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Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) and Purchase Intention: A Brief Look at the Last Decade by Bibliometrics

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Abstract: Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) plays a crucial role in digital marketing by shaping consumer judgments and purchase decisions. This study conducts a bibliometric analysis of research on e-WOM and purchase intention published between 2015 and 2024. A total of 200 Scopus-indexed journal articles were analyzed using performance indicators, citation analysis, keyword co-occurrence, thematic clustering, and network visualization with VOSviewer. The findings reveal three development phases: emergence (2015–2017), rapid growth (2018–2020), and consolidation with a sharp increase in publications in 2023–2024. Influential journals and highly cited studies emphasize information helpfulness, review quality, and credibility as key predictors of purchase intention. Five thematic clusters were identified, covering consumer behavior, trust, social commerce, brand constructs, and information quality. The study confirms that e-WOM and purchase intention remain evolving research areas, highlights cross-cultural and longitudinal gaps, and provides structured directions for future theoretical and managerial development.

Keywords: Bibliometric Analysis, Consumer Behavior, Electronic Word Of Mouth, Purchase Intention, Social Commerce.

INTRODUCTION

Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has become a critical element in the digital marketing landscape, offering unique advantages over traditional word-of-mouth communication. Unlike its offline counterpart, e-WOM is scalable, asynchronous, and persistent, enabling rapid dissemination and long-term accessibility of consumer opinions. These features strengthen its role in shaping purchase intention (Babić Rosario et al., 2020; Cheung & Thadani, 2012). The widespread use of social media, online forums, blogs, and review websites has empowered consumers to influence peers by sharing evaluations and recommendations content often perceived as more credible than firm-generated advertising (Islam & Rahman, 2017). As online interactions increasingly shape the consumer journey, e-WOM has emerged as a potent force driving consumer engagement, trust, and brand loyalty.

The link between electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and purchase intention has garnered substantial academic interest. Empirical findings suggest that positive e-WOM

enhances consumer trust and reduces perceived risk during the decision-making process (Cheung & Thadani, 2012), thereby increasing purchase intention (Park & Lee, 2009). In contrast, negative e-WOM harms brand image and discourages potential customers (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). The ubiquity of online platforms such as Amazon, Yelp, and TripAdvisor underscores the growing influence of consumer-generated content on purchase behavior. Recent studies emphasize that the increasing availability of e-WOM data has accelerated scholarly attention to its role in shaping consumer behavior and purchase intention in the digital era (Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, et al., 2021). In today's oversaturated marketing environment, peer-generated reviews are often perceived as more authentic and trustworthy than traditional brand messaging.

Academic interest in e-WOM and purchase intention has grown significantly over the past decade. Scholars have investigated a variety of related dimensions, including message credibility, source expertise, emotional tone, review volume, valence, and the influence of online communities (Dellarocas et al., 2010; Erkan & Evans, 2016). Recent reviews highlight that the impact of e-WOM on purchase intention remains significant, with factors such as review credibility, source trustworthiness, and emotional expression shaping consumer responses in the digital era (Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, et al., 2021). These studies reinforce the idea that e-WOM plays an instrumental role in shaping not only initial purchase intention but also post-purchase behavior such as satisfaction and repurchase intention.

Despite these advances, several research gaps persist. Much of the existing literature has focused on Western populations, particularly in Europe and North America, limiting the generalizability of findings across diverse cultural and regional contexts (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, et al., 2021; Y. Wang et al., 2021). Emerging markets in Asia, Africa, and Latin America with their rapid digital growth remain underrepresented in the e-WOM literature (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Moreover, the effectiveness of e-WOM is likely to differ across product categories (e.g., utilitarian vs. hedonic), sectors (e.g., fashion, electronics, tourism), and digital platforms (e.g., Instagram, YouTube, TikTok), yet comparative cross-domain analyses remain limited. Finally, longitudinal studies examining how e-WOM impacts brand equity, customer lifetime value, and consumer loyalty over time are still scarce (King et al., 2014).

Methodologically, much of the current literature relies on cross-sectional data, which may not fully capture the dynamic and evolving nature of online consumer interactions (Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, et al., 2021). The rise of real-time marketing and algorithm-driven recommendation systems necessitates new approaches that combine behavioral analytics, sentiment analysis, and machine learning to understand the nuances of e-WOM influence. Moreover, many studies have not sufficiently considered the role of digital influencers, micro-celebrities, and brand communities, which increasingly shape how e-WOM is generated and consumed. Given these methodological limitations, a comprehensive bibliometric analysis can provide macroscopic insights into the evolution and structure of e-WOM research.

