BEYOND LIKES! INVESTIGATING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS ON eWOM AND PURCHASE INTENTION IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

The emergence and pervasive adoption of social networking sites (SNSs) have evolved the means in which people communicate and share information. Accompanying this advancement, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has garnered considerable interest as a potent tool for information transmission and consumer decision-making. Given the interpersonal dynamics inherent in SNSs, this research investigates the association between antecedents of social relationship and eWOM as well as purchase intentions. Consequently, a conceptual model was constructed and validated to ascertain the significance of distinct factors, including interpersonal influence, social capital, homophily, and trust, as precursors to engagement in eWOM. The study also explored the moderating impact of social support on the association between eWOM intention and purchase intention. Additionally, the study analysed the moderating impact of gender on the relationship between interpersonal influence and eWOM intention. Using data from 383 respondents, the adequacy and accuracy of the model were assessed by employing partial least square technique of structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that informative influence, bridging social capital, and trust have a favourable impact on users' engagement in eWOM activities, which further effects purchase intention. On the other hand, normative influence,

bonding social capital and perceived homophily demonstrated a negative relationship with eWOM engagement. These research findings have practical implications for marketers targeting new markets through eWOM activities.

INTRODUCTION

The practice of customers searching for information online has evolved into a widespread pattern in the recent past (Ananda et al., 2019; Qiu et al., 2023). The accelerated growth of online communication through channels like social media, blog sites, and discussion forums has elevated consumer involvement in both traditional and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) (Leong et al., 2022; Sharma & Arora, 2025). Among the earliest means of communication, word-of-mouth (WOM) stands as the most influential predictor in molding consumer behaviour (Kakirala & Singh, 2020; Zhou et al., 2021). As against traditional WOM, the new eWOM facilitates instantaneous message dissemination among consumers, with communications being archived digitally and retrieved when needed (Arora et al., 2023; Qiu et al., 2023). Studies like Arora et al. (2022) and Leong et al. (2022) have noted that social media channels are optimal medium for eWOM as users effortlessly generate and transmit product-related content within their existing social ties. As per Statista (2022), more than 74% of tourists make travel-related decisions based on online reviews and comments proffered by other travelers on social media. Accordingly, marketing professionals progressively deploy brand/product-focused eWOM approaches to establish long lasting relationships and raise customer involvement with respective products (Rana & Arora, 2022a; Song et al., 2021). Thus, eWOM-positioned social media marketing has evolved into a substantial aspect of brand communication practices, and its implications on consumers' buying behaviour cannot be relegated (Babić Rosario et al., 2020; Dorie & Loranger, 2024). Considering this interactive and social character of social media, the present research emphasises social networking sites (SNSs) as an expanding avenue for consumer-to-consumer interaction, notably product affiliated to eWOM.

Studies like Donthu et al. (2021), Verma et al. (2023) and Verma and Yadav (2021) have identified varied motivators for online-savvy individuals to spread eWOM about products on SNSs. However, these provide little assistance in determining how potential social relationship factors impact eWOM and purchasing inclination behaviour vis-a-vis social media advertisements. Hence, it becomes imperative to identify the pertinent social factors that influence eWOM participation. There have been a handful of investigations that have linked social relationship dimensions

to WOM referral conduct across both offline and online contexts. For instance, Filieri et al. (2021) envisioned that consumers' decisions and their responsiveness to new technologies are heavily impacted by interpersonal influence. Sharma and Arora (2024), Gerdt et al. (2019), and Liu et al. (2021) discovered that social capital in an online world produces reliable eWOM, implying it to be a useful determinant of eWOM in SNSs. Another area of investigation was perceived homophily. Liu et al. (2024) and Rahaman et al. (2022) posited that eWOM communication is more inclined to emerge among individuals who have similar attributes. Studies like Pang (2021) and Prasad et al. (2019) claimed that people's participation in eWOM activity on SNSs is highly influenced by how much they trust their social media friends. Presence of online social support in social media channels escalates the consumers buying decisions (Haines et al., 2023; Qiu et al., 2023). A person's likelihood of making a purchase increases as they find favorable eWOM and receive recommendations from acquaintances (Liu et al., 2024). The impact is more pronounced when users obtain substantial social support, from close associates, as opposed to receiving minimal social support (Levy & Gvili, 2024; Roy et al., 2025). Gaining insight into such moderation shall enable marketers in developing more efficacious techniques that capitalise on social support processes and eWOM to enhance online revenue. Hence, it becomes imperative to research how perceived social support moderates the association between eWOM intention and purchase intention. Extant research has indicated that men may adhere to comprehensive reviews that emphasise the usefulness and efficacy of an offering when making a purchase decision. Conversely, females may attribute higher significance to reviews that are shared by intimate acquaintances even though they are not as comprehensive (Khan et al., 2024). This research provides a noteworthy insight into the moderating impact of gender on the impact of interpersonal influence on eWOM.

Previous studies on eWOM have missed deciphering how the social relationships are constructed on SNSs, and their impact on consumers buying decisions (Spadine & Patterson, 2022; Verma et al., 2023). While Roy et al. (2025) reported that the majority of internet users are "lukers" as they merely observe and read reviews and information without ever participating, Leong et al. (2022) noted that people view social media as a key "player" in forming social ties among fellow online users. Hence, it becomes important to comprehend how individuals establish social relationships through electronic communication on SNSs. Comprehending social relationship antecedents shall help marketers build social interaction tactics to promote eWOM effectiveness and build buy intents.

This study significantly adds to the comprehension of how the aforementioned constructs of social relationships, including informative and normative influences, bridging and bonding social capital, perceived homophily, and trust, collectively

impact eWOM and purchase intentions. A neglected aspect in the extant literature on eWOM is the inadequate consideration given to the moderating influences of online social support and gender within the realm of SNSs. Thus, this study provides a noteworthy contribution by examining the moderating impacts of social support and gender, thus enhancing the value of research in the domain.

The paper endeavors to create a conceptual framework that improves our theoretical comprehension of how prospects employ social networking platforms as a medium for eWOM communication. Using an empirical investigation, this study examines a proposed model that recognises interpersonal influence, social capital, perceived homophily, and trust as significant antecedents of eWOM on SNSs. The study pointedly offers valuable perspectives on the interconnectedness among these antecedents of social relationships and eWOM within SNSs. Employing user gratification theory, the conceptual model forms the framework for this study. Consequently, the research aims to answer the following research questions:

- What are the key social relationship antecedents that impact eWOM intention and purchase intention in the realm of social media advertisements?

- Does perceived social support in SNS moderate the effect of eWOM intention on purchase intention in the realm of social media advertisements?

- Does gender moderate the effect of interpersonal influence on eWOM intention?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

User and Gratification Theory

User and Gratification Theory is a predominant theoretical framework in media studies (Chen, 2020; Wu & Kuang, 2021). Explaining how rational thinkers prefer certain media to meet their distinct social-psychological and social needs (Chen, 2020; Dorie & Loranger, 2024; Mackenzie et al., 2005), the theory postulates that individuals' media usage behaviour is goal oriented. Liang and Turban (2011) and Wang et al. (2016) observed that people use media platform to meet their specific needs. While the theory has been used by scholars to assess the individuals' motives of using conventional media (Krishnapillai & Ying, 2017), with the advancement of media communication technology, scholars have extended the employment of this theory to the study of mobile SNSs (Yang, 2017; Wu & Kuang, 2021), instant messaging (Bhaiswar et al., 2022), virtual communities (Muda & Hamzah, 2021), online games (Farias, 2017; Kim & Lee, 2017), and internet (Fan et al., 2019; Themba & Mulala, 2013).

