed mainly through social media platforms and popular e-commerce sites where respondents were already active. Participants were invited to respond anonymously

and provide informed consent before completing the questionnaire, ensuring data confidentiality and ethical data collection practices.

For data analysis, SmartPLS, a software for structural equation modeling based on Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM), was used. This method was particularly suitable for analyzing complex models as it allowed for the simultaneous evaluation of relationships between multiple latent and observed variables. SmartPLS was used to test the research hypotheses by measuring the effects of online reviews, influencer recommendations, and social media comments on consumer purchase decisions.

3. Result and Discussions

3.1. Results

The results of the study were obtained from the analysis of data collected through the online questionnaire and processed using SmartPLS software to analyze the relationships between the various variables of the model.

Demographic Results

The study sample was balanced, although the majority of respondents were young adults aged 18 to 35, reflecting the high penetration of digital technologies and online shopping within this age group (Fig.1). Regarding gender, 55% of the respondents were female, while 45% were male (Fig.2).

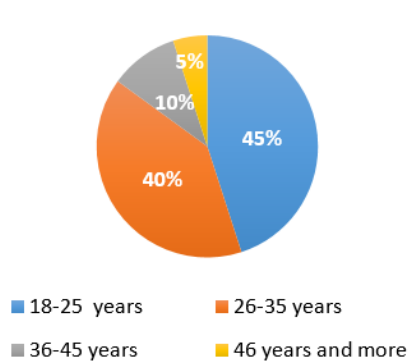


Figure 2. Distribution of Age

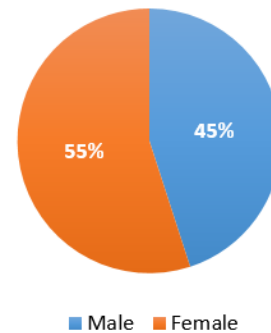


Figure 3. Distribution of Gender

Reliability of Variables

The reliability of the variables was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and all variables showed satisfactory results (greater than 0.70), indicating adequate internal consistency. The results demonstrate that all variables have high reliability. These values are well above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating that the instruments used to measure these variables are consistent.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha of Variables

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Online Reviews and Ratings	0.85
Influencer Recommendations	0.82
Social Media Comments	0.88

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is measured by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and all independent and dependent variables show AVE values greater than 0.50, demonstrating that they explain a good portion of the variance of their respective indicators. The AVE values are all above 0.50, confirming that each latent variable (both independent and dependent) adequately explains the variance of its respective indicators.

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variable	AVE
Online Reviews and Ratings	0.62
Influencer Recommendations	0.59
Social Media Comments	0.64

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was tested by comparing the square root of the AVE for each variable with its correlations with other variables. The results show that each variable is distinct, ensuring that it measures a unique concept. The square roots of the AVE are higher than the correlations between the variables, confirming discriminant validity and indicating that each variable measures a distinct concept.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

Variable	AVE Square Root	Correlation with Other Variables
Online Reviews and Ratings	0.79	0.51 (Influencer Recommendations)
Influencer Recommendations	0.77	0.48 (Social Media Comments)
Social Media Comments	0.80	0.60 (Online Reviews and Ratings)

Hypothesis Testing

The hypotheses were tested using path coefficients, T-statistics, and P-values to evaluate the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable, which is the purchase decision.

Hypothesis 1: The Impact of Online Reviews and Ratings on the Purchase Decision

The test results for Hypothesis 1 show that the path coefficient of 0.52 is significant, with a P-value less than 0.01, confirming that online reviews and ratings have a positive and significant impact on the purchase decision. Therefore, this hypothesis is confirmed.

Table 4. Test of validity for H1

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value
Online Reviews and Ratings → Purchase Decision	0.52	6.35	< 0.01

Hypothesis 2: The Impact of Influencer Recommendations on the Purchase Decision

The path coefficient of 0.47 and significant T-statistic indicate that influencer recommendations have a positive impact on the purchase decision. Consumers are particularly influenced by influencers who are perceived as credible and authentic. Hypothesis 2 is confirmed.

Table 5. Test of validity for H2

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value
Influencer Recommendations → Purchase Decision	0.47	5.12	< 0.01

Hypothesis 3: The Impact of Social Media Comments on the Purchase Decision

The path coefficient of 0.61 shows a significant impact of social media comments on consumers' purchase decisions. Therefore, this hypothesis is confirmed, and comments on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter strongly influence the purchase decision.

Table 6. Test of validity for H3

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	T-Statistic	P-Value
Social Media Comments → Purchase Decision	0.61	7.20	< 0.01

The results of the study clearly demonstrate the importance of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the purchasing decision-making process of Moroccan consumers. All the proposed hypotheses were

confirmed, highlighting the significant impact of three key elements of eWOM: online reviews and ratings, influencer recommendations, and social media comments.

The first result shows that online reviews and ratings play a major role in the purchasing decisions of Moroccan consumers, with a path coefficient of 0.52 and a p-value less than 0.01. This confirms that consumers place great importance on online reviews, whether positive or negative. The influence of online reviews appears to be a critical factor in shaping consumers' perceptions and their final purchase decisions.