To address these gaps and provide a holistic understanding of the field, this study employs a bibliometric approach to systematically analyze the academic literature on e-WOM and purchase intention. Bibliometric analysis offers an objective, data-driven method to map the intellectual structure of a research domain, identify influential authors and journals, detect research trends, and highlight unexplored areas (Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). This method is particularly useful when dealing with large volumes of scientific publications, as it enables researchers to uncover latent patterns, co-citation networks, thematic clusters, and historical trajectories of research development.

In recent years, bibliometric studies have gained popularity in marketing and business research due to their ability to provide macroscopic insights into academic fields. Bibliometric methods have become increasingly relevant in management and marketing disciplines, offering

a systematic approach to assess intellectual structures and research evolution (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). Unlike traditional literature reviews that rely on qualitative synthesis, bibliometric analysis utilizes quantitative techniques such as performance analysis and science mapping. Performance analysis examines metrics such as publication counts, citation frequency, and h-index to assess scholarly impact, while science mapping explores relationships among research themes, authors, and institutions. In the context of e-WOM and purchase intention, such analysis can help identify dominant paradigms, emerging themes, and influential contributions that have shaped the discourse. Accordingly, this study aims to synthesize key bibliometric indicators, identify influential contributors, and propose a research agenda for future studies on e-WOM and purchase intention. This study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the publication trends in e-WOM and purchase intention research from 2015 to 2024?
RQ2: Who are the most influential authors, journals, and contributing countries in this field?
RQ3: What are the major research gaps and emerging themes identified in the literature?

The dataset for this study consists of 200 peer-reviewed journal articles retrieved from the Scopus database, identified using the keywords "electronic word of mouth" AND "purchase intention" and filtered based on specific criteria: publication years (2015–2024), subject area (Business, Management and Accounting), document type (Article), source type (Journal), publication stage (Final only), and language (English). The subsequent analysis incorporates publication trends, citation metrics, keyword co-occurrence mapping, and collaborative networks to trace the field's evolution over the past decade.

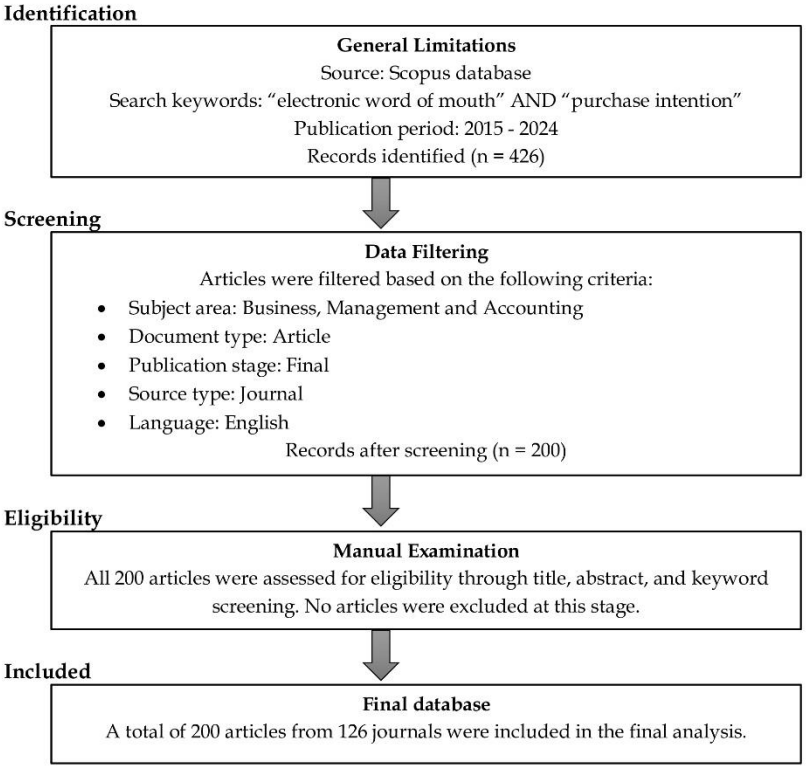


Figure 1. Article Selection Flow Based on PRISMA Guidelines

By mapping the intellectual landscape of this research domain, the study aims to offer valuable insights for academics, marketers, and policymakers. The findings are expected to inform future scholarly investigations and guide the development of more targeted and evidence-based digital marketing strategies. Additionally, the identification of key research

themes, seminal contributions, and underexplored areas will enrich theoretical understanding and foster practical applications of e-WOM strategies across different business contexts.

