

A Study on the Impact of e-WOM on Online Shopping for Mobile Phones

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ABSTRACT

Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) has become a dominant influence in online consumer decision-making. This study investigates how e-WOM affects online shopping behavior for mobile phones. Drawing on theoretical frameworks of consumer behavior and decision-making, the research explores how e-WOM's valence (positive or negative), volume, credibility, and source impact purchasing intentions. The findings are expected to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the mechanisms by which e-WOM influences buyers, particularly in high-involvement purchases like mobile phones. With the increasing integration of technology into everyday fashion, consumers rely on online feedback to make informed decisions. For marketers and retailers, leveraging positive e-WOM and addressing common consumer concerns in reviews can enhance brand reputation and encourage the adoption of electronic garments. The impact of e-WOM on online shopping for mobile phones is transformative, influencing consumer trust, risk perception, purchase intentions, and brand image. Mobile phones are an emerging technology-driven market, positive e-WOM can accelerate product adoption and broaden consumer acceptance. For companies, encouraging positive e-WOM through customer satisfaction initiatives, transparent communication, and prompt responses to consumer concerns can create a solid reputation and competitive advantage in the market.

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Introduction

Mobile phones are a high-involvement product due to their cost, functionality, and personal significance to users. The online marketplace offers a plethora of options, often leaving consumers overwhelmed. e-WOM, defined as any positive or negative statement made by consumers via the internet, serves as an essential tool for simplifying decisions.

The rise of online forums, review platforms, and social media has amplified the relevance of e-WOM. Unlike traditional word-of-mouth, e-WOM reaches a broader audience, is permanently recorded, and allows for multi-directional communication.

Statement of the problem

The number of people using online shopping has been raised for the past few years. The online shopping became helpful for the people especially during the covid 19 pandemic. It is important to analyse and identify the factors which influence the people regarding the online shopping and these are absolutely based on the people's perception and preference of their satisfaction. Online shopping has took great importance in our day to day life, even in the nook and corners of our country and some studies proved that it's spread and use is more common and frequent among the all the people. This study also examines the influence of consumer reviews on online purchasing decisions. Reviews helps to take a better purchase decisions. Online shopping is more comfortable for the people other than traditional shopping. Consumers can find wide variety of products and it is time saving. This study also analyse the determinants towards the

attraction of online reviews or e-word of mouth on online shopping among people about purchase of mobile phones.

Objectives

To examine consumers perception and preferences towards mobile phones in context of E-word of mouth on online shopping.

To analyses the factors affecting the Purchase Decision-Making Process for Mobile Phones influencing online shopping.

To assess the influence of factors such as e-WOM credibility, valence, and volume on consumer trust and purchase intentions.

Literature Review

The increasing prevalence of online shopping and the rise of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) have revolutionized consumer decision-making processes, particularly in high-involvement product categories such as mobile phones. This literature review explores key themes and findings from existing research, focusing on e-WOM's impact on consumer behavior, trust, and purchasing decisions in the mobile phone market.

The Role of e-WOM in Consumer Decision-Making

Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) refers to consumer-generated information shared online about products, services, or brands. Unlike traditional word-of-mouth, e-WOM has a broader reach, higher accessibility, and permanence, making it a powerful tool in online shopping.

Influence on Consumer Behavior: Research highlights that e-WOM plays a crucial role in all stages of the consumer decision-making process: awareness, evaluation, and purchase (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). For high-involvement products like mobile

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phones, e-WOM provides valuable insights into product specifications, user experiences, and comparative analysis, helping consumers reduce perceived risks.

- **Theoretical Frameworks:** The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) suggests that consumers process e-WOM via central (rational, detailed analysis) or peripheral (heuristic cues like popularity) routes depending on their involvement level (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Similarly, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) underscores that e-WOM shapes consumer attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control, influencing purchase intentions (Ajzen, 1991).