The second result also shows a positive impact of influencer recommendations on purchasing decisions, with a path coefficient of 0.47 and a p-value less than 0.01. This illustrates that consumers are particularly influenced by influencers who are perceived as credible and authentic. The trust consumers place in influencers significantly affects their purchasing behavior, especially when they relate to the influencer's values and expertise.

Finally, the results regarding social media comments show an even stronger impact, with a path coefficient of 0.61 and a p-value less than 0.01. This confirms that Moroccan consumers take into account opinions shared on popular social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter before making a purchasing decision. Social media comments, both positive and negative, contribute to the validation of products and services and play a crucial role in influencing consumer decisions in the digital space.

3.2. Discussion

The results of the study confirm the key elements discussed in the literature review, emphasizing the importance of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the purchasing decision-making process of consumers. By analyzing each dimension of eWOM, the results strengthen the theoretical conclusions of various previous studies.

✓ The Role of Online Reviews and Ratings on E-commerce Sites

The results of our study show that online reviews and ratings have a significant impact on the purchasing decisions of Moroccan consumers. With a path coefficient of 0.52 and a p-value below 0.01, this reflects a strong alignment with the findings of Von-Helversen et al. (2018) and Varga and Albuquerque (2024), who both demonstrated that online ratings directly influence purchase decisions. In particular, products with positive ratings are considered more reliable and have a higher likelihood of being purchased. On the other hand, negative reviews have an even more pronounced impact, encouraging consumers to be more critical and seek additional information before making a decision, as emphasized by Varga and Albuquerque (2024). These results confirm the relevance of earlier studies that underscore the importance of credibility and transparency in reviews, which play a crucial role in shaping product perception and consumer trust.

✓ The Role of Influencer Recommendations and Their Impact on Purchase Decisions

Influencer recommendations have also been shown to be a determining factor in Moroccan consumers' purchase decisions. With a path coefficient of 0.47 and a p-value less than 0.01, the impact of influencers on purchasing behavior is confirmed. These results align with the work of Kumar et al. (2024), which found that consumers are more likely to follow recommendations from influencers perceived as authentic and credible. Furthermore, the study by Venciute et al. (2023) highlights that consumers are more sensitive to influencer recommendations when they believe these individuals have expertise in a particular field. This was evident in our study, where respondents showed a greater inclination to follow influencers perceived as experts in fields such as fashion, beauty, or technology. Indeed, credibility and the relationship between influencers and their audience are key factors that condition the impact of influencer recommendations on purchase decisions, confirming the theories of authenticity and expertise in recommendations.

✓ The Impact of Social Media Comments on Purchase Decisions

Finally, comments on social media also showed a significant impact on Moroccan consumers' purchasing decisions. The path coefficient of 0.61, accompanied by a p-value less than 0.01, indicates that social interactions on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter play a crucial role in the purchasing process. These results confirm the work of Chu (2024), who showed that comments on social media directly influence purchase decisions. Indeed, the social validation aspect mentioned in the literature review is evident in our study: consumers often rely on experiences shared by other users to assess the quality of a product. Additionally, the viral effect of comments, also discussed by Berger and Milkman (2012), is confirmed here, with positive (or negative) comments spreading rapidly and influencing a large number of consumers. This demonstrates that the impact of social media is exponential, amplified by the speed at which information circulates and the potential for viral dissemination of messages.

Recommendation

Based on the results of this study, several practical recommendations can be made for Moroccan companies and brands aiming to optimize their marketing strategies and positively influence consumer purchasing decisions, particularly in the context of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM).

- Encourage positive reviews: Offer incentives to satisfied consumers to leave reviews.
- Proactively manage negative reviews: Respond constructively and resolve the issues raised.
- Select credible and authentic influencers: Collaborate with influencers perceived as experts.
- Invest in micro-influencers: Leverage influencers with engaged audiences.
- Measure the impact of influencer campaigns: Track the performance of collaborations with influencers.
- Encourage social media interactions: Create spaces for consumers to share their experiences.
- Publish engaging content: Generate emotional responses and encourage interactions on social media.
- Respond quickly to online comments: Enhance brand credibility by being responsive.
- Monitor online mentions: Use monitoring tools to track discussions around the brand.

Invest in personalized customer experiences: Use review and interaction data to offer personalized product recommendations.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion section is a short paragraph that summarizes the main findings, implications of the research and provides suggestions for future research. In conclusion, the study highlights the growing importance of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the decision-making process of Moroccan consumers. The results confirm that online reviews, influencer recommendations, and social media comments have a significant influence on purchasing decisions. Moroccan consumers, particularly younger generations, place particular value on these sources of information, perceiving them as more trustworthy than traditional advertising. Online reviews, whether positive or negative, profoundly influence trust and product perception. Influencer recommendations, perceived as authentic and credible, also play a key role, especially in fields such as fashion and technology. Finally, social media comments reinforce the legitimacy of products and create a viral effect that can accelerate purchasing decisions. In this context, Moroccan companies must understand and leverage these levers to optimize their digital marketing strategies. Proactively managing reviews, selecting relevant influencers, and encouraging social media interactions are essential actions to maximize the impact of eWOM on consumer purchasing decisions.

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