This bibliometric review is timely, given the increasing reliance on digital platforms for product discovery and decision-making. As marketing grows more data-driven and algorithmic, understanding the influence of e-WOM remains essential for organizations seeking to foster consumer trust and drive purchasing behavior. Bibliometric methods have become increasingly relevant in management and marketing, offering a systematic approach to assess intellectual structures and research evolution (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

METHODS

Bibliometric analysis is a systematic and quantitative method widely employed to explore the development of research themes and to detect emerging topics within a specific field (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, et al., 2021). Unlike traditional literature reviews that rely on qualitative synthesis, bibliometric techniques provide a macroscopic perspective by mapping the intellectual structure and evolution of a discipline (Bhimani et al., 2019). This approach enables researchers to identify topic clusters, shifts in scholarly focus, and the most influential publications, authors, and journals (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, et al., 2021; Öztürk et al., 2024). Bibliometric methods have been proven effective across various domains, including marketing and e-commerce, where they offer valuable insights into thematic progression and research performance (Ghorbani et al., 2022).

This study applies bibliometric techniques to examine scholarly output related to electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and purchase intention. A total of 200 peer-reviewed journal articles were retrieved from the Scopus database using the keywords “electronic word of mouth” and “purchase intention” in the title, abstract, or keyword fields. The search was restricted to journal articles and reviews written in English and published between 2015 and 2024. Only final-stage publications were included to ensure high-quality, peer-reviewed contributions. This keyword-based filtering ensured that the selected studies directly addressed the relationship between e-WOM and purchase intention. As emphasized by Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, et al., (2021), appropriate keyword selection is critical in bibliometric research to maintain precision and relevancy.

To further refine the dataset, the search was limited to the last ten years, allowing for a focused analysis of contemporary developments in the field (Verma & Yadav, 2021). Only journal articles and review papers were included, given that they represent what is widely accepted as “certified knowledge” within the academic community (Quintana-Martínez & Ramos-Rodríguez, 2014). The data were processed and analyzed using VOSviewer, a bibliometric mapping software that visualizes the relationships between authors, keywords, citations, and institutions (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). This tool provides an effective means of exploring the intellectual landscape of the field and tracking the evolution of research interests.

Two primary bibliometric techniques were employed: keyword co-occurrence analysis and co-citation analysis. Keyword co-occurrence analysis identifies how often specific terms appear together across the dataset, enabling the discovery of dominant research themes and their development over time (Z. Y. Wang et al., 2012). Co-citation analysis identifies pairs of studies that are frequently cited together in subsequent publications, suggesting a conceptual or methodological connection between them (Sheoran et al., 2018). This combination of approaches facilitates a nuanced understanding of the structural dynamics of the e-WOM and purchase intention research landscape, highlights influential contributions, and uncovers gaps for future exploration (X. Chen et al., 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All countries were covered within the scope of this study. The aim is to demonstrate how the field has evolved regarding research on e-WOM and its connection to purchase intention. The research spanned ten years from 2015 to 2024. To better understand e-WOM, we began by extracting annual scientific production. Although there were some publications on this topic before 2015, the period from 2014 to 2023 provides a good timeframe for examining study trends, as numerous works emerged at an accelerating pace towards 2024.

Publication Trends

Figure 2 presents the annual distribution of publications on e-WOM and purchase intention from 2015 to 2024. In the initial stage (2015–2017), research output was relatively low and fluctuating, ranging from 5 publications in 2015 to a peak of 11 in 2016, followed by a decline to 7 in 2017. This pattern reflects limited but gradually emerging scholarly engagement with the topic. A marked growth phase occurred between 2018 and 2019, with publications increasing sharply from 16 to 27, suggesting heightened academic interest possibly driven by the development of new theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, et al., 2021; Ismagilova et al., 2020)