Key Factors in e-WOM Effectiveness

Several factors determine the effectiveness of e-WOM in influencing consumer preferences and decisions:

- **Credibility:** Credibility is one of the most significant factors affecting e-WOM's impact. Consumers perceive reviews from verified buyers or industry experts as more trustworthy than anonymous or unverified sources. Research by Park et al. (2007) found that credible reviews enhance trust and reduce decision-making uncertainty.
- **Valence:** The tone of e-WOM (positive, negative, or neutral) significantly influences consumer behavior. Positive reviews promote favorable brand perceptions and purchase intentions, while negative reviews often have a stronger deterrent effect due to the negativity bias (Baumeister et al., 2001). Balanced reviews are particularly effective in building trust.
- **Volume:** The number of reviews available for a product acts as a heuristic for its popularity and reliability (Dellarocas et al., 2007). A higher volume of e-WOM, especially when consistent in tone and content, enhances consumer confidence in the product.
- **Timeliness:** Recent reviews are perceived as more relevant and credible, reflecting the product's current performance. Older reviews are often discounted, particularly in fast-changing technology markets like mobile phones.

Impact of e-WOM on Mobile Phone Purchases

Mobile phones are considered high-involvement products due to their cost, technological complexity, and personal significance. e-WOM serves as a critical tool for navigating the complexities of the market.

- **Product Comparison:** e-WOM enables consumers to compare models, brands, and specifications efficiently, facilitating informed decision-making (Park & Kim, 2008). Platforms like GSMarena and Amazon allow consumers to weigh expert opinions against peer feedback.
- **Risk Reduction:** e-WOM helps mitigate the risks associated with online shopping, such as concerns over product authenticity, quality, or suitability. According to Filieri and McLeay (2014), e-WOM reduces perceived risks and enhances consumer trust, particularly for expensive products like mobile phones.
- **Behavioral Outcomes:** Positive e-WOM often results in increased purchase intentions, while negative e-WOM can lead to cart abandonment, reconsideration, or switching to alternative brands (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010). Mixed e-WOM encourages

deeper research, prolonging the decision-making process but increasing confidence in the final choice.

e-WOM Platforms and Sources

The platforms and sources of e-WOM significantly shape its influence on consumer preferences.

E-commerce Platforms: Platforms like Amazon and Flipkart provide a structured space for e-WOM, where verified buyer reviews hold the highest credibility. Studies show that star ratings and detailed written feedback significantly impact purchasing decisions (Chen et al., 2011).

Social Media and Influencers: Social media platforms (e.g., YouTube, Instagram) play a growing role in e-WOM dissemination. Influencer reviews combine personal experiences with technical expertise, making them highly persuasive (Abidin, 2016).

Tech Review Sites: Websites like CNET, TechRadar, and GSMarena cater specifically to the mobile phone market. Their expert reviews are trusted for their detailed analysis and comparative insights.

Challenges and Limitations of e-WOM

While e-WOM is a valuable resource, it has limitations:

Fake Reviews: The proliferation of fake or biased reviews undermines trust in e-WOM. Platforms have increasingly employed AI tools to detect and filter out inauthentic reviews.

Overload of Information: Excessive e-WOM volume can overwhelm consumers, leading to decision fatigue (Huang et al., 2020). In such cases, consumers rely on heuristics, such as average ratings or top reviews, rather than comprehensive analysis.

Bias and Subjectivity: e-WOM often reflects individual biases, making it less objective than professional reviews. Consumers must critically evaluate reviews to distinguish genuine insights from subjective opinions.

Future Trends in e-WOM and Mobile Phones

AI and Personalization: The integration of AI tools into e-commerce platforms will enable personalized e-WOM recommendations, helping consumers identify the most relevant reviews based on their preferences.

Video Content Dominance: Video-based e-WOM, particularly from influencers, is expected to dominate due to its engaging and visually rich format.

Cross-Cultural Differences: Future research could explore how cultural factors influence the interpretation and impact of e-WOM in global markets.