While Bhaiswar et al. (2022) revealed that individual motivation to use social media sites is influenced by gratifications like entertainment, self-fulfillment, exposure and social influence, Haines et al. (2023) discovered that gratifications such as hedonic, social, and social media content gratification motivate consumers' online engagement on social media channels. The social gratification associated variables in social media channels (the social relationship characteristics) influence users to proactively converse with consumers and brands in SNSs (Sharma et al., 2024; Kim & Lee, 2017). Employing user and gratification theory, this study delivers a theoretical guideline in understanding consumers' eWOM behaviour toward social media advertising.

Conceptual Framework of Study

eWOM in social media

The term "eWOM" describes any kind of feedback – favourable or unfavourable – concerning a company or its products that are originated or transmitted by its customers and disseminated to a vast audience online (Liu et al., 2024; Sohaib et al., 2019). Consumers participate in eWOM for information creation, sharing, and consumption, to uplift their sense of worth (online repute), to aid numerous different users, and to gain potential communal benefits via digital exchanges (Ali et al., 2020; Rani et al., 2022). Engaging in eWOM endeavours by posting reviews and articles, offers consumers the benefits of social ties and the pleasures of social connections, and diversion (Molinillo et al., 2020). Of the available eWOM formats, the utilisation of SNSs for consumer communication has gained prominence as the most widely used form of electronic media (Dorie & Loranger, 2024; Haines et al., 2023). Prominent social media platforms like Facebook (Meta), Instagram, and YouTube serve as medium through which users share diverse information (Wu & Kuang, 2021). These platforms empower users to share their shopping experiences instantaneously with the world, without being constrained by geographical location or time limitations (Chen, 2020). As per Roy et al. (2024) and Verma et al. (2023), social media users who interact with brands on Facebook (Meta) are highly probable to become loyal customers and spread optimistic WOM. With the rising popularity of eWOM among both shoppers and businesses, researchers have realised a pressing need to learn much about its impact on buyer behaviour and, more specifically, how eWOM spreads through social media sites to affect shoppers' purchasing decisions (Chen, 2020; Haines et al., 2023; Levy & Givli, 2024).

Social relationship in social media

The term "social relationship" refers to the social interactions that take place among the individuals in a group (Arora et al., 2025; Johnson et al., 2022). The tendency of users to build and preserve social relationships within their personal contacts serves as the impetus for the initiation of eWOM behaviour within such sites. SNSs users assist ones' social connections with purchasing decisions by providing valuable product knowledge and experiences (Leong et al., 2022; Song et al., 2021). There are two types of influential socialisation facilitators, namely conventional (i.e., parents/family, peers, educational institutions, and mainstream media) and digital (i.e., the internet and SNSs) (Haines et al., 2023). The engaging character of contemporary media, such as the internet and social media, facilitates self-socialisation by aiding users in their identity formation and attainment of individuality (Roy et al., 2024; Qiu et al., 2023). The younger generations establish their social connections on digital sites like SNSs (Arora et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2024) and their attitude towards the product and engagement are influenced by online interactions on SNSs.

In the realm of these platforms, social relational determinants are particularly important for acknowledging the overarching eWOM process, as these provide understanding into the social relationship parameters through which eWOM actions and attitudes emerge (Gerdt et al., 2019; Verma & Yadav, 2021). Interpersonal influence (normative/informative influence), social capital (bonding/bridging), homophily, and trust are key dimensions mentioned in the literature on WOM/eWOM. These dimensions effectively capture the essence of social relationships and the implications of eWOM dynamics, as demonstrated in studies like Hu et al. (2019) and Wu and Kuang (2021).

Interpersonal influence plays a significant effect in consumers' purchasing decisions (Banerjee & Fudenberg, 2004; Mishra et al., 2022). When online shoppers are receptive to interpersonal influence, eWOM emerges as the most impactful source of information (Kirk et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022). Consumers' receptiveness to interpersonal influence is a universal characteristic that differs among people and is regarded as a two-dimensional concept – normative and informative influences (Chang & Hsu, 2016; Yang, 2017). Social capital too affects eWOM communication. The social standards of trustworthiness and reciprocity that arise from one's interactions with others within a virtual network are vital components of social capital that is facilitated by one's social ties (Alalwan, 2018; Chu et al., 2013). As per Pandey et al. (2018), SNSs formation inherently incorporates social capital. Bhaiswar et al. (2022) revealed that maintaining and growing one's social capital is a primary motivation for using social networking services.

Chang and Hsu (2016) argued that homophily is a significant factor that effects product information evaluation and explains how eWOM shapes consumer choices and disposition. Aiello et al. (2012) and Bisgin et al. (2012) established that similar people are more likely to come into contact with one another because of the proximity and convenience of their frequent and stable interactions in social media channels. Another social relationship factor that possesses a critical impression on consumers' inclination to involve in eWOM on social media is trust in other users of those sites (Chang & Hsu, 2016). Figeac and Favre (2023) and Kim and Ihm (2020) investigated the efficacy of digital feedback modes and concluded that websites play a crucial role in fostering user trust, which in turn encourages the spread of eWOM. This motivates the creation of the conceptual model (Figure 1) to further elucidate the hypothesised connections between the variables.
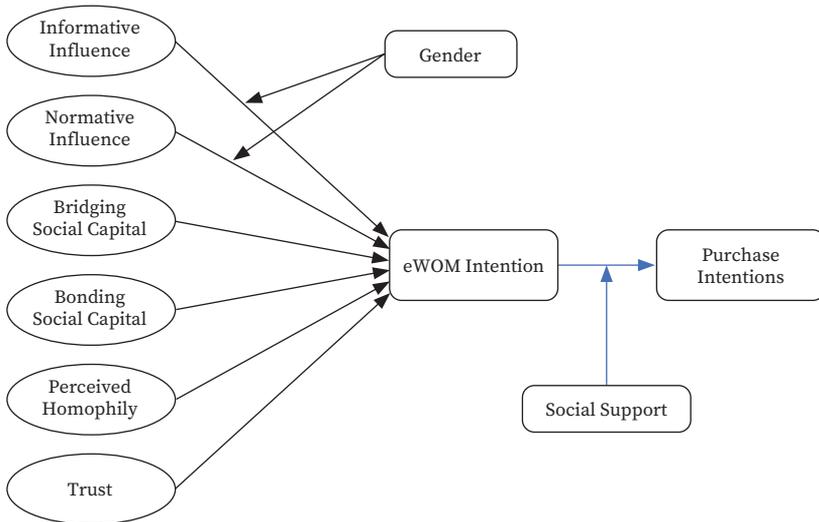
Figure 1. Proposed model

Social support in SNS context

People congregate in virtual communities for social support. According to Hu et al. (2019) and Molinillo et al. (2020), perceived interest, affection, and support from other members of one's social group is the theoretical basis for "social support". People possess supportive assistance through connections with their societies' peers. With advancement of advanced technologies, it has become simpler to disseminate content in an ambience wherein users may exchange expertise and information (Sharma & Klein, 2020; Utz & Muscanell, 2015). The member-to-member connections and interactions that have traditionally existed in offline settings, are now possible within SNSs (Chang & Hsu, 2016). Yang (2017) noted that people's purchasing decisions are aided and influenced

by the social connections via social media. Therefore, it is central to study how social support in SNSs moderates the impact of eWOM and their propensity to make purchases.