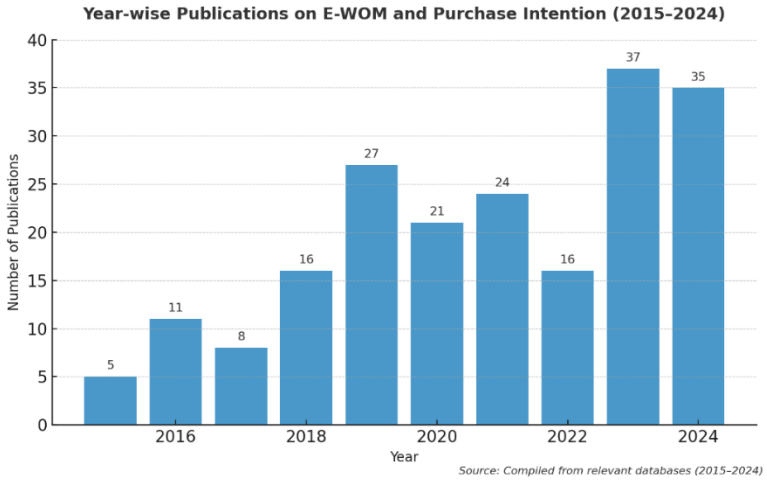


Figure 2. Annual Publication of Articles (2015–2024)

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 coincided with a decline in output, from 27 publications in 2019 to 21 in 2020, possibly attributable to disruptions in research activities, fieldwork limitations, and shifts in global research priorities (Verma & Yadav, 2021). A moderate recovery to 24 publications was observed in 2021, which may reflect researchers' adaptation to remote data collection and the use of secondary data methodologies (Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, et al., 2021). However, output fell again in 2022 to 16 publications, potentially indicating a post-pandemic realignment of research agendas toward other emerging themes in digital marketing and consumer behavior (Ghorbani et al., 2022).

In 2023, the number of publications reached its highest point in the dataset at 37, representing a substantial surge in scholarly output. This increase likely reflects renewed academic momentum, greater accessibility to digital data, and the growing practical relevance of e-WOM in the post-pandemic business landscape. Although 2024 saw a slight decline to 35 publications, the figure remains significantly above pre-2020 levels, underscoring the topic's sustained prominence in marketing and consumer research (Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

Source Performance Analysis

An examination of publication patterns from 2015 to 2024 reveals that studies on electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and purchase intention are concentrated within ten leading academic journals, as shown in Figure 3. The Journal of Business Research and the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services occupy the leading positions, each with nine publications, reflecting their central role as preferred outlets for studies on digital marketing, consumer behavior, and bibliometric analyses (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, et al., 2021). The prominence of these journals is consistent with their established reputation for publishing high-impact research that shapes marketing theory and practice.

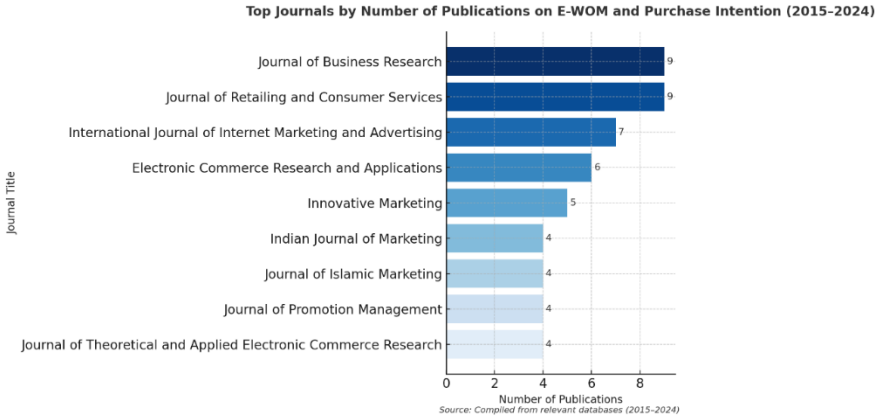


Figure 3. Analysis of Top Ten Journals Based on the Volume of Articles Related to E-WOM and Purchase Intention Published between 2015 and 2024

Following closely, the International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising and Electronic Commerce Research and Applications contribute significantly, with seven and six publications respectively. Their focus on online consumer engagement, e-commerce strategies, and digital platforms underscores the alignment of e-WOM research with the rapid expansion of internet-based marketing channels (Hajli et al., 2016; Ladhari & Michaud, 2015).