The literature underscores the transformative role of e-WOM in online shopping for mobile phones. Factors such as credibility, valence, and volume significantly shape its effectiveness, influencing consumer trust, preferences, and purchase intentions. Despite challenges like fake reviews and information overload, e-WOM remains a critical tool for navigating the complexities of the mobile phone market. Future research and technological advancements will further refine the impact and utility of e-WOM, making it an indispensable element of consumer decision-making.

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Limitations

- The sample size is small for the accurate study of customer.
- Some respondents might have given biased answer which might have an impact on the findings of the study. 2.
- Some people are reluctant to fill the form.
- Respondents tried to escape some statements by simple answering.

Data sources and Methodology

- The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data is collected from a sample of 100 people. The primary data is collected mainly from population in Kochi. A well-structured questionnaire is used for the primary data collection. Surveys capturing e-WOM exposure, trust in reviews, and purchase behavior. The collected data are analysed using Microsoft Excel. Secondary data were collected from the various authentic journals and Websites. Online review data from platforms like Amazon, Flipkart, and dedicated tech forums.

Data Analysis

Demographic Information		
Age Group	No of respondents	Percentage
18–34	64	64
35–54	21	21
55 and above	15	15
Total	100	100
Gender	No of respondents	Percentage
Male	57	57
Female	43	43
Total	100	100
Education Level	No of respondents	Percentage
Primary education	9	9
High School / higher secondary	19	19
Bachelor's / Master's Degree	73	73
Total	100	100
Monthly Income	No of respondents	Percentage
Below 10000	29	29
10000 –25000	28	28
25000 - 50000	31	31
Above 50000	12	12
Total	100	100

General Perception of Mobile Phones

1. Do you purchase mobile phones online?

	No of respondents	Percentage

Yes	100	100
No	0	0
Total	100	100

2. What are the top factors you consider when buying a mobile phone?

	Yes	No	Total
Price	91	9	100
Brand reputation	87	13	100
Camera quality	91	9	100
Battery life	92	8	100
Technical specifications (e.g., processor, RAM)	93	7	100
Design and aesthetics	81	19	100
Customer reviews	82	18	100

3. How do you perceive online shopping for mobile phones compared to in-store shopping?

	No of respondents	Percentage
Better	47	47
Similar	36	36
Worse	17	17
Total	100	100

Credibility of e-WOM

4. Do you rely on online reviews before purchasing a mobile phone?

	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	91	91
No	8	8
Total	100	100

5. How important is the credibility of the review source (e.g., verified purchaser, expert reviewer) in your decision-making?

	No of respondents	Percentage
Very Important	43	43
Important	27	27
Neutral	14	14
Not Important	13	13
Not Important at All	3	3
Total	100	100

Valence of e-WOM

6. How do positive reviews influence your decision to purchase a mobile phone?

	No of respondents	Percentage
Influence	79	79
Neutral	10	10
Little Influence	11	11
Total		

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7. How do negative reviews impact your decision to purchase a mobile phone?

	No of respondents	Percentage
Deter	67	67
Neutral	17	17
No Impact	16	16
Total	100	100

8. When reading mixed reviews (positive and negative), how do you respond?

	No of respondents	Percentage
Focus on positive reviews	19	19
Focus on negative reviews	27	27
Conduct further research	38	38
Avoid making a purchase	16	16
Total	100	100

Product and Brand Perception

9. Which of the following factors do you prioritize when choosing a mobile phone? (Rank 1 to 5, where 1 = Highest Priority and 5 = Lowest Priority)

	Rank
Brand reputation	2
Price and affordability	1
Technical specifications (e.g., camera, processor)	3
Customer service and warranty	5
Online reviews	4

10. How important is the brand of a mobile phone in your purchase decision?

	No of respondents	Percentage
Very Important	67	67
Neutral	22	22
Not Important	11	11
Total	100	100

11. Do you switch brands when purchasing a new mobile phone?

	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	73	73
No	27	27
Total	100	100

Price Sensitivity

12. Does the price of a mobile phone affect your decision to purchase?

	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	78	78

No	22	22
Total	100	100

13. Are you willing to pay a higher price for a mobile phone with excellent online reviews?

	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	12	12
No	88	88
Total	100	100