Hypotheses Formulation

Interpersonal influence and eWOM intention

A social determinant, interpersonal influence has a substantial dominance on how consumers make decisions and adopt new technological advances (Fan et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021). Interpersonal influence has two domains – normative and informational influences (Kim & Ihm, 2020 and Verma et al., 2023). While normative influences recognised as the propensity to live up to others' expectations, impact inclinations, norms, and value systems (Sharma & Klein, 2020; Spadine & Patterson, 2022), informational influences pertain to the propensity to believe what proficient users claim, and to follow their recommendations when searching for brands, product lines, and stores (Johnson et al., 2022; Kiani & Laroche, 2019). As per Bliton and Pincus (2020), both normative and informational influences impact consumers' eWOM behaviour in SNSs. According to Prajogo and Purwanto (2020), individuals exhibiting a higher responsiveness to informational influence on SNSs seek information and assistance from informed connections. Conversely, individuals influenced by social norms tend to conform to the expectations of important people in their social circles. They actively strive for societal approval by purchasing and utilising products and brands approved by significant others.

Thus, users consciously seek insights from one's connections on social media. These actions have been linked to eWOM, where social media users see their friends and followers mostly as a valuable resource for brand/product knowledge (Liu & Bakici, 2019; Pandey et al., 2018). This standpoint strongly indicates that consumers' openness to normative and informational influences should be taken into account when analysing their participation in eWOM on SNSs (Ali et al., 2020). Accordingly, we hypothesise:

> H1: Informative influence has a positive impact on consumer's eWOM intention in social media sites.
>
> H2: Normative influence has a positive impact on consumers' eWOM intention in social media sites.

Social capital and eWOM intention

The social capital theory suggests that consumers' propensity to engage in eWOM communication is shaped by the robustness of their social ties with the other individuals involved (Gvili & Levy, 2018). By incorporating social media channels,

people strive to preserve and strengthen their social capital (Liu et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2016). As per Schmid and Robison (1995), there are two categories of social capital – bridging and bonding. According to Geraee et al. (2019) and Liu et al. (2024) the term "bridging social capital" exemplifies the resources that are accessible to individuals who possess a few ties to one another (known as "weakly tied"). This capital is developed via mutual sharing of information among different heterogeneous cohorts. Bonding social capital, on the other hand, is built on the strength of relationships between members of homogeneous contexts. Bonding places an emphasis on social conventions and emotional support between a group's members (Bharati et al., 2015; Geraee et al., 2019).

Studies like Lee and Kim (2022) and Sudirjo (2024) observed that the accessibility of networks on social media platforms can exert a significant influence on consumers' purchasing decisions. This influence can arise from both reliable and close "strong tie" interactions, as well as sporadic or distant "weak ties". Evidence from Pandey et al. (2018) and Sharma and Klein (2020) indicates that the impact of bonding social capital is greatest at the private and small-group dimensions. Hwang and Kim (2015) and Rani et al. (2022) posited that by connecting consumers' emerging personal networks to larger community members, SNSs enable bridging capital weak ties to exercise a broader implication. This tends to increase the margin at which eWOM spreads across a wide area network. The perceived social capital centered on both bridging and bonding established via SNSs entices customers to converse between themselves and disperse product-related knowledge that incentivises eWOM communication (Kirk et al., 2022; Ngo et al., 2024). In this light, we postulate the relationship between social capital density and SNS-facilitated eWOM:

H3:   Bridging social capital has a positive influence on eWOM intention in social media sites.

H4:   Bonding social capital has a positive influence on eWOM intention in social media sites.

Perceived homophily and eWOM intention

The extent to which people who converse with each other have characteristics in common (congruent) is confirmed as homophily (Aiello et al., 2012). Kim and Ihm (2020), Khan et al. (2024), and Roy et al. (2025) have observed that friends and affiliates of social media sites share a high degree of similarity in terms of socio-demographic attributes like gender, ethnic background, and age, as well as perceptional facets like beliefs and behaviours. Qiu et al. (2023) discovered that communication seems to be easier when the people communicating are more alike in virtual platforms. Similarly, Rahaman et al. (2022) and Zhang et al. (2021) noted that individuals who share similar beliefs or interests are more inclined to

engage in content sharing within online communities. In social media sites, Bliton and Pincus (2020), Figeac and Favre (2023), and Johnson et al. (2022) reported that heterophilous conversation appeared to prompt eWOM tendencies among diverse contacts. Regardless of the wide range of web users, consumers freely choose the themes they are exposed to and the virtual communities they participate in. This allows them to direct their social communication towards other consumers who are like themselves. As a result, consumers who are perceived to be more homophilic are perhaps more likely to interact online when choosing products (Ali et al., 2020; Dorie & Loranger, 2024). Consequently, SNSs might be particularly effective at luring homophilous users, and this occurrence raises the propensity that these users will engage in eWOM behaviour (Roy et al., 2021; Pang, 2021; Rafi et al., 2025). Thus, the hypothesis is:

> H5: Homophily has a positive influence on eWOM intention in social media sites.

Trust and eWOM intention

Trust, in the contacts established through social networks, needs to be taken into account when conceptualising consumer behaviour related to their involvement in eWOM within SNS (Bulut & Karabulut, 2018; Zainal et al., 2017). As per Hafstad and Aaro (1997), trust is the propensity to depend on a person (or group) in whom one has faith. Kim et al. (2019) and Pyle et al. (2021) noted that trust is crucial for members of web 2.0 networks who want to share information with one another online. Similarly, Anaya et al. (2020) and Bhandari and Rodgers (2018) observed that SNS users' eWOM actions tend to increase once when they believe their social contacts. According to Anaya et al. (2020), Pihlaja et al. (2017), and Shiva et al. (2022), consumers trust user-generated content about brands posted on online sites more than content produced by marketers and disseminated through the traditional promotional mix of advertising. Also, Bliton and Pincus (2020) and Kiani and Laroche (2019) revealed that in comparison to comment threads from unknown sources through other eWOM channels (such as website reviews and discussion boards), connections in SNSs, engrained in consumers' network systems, are perceived as more trustworthy and reliable than unverified sources or advertising agencies with entrenched interests. Haro-Sosa et al. (2024) and Li et al. (2022) indicated that consumers' receptiveness to eWOM on social media can be significantly influenced by their heightened trust in contacts within these platforms. Consequently, the hypothesis is:

> H6: Social media users' perceived trust in their contacts has a positive influence on eWOM intention in social media sites.

eWOM intention and purchase intention

Studies including Fan et al. (2019), Rana and Arora (2022b), and Yang (2017) have observed that interpersonal interactions in the form of eWOM have gained increased influence in shaping consumer purchasing decisions, primarily due to the rise of electronic media as a reliable source of information. According to recent studies like Leong et al. (2022) and Zhou et al. (2021), consumers actively seek reviews on the internet and the opinions of their peer group prior to actually purchasing a product. Similarly, Leong et al. (2022) and Zhou et al. (2021) discovered that eWOM is used by customers to determine whether or not they will trust a company while shopping online. As per Kumar et al. (2022), Kusawat and Teerakapibal (2024), earlier when consumers needed product-related information, they sought it out from marketers, mates, or possibly in public settings. Now, eWOM enables consumers to socialise with one another and transfer brand information that helps to further effect users' purchasing decisions (Levy & Gvili, 2024; Molinillo et al. 2020). Accordingly, it is postulated:

> H7: eWOM intention has a positive influence on consumers purchase intentions.