Although journals such as Innovative Marketing, Indian Journal of Marketing, Journal of Islamic Marketing, Journal of Promotion Management, Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research, and Marketing Intelligence and Planning record comparatively fewer publications (four to five articles each), they provide important niche perspectives. These include culturally specific marketing strategies, sector-focused applications, and emerging methodological approaches, which complement the broader body of literature (Ismagilova et al., 2020). The concentration of publications in these leading journals indicates a clear thematic clustering of e-WOM and purchase intention research within high-visibility outlets, consistent with the observation by Ghorbani et al. (2022) that prominent publication channels play a pivotal role in setting the global research agenda in digital marketing.

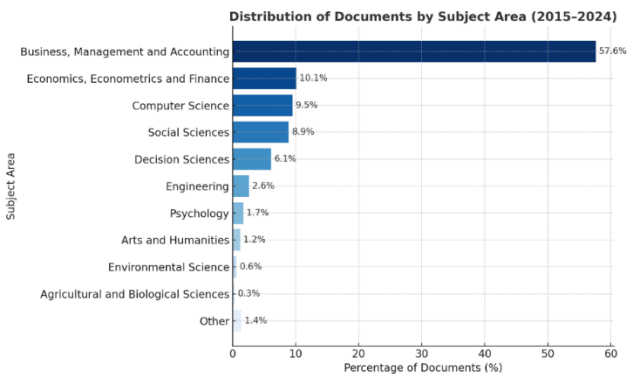


Figure 4. Distribution of Scopus-Indexed Documents by Subject Area (2015-2024)

When examined by subject area, more than half of all publications (57.6%) fall under Business, Management, and Accounting, underscoring the marketing-centric nature of the discourse. Other significant areas include Economics, Econometrics, and Finance (10.1%), Computer Science (9.5%), and Social Sciences (8.9%), suggesting that e-WOM and purchase intention are increasingly being explored through interdisciplinary lenses that incorporate economic modeling, data analytics, and socio-behavioral perspectives. This cross-disciplinary spread is consistent with recent scholarly calls to integrate marketing research with computational and social science approaches to better capture the complexity of online consumer behavior (Donthu, Kumar, Sureka, et al., 2021; Ismagilova et al., 2017).

Most Cited Articles

The analysis of the five most frequently cited articles on e-WOM and purchase intention reveals that the highest-impact works predominantly focus on the role of information quality, influencer credibility, and social media engagement in shaping consumer behavior. Filieri et al. (2018), with 349 citations, underscores that the perceived helpfulness of online reviews significantly drives purchase intention, aligning with the meta-analytic findings of (Ismagilova et al., 2020) that review quality remains one of the most consistent determinants across industries. Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández (2019) highlight the influence of digital influencers on engagement, expected value, and purchase intention, echoing (Casaló et al., 2020) who emphasize parasocial relationships as a critical mechanism in influencer marketing effectiveness. Similarly, (Kumar & C, 2017) demonstrate that social e-WOM positively impacts brand attitude and purchase intention, particularly in emerging markets where peer recommendations carry high persuasive power.

Table 1. The Five Most Frequently Cited Articles

No	Title	Citation
1	*"Consumer perceptions of information helpfulness and determinants of purchase intention in online consumer reviews of services"* (Filieri et al., 2018)	349
2	*"The role of digital influencers in brand recommendation: Examining their impact on engagement, expected value and purchase intention"* (Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019)	331
3	*"Social eWOM: does it affect the brand attitude and purchase intention of brands?"* (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017)	261
4	*"Influence of e-WOM engagement on consumer purchase intention in social commerce"* (Yusuf et al., 2018)	198
5	*"Social media or shopping websites? The influence of eWOM on consumers' online purchase intentions"* (Erkan & Evans, 2018)	155

The prominence of these studies indicates a research landscape where positive e-WOM, credibility cues, and engagement mechanisms are central themes, with a strong reliance on quantitative approaches and theoretical models such as the Information Adoption Model and Social Influence Theory. However, the limited representation of studies on negative e-WOM, cross-cultural perspectives, and technology-driven e-WOM (e.g., AI-generated reviews) suggests potential avenues for future research. Practically, the findings reinforce the necessity for marketers to prioritize trust-building strategies, produce high-quality user-generated content, and leverage credible influencers to stimulate consumer purchase intention in both developed and emerging markets.