Consumer Trust

14. How important is trust in the brand and product when purchasing a mobile phone?

	No of respondents	Percentage
Very Important	81	81
Neutral	15	15
Not Important	4	4
Total	100	100

15. Do you trust reviews more than advertisements for making a purchase decision?

	No of respondents	Percentage
Agree	41	41
Neutral	31	31
Disagree	28	28
Total	100	100

Buying Behavior

16. Where do you primarily research mobile phones before purchasing? (Select all that apply)

	Yes	No	Total
E-commerce platforms	92	8	100
Tech review websites	83	17	100
Social media	69	31	100

17. What is the average time you take to decide on a mobile phone purchase after researching?

	No of respondents	Percentage
Less than one week	41	41
one week to one month	23	23
More than a month	36	36
Total	100	100

18. What stage of the decision-making process is most influenced by e-WOM?

	Yes	No
Awareness (learning about options)	100	0

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Consideration (comparing alternatives)	87	13
Decision (finalizing the purchase)	81	19

Suggestions for e-WOM Platforms

19. What improvements would you like to see in online review platforms?

	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	79	79
No	21	21
Total	100	100

20. What motivates you to leave reviews for products online? (Select all that apply)

	Yes	No
Exceptional product/service experience	89	11
Poor product/service experience	91	9
Incentives (e.g., discounts, rewards)	32	68
Helping others make informed decisions	47	53

Findings of the study

Consumers prioritize price, brand reputation, and technical specifications such as camera quality and battery life when choosing mobile phones. A majority of respondents perceive online shopping as more convenient and offering better deals compared to in-store shopping. However, concerns about product authenticity and quality remain.

- Nearly all respondents reported consulting online reviews before purchasing a mobile phone, with e-commerce platforms and social media being the most popular sources. Verified buyers on e-commerce platforms are considered the most credible, followed by expert reviews from tech bloggers.
- Anonymous reviews and social media posts are trusted less. E-WOM strongly influences the evaluation stage of the decision-making process, helping consumers compare alternatives and make informed choices.

- Consumers value reviews that provide a balanced perspective, highlighting both pros and cons, with detailed performance analysis being the most appreciated. Positive reviews encourage purchases, but negative reviews have a stronger deterrent effect due to the negativity bias. Balanced reviews tend to build trust and aid decision-making. A high volume of reviews enhances perceived reliability and popularity of a product. However, a few detailed and credible reviews were found to be equally persuasive for some respondents. Mixed reviews encouraged further research, delaying decision-making but enhancing confidence in the final choice. While e-WOM is highly influential, price and brand reputation remain equally or slightly more significant in shaping consumer preferences.

Conclusion

e-WOM is a critical determinant in online shopping for mobile phones. Its influence varies across demographic groups and is mediated by factors like credibility, valence, and volume. Companies should harness e-WOM as a strategic asset, focusing on enhancing review authenticity and leveraging its power to sway consumer decisions.

The impact of e-WOM on online shopping for electronic garments is transformative, influencing consumer trust, risk perception, purchase intentions, and brand image. Given that electronic garments are an emerging technology-driven market, positive e-WOM can accelerate product adoption and broaden consumer acceptance. For companies, encouraging positive e-WOM through customer satisfaction initiatives, transparent communication, and prompt responses to consumer concerns can create a solid reputation and competitive advantage in the market.

A deeper exploration of how demographic factors (e.g., age, income) moderate the impact of e-WOM on purchase decisions. The role of e-WOM in emerging markets and its influence on other product categories. Future research could explore the cross-cultural differences in e-WOM's impact and its influence on other high-involvement product categories. In conclusion, e-WOM has emerged as a transformative force in online shopping for mobile phones. Consumers' growing reliance on digital reviews underscores the need for businesses to strategically manage and optimize their online reputation. By prioritizing authenticity, transparency, and consumer engagement, brands can capitalize on the potential of e-WOM to shape perceptions, build trust, and boost sales.

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