Social support as moderating variable

According to the social support theory, the term "social support" pertains to the social interactions that occur among members of a group and their subjective experiences of being valued for, answered to, and endorsed (Rafi et al., 2025; Schmid & Robison, 1995). As per Geraee et al. (2019), individuals are increasingly inclined to participate in social media outlets and virtual communities when they have accessibility to emotional and informational social support. Baptista et al. (2021) and Mishra et al. (2022) have confirmed that when consumers converse optimistically about a brand in online networks, it can influence their purchase decisions. In addition to providing information, insights, and experiences, they also offer emotional support to their associates. Social media channels and online communities prosper because of this social support. These attributes motivate individuals to get involved, help one another, and share knowledge (Anaya-Sánchez et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2018). Kiani and Laroche (2019) and Tseng (2023) have inferred that the development of social media advanced technology incorporates social support to end user, fostering the expansion of socialisation that directly affects consumers' eWOM behaviour and purchase intent. When people feel supported, their intention to share eWOM and their intention to purchase are more likely to be positively correlated and vise-versa (Molinillo et al., 2020). Roy et al. (2024) posited that social support strongly moderates the effects of eWOM on purchase intention and it enhances the influence of eWOM on consumer purchase intention. Whereas, Yusuf et al. (2018)

found that no all social support uniformly enhances the eWOM-purchase intention relationship. Similarly, it has been indicated that the presence of social support in online media is a relevant consideration that may impact the inclination to participate in eWOM intentions. Thus, based on the above discussion we propose:

H8: Social support in social media sites moderates the relationship between eWOM intention and purchase intention.

Gender as a moderating variable

Studies like Sama and Sharma (2024) and Sohaib et al. (2018) have observed that the social conditioning and behavioural advancement of the two gender groups diverge due to a variation of socio-structural and biological factors. Gender causes variations in attitude and behavioural actions in different contexts, including internet privacy issues (Bamman et al., 2014), mobile phone usability (Rose et al., 2012), and interpersonal influences (McGregor et al., 2017). Existing investigation on the influence of gender on susceptibility to interpersonal influences yield varying results. Studies like Haines et al. (2023) and Levy and Gvili (2024) noted that females are more inclined to select apparel brands that are well-liked by their peer group. Conversely, men are often more concerned over whether one's peers will approve of the brands they choose (normative influence). Khan et al. (2024) and Kiani and Laroche (2019) have shown that, commonly, males (as compared to females) are subjected to greater pressure to show relatively strong adhesion to one's peer group in attempt to avert of been abandoned or excluded from the group because of a patriarchal system and gender bias. Kiani and Laroche (2019) and Pihlaja et al. (2017) revealed that female social networks are hindered by societal constraints, unequal authority dynamics, and gender stereotype. Consequently, females are less affected by interpersonal peer norms than males. Sánchez Torres et al. (2018) found that males are more affected by the reliability of information, while females place greater importance on the quality and requirement of the information. This advises that males may be more receptive to informative signals, thus moderating the relationship between informative influence and eWOM. Cho and Son (2019) posited that females with robust online connections tend to be more involved in product information and recognise the information as more reliable. Defiantly, male's reactions were less induced by social connections, indicating that males may rely more on the informative content itself, thereby moderating the relationship between informative influence and eWOM. Several other studies like Taylor and Tod (1995) found that gender did not significantly moderate the relationships between attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control, and behavioural intention in several paths. Gender differences did not show significant moderating effects on the relationships between trust and intention (Zhou et al. 2007). Hence, this demands further research and so we propose:

H9: Gender moderates the relationship between informative influence and eWOM intention.

H10: Gender moderates the relationship between normative influence and eWOM intention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Instrument and Measurement of Variables

It was decided to employ validated scales from existing studies to assess the model constructs. The scale items were altered to fit the social media setting as relevant for the study. The normative and informational influences were measured using scales with eight and four items respectively, from Bearden et al. (1989). Scales from Williams (2006) were used to measure online social capital – bridging and bonding social capital. The construct of perceived homophily was assessed using the scale developed by McCroskey et al. (1975). Seven-item scale from Mortenson (2009) was sourced to measure trust. Social support was assessed using the scale by Hajli and Sims (2015). Finally, validated scale items of Bearden et al. (1989) were deployed to gauge eWOM intention. The responses from social media users were gathered through a self-administered questionnaire. This instrument was pretested with four experts for assessing the adequacy of the language. Thereafter, a pilot study was undertaken with 30 graduate and undergraduate students to check requisite validity and reliability. All variables demonstrated Cronbach's alpha values greater than the threshold of 0.70, as suggested by Hair et al. (2017), indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Data Collection

This quantitative investigation implements a survey-based methodology and adheres to the positivist paradigm. In order to optimise the quantity of samples, the researchers implemented both paper and electronic questionnaires. Considering the large number of Facebook users in India, convenience sampling was used as a technique to acquire data from five prominent Indian cities at diverse locations including educational institutions, offices, business establishments, and retail hubs during December 2022–July 2023. Furthermore, the times of day and sites of data gathering were altered to reduce sampling biases. Users of SNSs were either invited via email to take part in a digital form of the questionnaire or paper versions were delivered to them for gathering primary data. Electronic questionnaires were disseminated via different social networks and forums, like Instagram or Facebook. This was aimed to engage a diversity of respondents for the investigation. The initial question was a screening question. People who were not on any SNSs

were excluded from the survey. Of the 415 total responses collected, 383 were considered valid for analysis. A significant proportion of the respondents (51.95%) were within the age range of 21 and 30 years, while only 4.69% were above 50 years (Table 1). To entice and sustain people to take the survey, the questionnaire's homepage was made simple to navigate.

Table 1
Respondents' profile

Demographic variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years old)		
Under 21	70	18.28
21–30	199	51.96
30–40	69	18.02
40–50	30	7.83
Above 50	15	3.91
Gender		
Male	168	43.86
Female	215	56.14
Marital status		
Unmarried	239	62.40
Married	140	36.55
Others	4	1.05
Education		
Graduation	150	39.16
Post-graduation	170	44.39
Schooling	38	9.92
Professional	25	6.53
Occupation		
Government job	29	7.57
Private job	74	19.32
Student	190	49.61
Professional	20	5.22
Business owner	42	10.97
Others	28	7.31
Family monthly income (INR)		
Less than 50,000	93	24.28
50,000–100,000	130	33.94
100,000–150,000	80	20.89
More than 150,000	80	20.89

Analysis

The proposed model and hypotheses were tested using a structural equation modeling (SEM) technique employing partial least squares (PLS). The PLS was preferred for the subsequent reasons: (a) the study's primary objective is to foretell participants' eWOM and purchase intentions and (b) subsequently, we endeavored to discover parameters that promote consumer participation in eWOM and build a framework in accordance to the discovered parameters. Thus, we used the SmartPLS 3.2.4 software to test the measurement and structural model. Given that the present research relies on data given by the participants themselves, the researchers examined the potential problem of common method variance (CMV) as described by Podsakoff et al. (2003). In order to proactively decrease the chances of CMV, respondents were assured of both anonymously and secrecy. The marker-variable approach was employed to conduct CMV validity evaluations. The findings revealed that discrepancies among the initial and CMV-adjusted correlations was minimal (≤ 0.061) for each of the pertinent constructs. From post hoc Harman's single factor test, it was found that the initial factor merely outlines 39.96 of the variance, which is below the cutoff (50%) variance explained (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Therefore, it could be inferred that CMV does not significantly alter the findings and forecasts in the present research.