Author Productivity and Networks

Figure 5 highlights the most prolific researchers in the field of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and purchase intention between 2015 and 2024. Zinko, R. leads with seven publications, followed by Filieri, R. with five. Furner, C. P. and Roy, G. each contributed four, while Akram, U., Datta, B., Dwivedi, Y. K., Mukherjee, S., Ngah, A. H., and Prasad, S. each authored three publications. The prominence of Filieri, R. is especially noteworthy—not only as a high-frequency contributor but also as a leading figure in major conceptual developments. For example, Filieri & McLeay (2014) offer critical insights into how online consumer perceptions of review helpfulness mediate purchase intention, while later work by Filieri and colleagues addresses visual cues (Filieri et al., 2021) and influencer credibility (Filieri et al., 2023). Similarly, Dwivedi et al., (2021) place these contributions in the broader trajectory of emergent trends in digital and social media marketing research. These authors serve as intellectual anchors within the e-WOM domain, guiding its theoretical and empirical advancement.

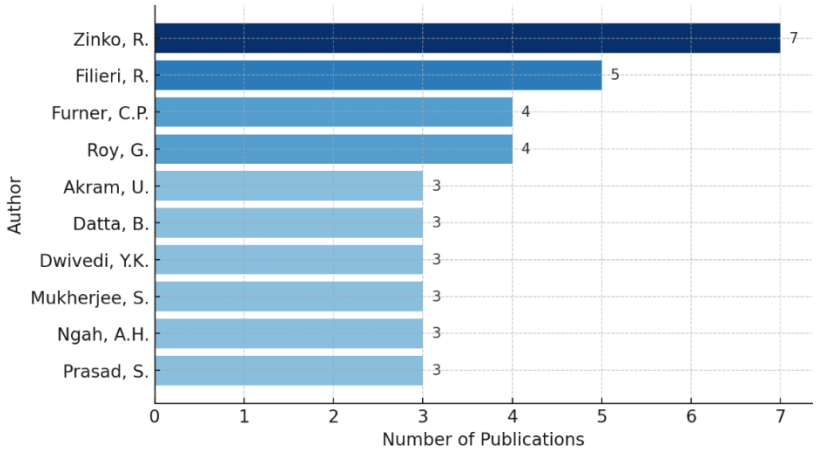


Figure 5. Author Productivity in Scopus: Top 10 Contributors

The concentration of output among a small group suggests the presence of a thematic core of scholars in this field. Their sustained productivity demonstrates thematic expertise and the potential for future cross-institutional collaborations.

Global Research Collaboration

The analysis of publication output (Figure 6) shows that India, the United States, and China dominate research on e-WOM and purchase intention, with secondary contributions from Malaysia, the United Kingdom, Spain, France, Indonesia, and Pakistan. This reflects both the size of these research systems and the relevance of digital commerce in their economies, where e-WOM has become a critical driver of consumer trust and purchasing behavior (Erkan & Evans, 2018)

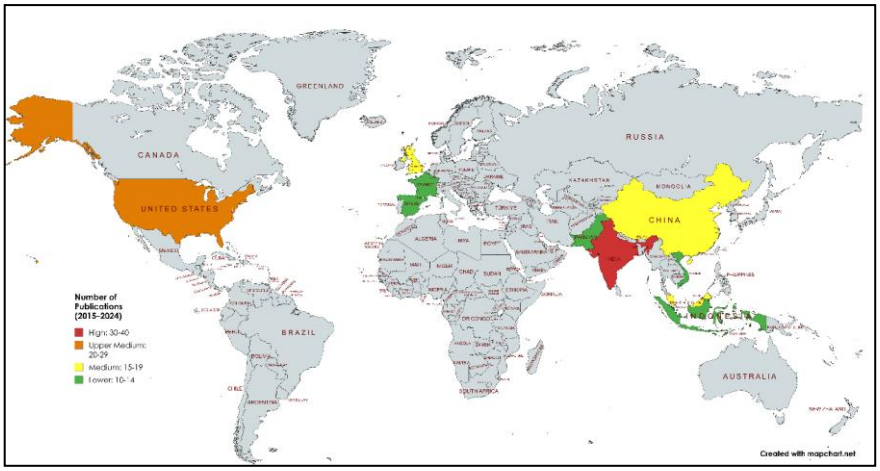


Figure 6. Analysis of e-WOM and Purchase Intention Publications by Country (2015-2024)