RESULTS

Measurement Model

From Table 2, the HTMT test values are less than 0.90, supporting discriminant validity. To assess the fitness of the model, six widely utilised indices were employed, all of which fall within the acceptable range (Chi-Square minimum discrepancy divided by degrees of freedom [CMIN/DF] = 2.439, goodness-of-fit index [GFI] = 0.864; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.050; normed fit index [NFI] = 0.922; comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.940; Tucker-Lewis index [TLI] = 0.936, and adjusted goodness-of-fit index [AGFI] = 0.900). Thus, the measurement model was noted to have an adequate fit, as determined by the application of standard threshold indices values. Additionally, all items in Table 3 exhibit standardised regression weights exceeding the threshold of 0.50, thereby satisfying the established criterion. The SmartPLS provides a standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) value only in the model fit indices. The SRMR value of the model is 0.067.

Table 2
HTMT matrix

Constructs	CR	AVE	eWOMIT	IFI	NOI	BRSC	BOSC	PERHOM	TRUST
eWOMIT	0.828	0.546	–						
IFI	0.796	0.567	0.758	–					
NOI	0.847	0.65	0.518	0.658	–				
BRSC	0.862	0.611	0.705	0.605	0.633	–			
BOSC	0.887	0.724	0.615	0.543	0.821	0.768	–		
PERHOM	0.916	0.784	0.360	0.370	0.543	0.394	0.665	–	
TRUST	0.922	0.747	0.575	0.557	0.736	0.670	0.723	0.482	–
PUI	0.925	0.754	0.615	0.540	0.756	0.604	0.840	0.650	0.690

Note: CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted ; eWOMIT = electronic word of mouth intention; IFI = incremental fit index; NOI = normative influence; BRSC= bridging social capital; BOSC = bonding social capital; PERHOM = perceived homophily; PUI = purchase intention; All values are below 0.90.

Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

To verify the structural model and assess the proposed hypotheses, we used one-tailed test. The outcomes, as presented in Table 3, aligned with the conceptual model, indicate that four out of the nine proposed hypotheses were supported.

It was observed that informative influence had a favourable effect on eWOM intention ($\beta = 0.269$; $p = 0.000$), indicating the acceptance of H1. Contrary to our assumption, H2 postulating normative influence's favourable association with eWOM is rejected ($\beta = -0.076$ and $p = 0.343$). Bridging social capital ($\beta = 0.280$, $p = 0.000$) was noted to have a significant and favourable effect on eWOM intention. However, H4 was rejected as bonding social capital ($\beta = 0.131$, $p = 0.097$) was found to have an informational impact on eWOM intention. Similarly, with $\beta = -0.018$ and $p = 0.351$, perceived homophily demonstrated insignificant effect on eWOM intention. The results confirmed the acceptance of H6, as a positive relationship between trust and eWOM intention was observed ($\beta = 0.259$, $p = 0.000$). Also, $\beta = 0.432$ and $p = 0.000$ demonstrate that eWOM intention exerts a favourable impact on consumer purchase intention.

The moderating role of social support on the association between eWOM intention and purchase intention (H8) was not supported with $\beta = 0.037$ and $p = 0.077$. Interestingly, the moderating effect of gender on the relationships between the two interpersonal influences and eWOM was determined to be non-significant, as indicated by the β (-0.034 and 0.039) and corresponding p-values of 0.006 and 0.004, respectively. Thus, hypotheses H9 and H10 were not supported. The R^2 in the case of eWOM is 0.460 and overall R^2 value for purchase intention is 0.273. Average f^2 value is mentioned in the Table 3.

Table 3

Structural model results

	Path		Estimate	SD	*t*-value	*p*	Avg f^2	Confidence interval (5%)	Confidence interval (95%)	Result
H1	Informative influence	eWOM intention	0.269	0.073	3.724	0	0.069	0.154	0.403	Accepted
H2	Normative influence	eWOM intention	−0.076	0.08	0.991	0.343	0.008	−0.21	0.052	Not supported
H3	Bridging social capital	eWOM intention	0.28	0.058	4.86	0	0.09	0.186	0.379	Accepted
H4	Bonding social capital	eWOM intention	0.131	0.09	1.299	0.097	0.016	−0.029	0.279	Not supported
H5	Perceived homophily	eWOM intention	−0.018	0.06	0.382	0.351	0.005	−0.124	0.074	Not supported
H6	Trust	eWOM intention	0.259	0.69	3.705	0	0.053	0.144	0.368	Accepted
H7	eWOM intention	Purchase intention	0.432	0.06	7.078	0	0.195	0.322	0.52	Accepted
H8	*(Moderating effect)* Social support*eWOM	Purchase intention	0.037	0.031	1.424	0.077	0.007	0.085	0.294	Not supported
H9a	*(Moderating effect)* Gender*IF	eWOM intention	−0.034	0.119	0.249	0.402	0.006	−0.23	0.167	Not supported
H9b	*(Moderating effect)* Gender*NI	eWOM intention	0.039	0.098	0.459	0.323	0.004	−0.116	0.202	Not supported

Note: IF = informative influence; NI = normative influence; R^2 in the case of eWOM is 0.460 and purchase intention is 0.273

DISCUSSION

The prominence of eWOM on digital platforms, particularly SNSs, has become an essential element of promotional mix strategies. This research delves into the examination of several factors influencing social relationships, including informative and normative influences, bridging and bonding social capital, perceived homophily, and trust, and their impact on eWOM intention within the realm of SNSs. The investigation also encompassed the exploration of the moderating influence of social support on the association between eWOM intention and purchase intention. Four of the ten findings are found to be consistent with the proposed conceptual model. Except for normative influence, bonding social capital and perceived homophily, the effects of significant social relationship variables on eWOM intention were confirmed. The influence of eWOM intention on consumers purchasing intention was also found to be significant in the perspective of SNSs.

H1 results (Table 3) demonstrates a substantial relationship between consumer responsiveness to interpersonal influence and SNS users' eWOM intention. These findings align with outcomes of existing studies like Zhang et al. (2021) and Levy and Gvili (2024). The results of the current study imply that individuals who are highly vulnerable to informational influences accentuate the information dissemination and relationship-building processes. This symbolises that customers' perceptions of brands are heavily influenced by the opinions of their peers, communities, and others. Individuals susceptible to informative influence prefer to seek information from others. This may be due to the reason that informative influence thrives when eWOM simultaneously satisfies cognitive needs (credible data) and social needs (community validation). This dependency contributes to the explicit dissemination of brand-related content as well as acquisition of information from peers via online channels. Similarly, the study conducted by Kusawat and Teerakapibal (2024) and Lee and Kim (2022) revealed the same effects, implying that informational influence has a major impact on eWOM uptake, particularly when the source is perceived as convincing and proficient. Similarly, Levy and Gvili (2024) posit that customers rely on greater online feedback and suggestions when they perceive provenance as knowledgeable.

In H2, we assumed that individuals influenced by social norms tend to conform to the expectations of important people in their social circles. They actively strive for societal approval by purchasing and utilising products and brands approved by significant others. Interestingly, the findings suggest an insignificant relationship between normative influence and eWOM, thus contradicting the findings of previous investigations (Figeac & Favre, 2023; Sama & Sharma, 2024; Wang et al., 2016). This signifies that the conformity pressure that individuals perceive to be necessary to meet the expectations of their close tribe ceases to

influence their ability to participate in any form of eWOM activities. Besides the social norms, individuals may choose to participate in eWOM activities based on other factors like the perceived utility of the information, personal preferences, or their perspective on online communication (Haines et al., 2023; Sama & Sharma, 2024). These effects emerge because SNS transform normative influence into a double-edged sword – while generally promoting conformity, they simultaneously increase the social cost of visible non-conformity. Users strategically withhold eWOM when perceived risks outweigh normative alignment benefits.