However, the co-authorship network visualization (Figure 7) reveals a different dynamic: while productivity is concentrated, collaboration remains uneven. Large nodes such as India, the United States, and China function as central hubs, frequently connected with European partners like the United Kingdom and France, and to some extent with emerging markets in Southeast Asia. In contrast, countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan, and Iran appear more peripherally positioned, collaborating mainly with regional neighbors. This structural imbalance echoes earlier bibliometric evidence showing that international collaborations are often driven by a small set of scientifically advanced countries, while developing nations remain locally clustered (Chinchilla-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Estevez et al., 2022).

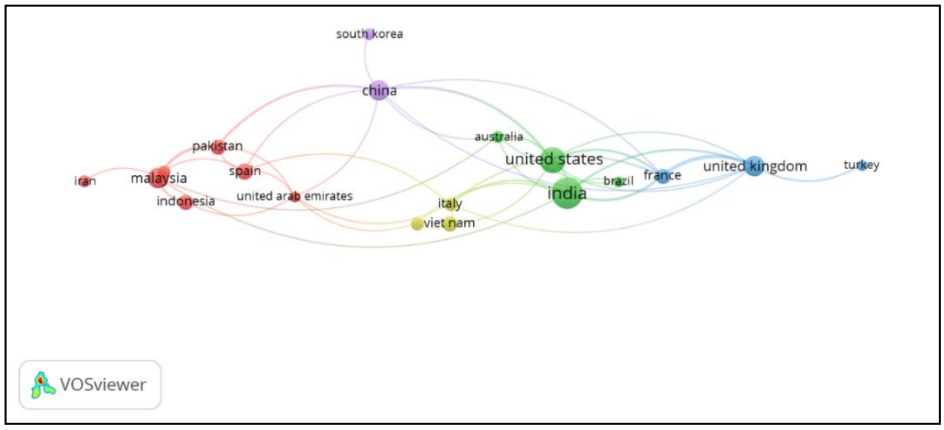


Figure 7. Global Research Collaboration on e-WOM and Purchase Intention

Taken together, these two maps suggest that although the volume of e-WOM research is growing globally, the knowledge network is still fragmented. Prior studies emphasize that internationally co-authored papers tend to attract more citations and wider recognition (Estevez et al., 2022), as they integrate diverse perspectives and contexts. For the e-WOM and purchase intention field, greater cross-country collaboration could enhance theoretical generalizability, particularly in testing how cultural differences, digital platform ecosystems, and consumer trust mechanisms moderate the e-WOM–purchase intention link (Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, et al., 2021). Strengthening collaborations between high-output countries (India, US, China) and emerging research systems (Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan) may thus accelerate both scholarly impact and managerial relevance.

Mapping Analysis of e-WOM and Purchase Intention

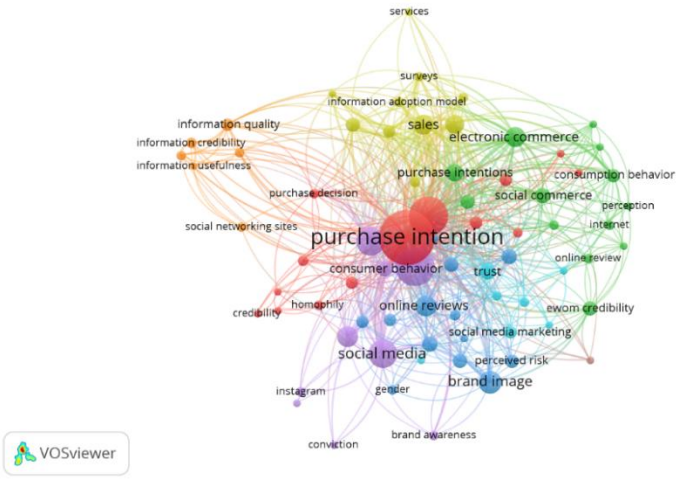


Figure 8. Keyword Co-Occurrence Network for "e-WOM" and "Purchase Intention"