Furthermore, in H3 and H4 we assumed that the perceived social capital centered on both bridging and bonding established via SNSs entices customers to converse between themselves and disperse product-related knowledge that incentivises eWOM communication. The current study findings show that bridging is more influential than bonding in respect of eWOM engagement, which contradicts pervious findings (Fan et al., 2019; Verma et al., 2023; Qiu et al., 2023). The recent studies (Ngo et al., 2024; Roy et al., 2025) posit that social interaction characteristics such as bridging social capital had a beneficial impact on eWOM behaviour. Users from more diverse communities are more likely to share and seek for product-related information with different network groupings. These research findings align with current study, suggesting that the apparent ability of social networking platforms to facilitate interaction among weakly linked, diverse individuals (i.e., bridging) stimulates individuals to participate in eWOM conversation (Chopra et al., 2024). Conversely, the fostering of close-knit connections among SNSs users by social media channels (i.e., bonding) does not impact participation. People with strong social networks (close ties) often employ non-traditional means of interpersonal interaction, such as in-person meetings, telephone conversations, and other more personal forms of interaction. It indicates that the bridging component of social capital is the main driver of customer involvement with eWOM (Verma et al., 2023). Thus, results indicate that bridging social capital is the more prevalent in SNS then bonding. We hypothesised that consumers who are perceived to be more homophilic are perhaps more likely to interact online when choosing products. The evidence from this study indicates that perceived homophily was negatively associated with eWOM intention. This refutes the observations from previous research studies like Chen (2020), Figeac and Favre (2023). The current study highlights that homophily within SNS users could hinder their accessibility to distinct information and knowledge from one another, thereby preventing eWOM. Thus, the analysis reveals that heterophilous interaction appears to encourage eWOM behaviours among varied connections in the domain of online SNSs. McGregor et al. (2017) claimed that homophily restricts one's social circle and has significant effects on one's exposure to new ideas, outlook development, and interpersonal interactions.

In H6, trust, another aspect of interpersonal dynamics, has been noted to influence eWOM intention, implying that people are more inclined to participate in activities such as opinion-seeking, opinion-delivering, and opinion-transmitting behaviours on online media when they have a high level of credibility in their connections on SNSs. The current study highlights a positive relationship between members' trust in one another and their propensity to share information in online forums.

In H7, we intend to find the impact of eWOM intention on purchase intention. This finding demonstrates that consumers' inclination to buy a product promoted on SNSs is primarily influenced by the online reviews or feedback shared by other consumers in the virtual realm. The generation of positive eWOM by users has been proven to have a significant influence on consumers' perception of a brand and their inclination to make a purchase. These findings support previous research studies like Fan et al. (2019) and Verma et al. (2023). The findings rest on the premise that trust leads to increased user engagement, information sharing, and ultimately, influencing eWOM and purchase intention positively.

Additionally, for H8, the current study's findings reveal that online social support does not moderate the relationship between eWOM and individual's inclination to make purchases, implying that the impact of eWOM on individual choice whether to buy a product or not is not mainly influenced by the amount of support that one acquires through virtual network connections. One possible explanation for this finding is that certain consumers pivot their purchasing decisions on their own research and the extensive information provided by eWOM, instead of depending on social support within their internet-based network (Schlosser, 2005). The individuals offering social support may not have any special expertise with the service or products in question. Hence, their support may not be considered as pertinent or influential as the in-depth reviews obtained in eWOM from the experts.

The role of gender as a moderator was discovered to be insignificant in H9, defying the findings of McGregor et al. (2017) and Sharma et al. (2024). This illustrates that people of any gender use eWOM and are susceptible to interpersonal impacts. The internet has become the primary means by which people interact with their social circles. Individuals share their enthusiasm related to a product/ service via SNSs, and their friends respond positively. Regardless of someone's gender identity, they might feel compelled to align with the group's positive review of the product, even if they personally did not like it (Figeac & Favre, 2023; Haines et al., 2023). Finding from the recent study Rafi et al. (2025) suggested that eWOM is heavily influenced by personality traits like lifestyle and involvement, regardless of gender.

Theoretical Contributions

The results offers some key theoretical contributions to uses and gratifications theory, specifically in the framework of eWOM and social media behaviour. For academics and scholars in the allied field of expertise, this study delivers a substantial theoretical addition by empirically analysing social relationship factors as an essential antecedent for eWOM behaviour in SNSs. The results reveal a hierarchy of gratifications, where utilitarian needs (e.g., information influence, bridguing social capital and trust) act as foundational stimuli for social gratifications (sense of belonging, self-esteem) and emotional states. This confronts the conventional uses and gratifications theory assumption that gratifications operate in parallel, instead proposing utilitarian, social, emotional and trust as a successive pathway.With a comprehensive investigation, both theoretical and empirical, the present research demonstrates the varying impacts of social factors and contributes to the understanding of how social relationships influence eWOM interactions. Additionally, this study substantiates the moderating effect of online social support on the relationship between eWOM intention and consumer purchase intention. Online social support may have a pivotal role, but its influence in regulating the relationship between eWOM and purchase tendency is found be insignificant. This could be because eWOM by itself is the dominant and primary provenance of information that substantially affects buying choices on its own (Kusawat & Teerakapibal, 2024; Mishra et al., 2022).

Furthermore, the current study provides empirical justification for insignificant relationship of bonding social capital that does not initiate eWOM. The findings suggest that closer links within the same social circle, i.e., friends and family members, result in lower engagement in eWOM activities such as exchanging comments and reviews online. One possible explanation for this insignificant relationship is that users prefer to discuss their opinions or thoughts privately with their closest intimates rather than publicly. Individuals desire to broaden their social ties with individuals from different backgrounds rather than then just with their family circle or close friends.

Moreover, the present investigation provides empirical support for the utilisation of the user and gratification theory in research pertaining to social media. This theory serves as the basis for describing how social gratification-related variables (social relationship facets) in social media channels drive users to engage in proactive dialogue with brands and customers on SNSs. Thus, present study integrates user gratification theory (UGT) by evaluating its use in the internet consumer environment, where social networking channels serve not only as platforms for information consumption but additionally as arenas for user-generated content. This investigation posits that eWOM is not a passive

phenomenon but a gratification-driven activity intended for satisfying intentions for knowledge acquisition, a peer to contact, and delight. The present research extends current theory by incorporating social relationship factors, including interpersonal influences, social capital, homophily and trust into the eWOM paradigm. This integration provides insight into the significant social dynamics that impact user conduct. It presents a holistic framework that describes how these elements combine to increase the efficiency of eWOM in influencing purchasing intentions.

Contrary to the generally ascribed role of gender as a moderator in consumer behaviour processes, this study adds to the body of knowledge on the theme by observing that gender does not play any moderating role on the association between informative and normative influences and eWOM intentions. The reason for this may be that in the contemporary era, electronic word of mouth behaviour is significantly influenced by the personality features of the individual, such as their lifestyle and level of involvement, regardless of their gender (Haines et al., 2023; Johnson et al., 2022).

For academia, this research extends a comprehensive understanding of interplay of multiple antecedents resulting in the formation of consumers intention for eWOM and further leading to purchase intention in the realm of SNSs.

Managerial Implications

It is essential to acknowledge the presence of multiple stakeholders in the eWOM process, each with their own distinct motivations. These stakeholders encompass advertisers who aim to promote their product lines and enhance brand associations and purchase motivation through eWOM on SNSs; SNSs entrepreneurs seeking to generate profits from advertising companies; and consumers striving to fulfill their demands. The research outcomes have yielded valuable managerial and practical insights, guiding advertisers and business practitioners on the crucial factors they should prioritise when implementing eWOM marketing strategies on SNSs.

It has been discovered that social relationships on these sites function as a stimulus for enhancing eWOM intention between marketers and shoppers. Consequently, marketing agencies should encourage online conversations about their product by establishing online communities dedicated to their brands. This strategic initiative by marketers will serve as a cost-effective advertising approach and bolster the brand's visibility among SNS users, thereby enhancing its prominence. In particular, consumers that are prone to interpersonal influence tend to acquire a more favorable perception of a brand that their peers in their social media accounts actively discuss (Farzin et al., 2022; Kusawat & Teerakapibal, 2024).

A further benefit is that producers and others in the distribution network will get instantaneous comments on how they can upgrade their goods and services. Furthermore, marketing professionals should employ innovative communication techniques to generate enthusiasm and educate customers about their brands. For example, they can design social network games centered around their products to foster consumer engagement and encourage repeated sales.

The findings suggest that creating advertisements that encourage SNS users to engage in interpersonal conversations can be an effective strategy for generating eWOM behaviours in SNSs. Consequently, the results indicate that eWOM on SNSs serves not only as a means of product information but also as a platform for product recommendations and customer reviews (Geraee et al., 2019; McGregor et al., 2017). Convincing a potential customer to make a purchase is most effective through positive feedback from a well-known influencer. Managers should collect a database of users who could be recognised as "influencers" employing Google alert, Sysomos, and other methods. Companies need to establish robust digital visibility if they wish to attract customers. They may establish blogs and discussion segments, which preferably serve as the primary repository of knowledge on product offerings, covering the consuming experiences of legitimate users. This research suggests that businesses should foster virtual communities where members may connect with one another and form online social support. People engage in virtual communities and utilise SNSs to acquire knowledge and support, resulting in the development of trust, increased fulfilment, and strengthened loyalty (Dorie & Loranger, 2024; Farzin et al., 2022).

Despite the benefits of social media for gathering extensive, genuine consumer input, it also comes with the inherent risk of internet "trolls" that contributes to the dissemination of negative eWOM about a company's products or services. Marketers can control online dialogue by deploying "house rules" as a standard Facebook (Meta) application on their brand pages to develop guidelines for conduct from the beginning in formal writing. Consequently, the outcomes of this study have substantial significance for managerial scenarios. These findings would assist marketing executives in developing an effective social media marketing plan that could influence consumer eWOM intention and purchase intent.

CONCLUSION

Modern online world makes it effortless for customers to meet up and exchange knowledge regarding products with each other, regardless of time or space. With the rise in popularilty of SNSs, users are even more likely to be inclined to connect with each other online (Dorie & Loranger, 2024; Haines et al., 2023). As users nowadays play a vital role in the eWOM process, not merely as recipients

of product-specific details but additionally act as the broadcasters that search out and disseminate the thoughts and critiques related to products (Verma & Yadav, 2021; Qiu et al., 2023). Given the popularity of social networks and their role in marketing, this study aids significantly to social media advertising literature by examining how different social relationship factors affect eWOM and purchase intentions. The findings indicated that three factors-informative influence, trust, and bridging social capital, had a positive impact on eWOM intentions. Therefore, it is determined that marketing professionals should place importance on consumers' social relationships on social networking channels, as consumers mimic the widely popular actions of other people, such as "liking/sharing" a commercial, acquiring the promoted product, or propagating favourable WOM concerning a brand on SNSs. Differing to our hypothesis, the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention is not moderated by online social support. This signifies that although eWOM considerably impacts the consumers buying intents, the existence of online social support ceases to modify this result. For marketing professionals, the findings suggest that content quality and reliabilty of the eWOM messages must be focussed to effectivelly boost the consumers' buyings intents through eWOM. Furthermore, the study determined that bridging is more influential than bonding in terms of eWOM engagement, which is in direct opposition to previous studies findings (Fan et al., 2019; Verma et al., 2023; Qiu et al., 2023). This research discovery determines that users of SNSs exhibit a heightened interest in engaging in eWOM activities with individuals from a diverse cultural and demographic backgrounds. Therefore, marketing practitioners should concentrate on the development and dissemination of content that is tailored to a broad range of cultural and demographic contexts. The efficacy and reach of eWOM strategies can be enhanced by attracting and engaging a diverse user base.

Limitation and Future Scope of the Study

Similar to previous studies, the current investigation presents limitations that create opportunities for further exploration. The survey sample is confined to Indian cities, predominantly comprising Millennials and Generation Z users, which restricts the ability to generalise the findings to a broader population. Considering that older demographics have witnessed a significant increase in usage of SNSs in recent years (Statista, 2022), future research may examine the variations in eWOM behaviour (intention) among different generations within SNSs. The data collected for this study is self-reported; therefore, there is a minor possibility of variance from actual behaviour, such as social desirability bias. This could potentially impact the incorrectness of the data and the inferences that can be derived from it. Prospective studies could investigate experimental designs to undertake a more incisive inquiry into the potential effects of social relationship factors on

eWOM intentions and consumers' purchase intentions. This would add to a deeper and comprehensive comprehension of the subject. Another limitation of this investigation is that the emphasis of this research is on social relationship variables whereas other potential influencing elements such as individual differences and psychological characteristics may also enhance consumers' involvement in eWOM. Also, the current study analyses the moderation of gender on informative and normative influence (interpersonal influence) which was found to be insignificant. This demands further research on this aspect, Also, further research can be considered using gender as a moderator with social capital homophily and trust aspects. Future studies may investigate these aspects in considerable depth. Investigating eWOM in diverse cultural contexts represents a promising avenue for academic research. Despite the global accessibility of the internet, the content shared online differs significantly from one country to another. Gaining a deeper understanding of the cultural influences on online consumer behaviour and the prevalence of product-related eWOM in SNSs will undoubtedly contribute to future research endeavors.

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APPENDIX

Table 4

Standardised Regression Weights

Constructs	Items		Estimate
Informative influence	IFI1	If I have little experience with a product, I often ask my friends about the product	0.684
	IFI2	I often consult other people to help choose the best alternative available from a product class	0.830
	IFI3	I frequently gather information from friends or family about a product before I buy	0.737
Normative influence	NOI1	When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of	0.768
	NO12	It is important that others like the products and brands I buy	0.836
	NOI3	I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase	0.812
Bridging social capital	BRSC1	Interacting with people on the SNS makes me feel like part of a larger community	0.723
	BRSC2	Interacting with people on the SNS makes me want to try new things	0.778
	BRSC3	Interacting with people on the SNS gives me new people to talk to	0.798
	BRSC4	Interacting with people on the SNS makes me interested in what people different from me are thinking	0.824

(*continued*)

Table 4 (*continued*)

| Constructs	Items		Estimate
Bonding social capital	BOSC1	There are several members of the SNS I trust to help solve my problems	0.873
	BOSC2	There is a member of the SNS I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions	0.886
	BOSC3	There are several members on the SNS that I feel comfortable talking to about personal problems	0.790
Perceived homophily	PERHOM1	In general, the contacts on my 'friends' list on the SNS think like me	0.904
	PERHOM2	In general, the contacts on my 'friends' list on the SNS behave like me	0.875
	PERHOM3	In general, the contacts on my 'friends' list on the SNS is like me	0.876
Trust	TRUST1	I trust most contacts on my 'friends' list on the SNS	0.856
	TRUST2	I have confidence in the contacts on my 'friends' list on the SNS	0.887
	TRUST3	My contacts on my "friends" list on the SNS offer honest opinions.	0.877
Social support	Socialsuppt1	When faced with difficulties, some people on SNS comforted and encouraged me	0.889
	Socialsuppt2	When faced with difficulties, some people on SNS expressed interest and concern for my well-being	0.872
	Socialsuppt3	When I encountered a problem, some people on SNS would give me information to help me overcome the problem	0.844
Electronic word-of-mouth intention	eWOMIT1	To make sure that I buy the right products or brands, I often read online reviews of products and brands written by other fellow members in social networks	0.733
	eWOMIT2	To choose the right products or brands, I often consult online reviews of products and brands provided by other fellow members in social networks	0.786
	eWOMIT3	I always share my experiences with products and brands in social networks on request of other members	0.745

(*continued*)

Table 4 (*continued*)

Constructs	Items		Estimate
Purchase intention	PUI1	I will buy product that are advertised on SNS	0.904
	PUI2	I desire to buy products that are advertised on SNS	0.852
	PUI3	I am likely to buy products that are promoted on SNS	0.864
	PUI4	I plan to purchase products that are promoted on SNS	0.851

Table 5

Common Method Variance (CMV) Assessment

Test	Criterion	Results
Marker-variable approach	Discrepancy between original & CMV-adjusted correlations should be minimal (≤ 0.10)	Maximum discrepancy = 0.061 (Acceptable)
Harman's single-factor test	Variance explained by a single factor should be < 50%	39.96% (Acceptable)
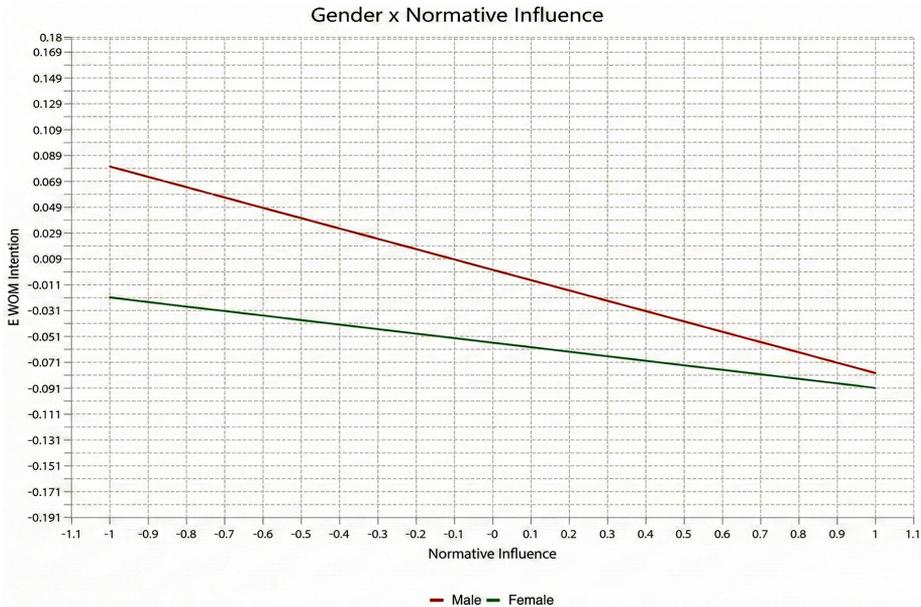
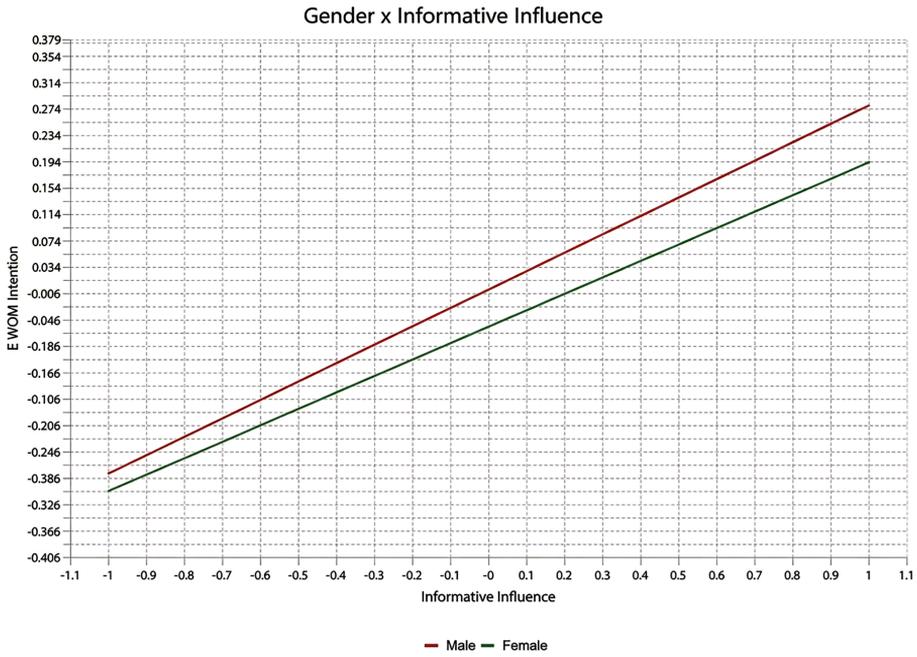**Figure 2**. Interaction Effect (Gender and Normative Influence)

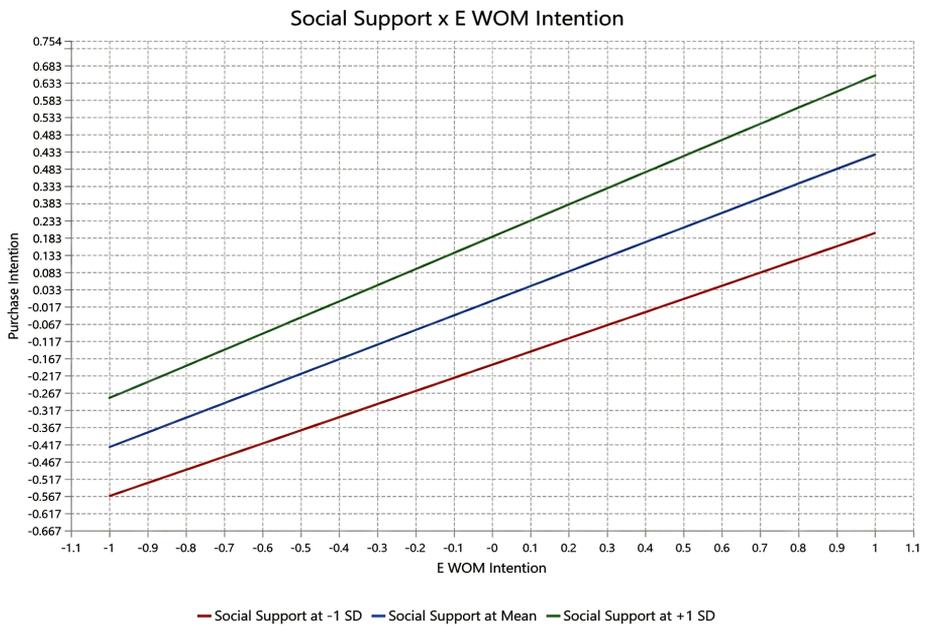**Figure 3.** Interaction Effect (Gender and Informative Influence)

Figure 4. Interaction Effect (Social Support and EWoM Intention)