Based on the keyword co-occurrence network in Figure 8, the research landscape on electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and purchase intention between 2015 and 2024 highlights the centrality of these two constructs as the backbone of current scholarly discourse. Both terms emerge as dominant nodes, suggesting their critical role in shaping consumer decision-making in digital contexts. This finding is consistent with Filieri et al. (2021), who emphasize that e-WOM acts as one of the most influential determinants of online purchase decisions, particularly in sectors where trust and credibility are pivotal, such as e-commerce and hospitality. The visualization also shows that purchase intention and e-WOM are strongly tied to secondary keywords such as social media, online reviews, brand image, and trust. This suggests that the relationship between e-WOM and Consumer Behaviour – American English cannot be separated from the broader digital ecosystem in which interactions occur. For instance, (Cheung & Thadani, 2012) highlight that online reviews and credibility significantly shape consumer trust, which in turn mediates the effect of e-WOM on purchase intention. Thus, trust and credibility emerge as bridging concepts that reinforce the predictive validity of e-WOM in explaining consumer behavior.

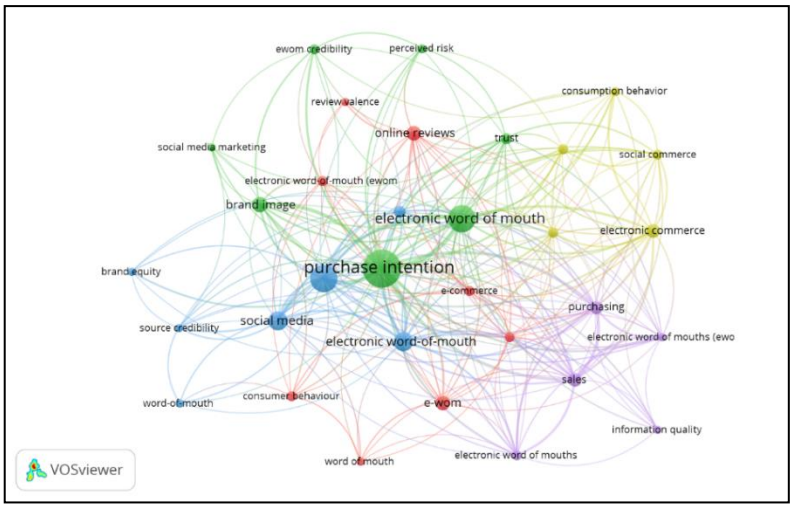


Figure 9. Keyword Co-Occurrence Network for "e-WOM" and "Purchase Intention"

Table 2. Clusters

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5
Consumer Behavior, Consumer Behaviour, e-Commerce, e-WOM, Electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWOM), Online Reviews, Review Valence, Word of Mouth	Brand Image, Electronic Word of Mouth, EWOM Credibility, Perceived Risk, Purchase Intention, Social Media Marketing, Trust	Brand Equity, Electronic Word-of-Mouth, EWOM, Purchase Intention Social Media, Source Credibility, Word-of-Mouth	Electronic Commerce, Marketing, Online Purchase Intention, Social Commerce	Electronic Word of Mouth, Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM), Information Quality, Purchasing Sales

In Figure 9, the focus shifts from relational connections to the density and dominance of keywords within the network, presented through five distinct clusters. This clustering reveals not only the thematic concentration of research but also the relative intensity with which certain concepts are studied. The central dominance of e-WOM and purchase intention underscores their position as anchor constructs, while surrounding clusters reflect supporting constructs that enrich the discourse. This visualization indicates that the scholarly focus is not fragmented but organized around interrelated thematic hubs, highlighting the multidisciplinary nature of this field (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

Table 2 provides a more granular interpretation of the five clusters identified in Figure 10. Cluster 1 reflects themes of consumer behavior and social media, underscoring the psychological and behavioral dimensions of how consumers process e-WOM information. Cluster 2 highlights trust, credibility, and social media marketing, showing the marketing strategies and trust-building mechanisms essential in digital platforms (J. Wang et al., 2022). Cluster 3 relates to commerce, purchasing, and social networking, emphasizing the functional and transactional aspects of consumer decision-making. Cluster 4 focuses on brand equity, online purchase intention, and social commerce, which aligns with studies by Hajli et al., (2016) who argue that social commerce facilitates community-based trust, thereby strengthening brand-consumer relationships. Finally, Cluster 5 concentrates on information quality, purchasing, and sales, reflecting the traditional information adoption perspective proposed by Sussman & Siegal (2003). Recent studies (e.g., Erkan & Evans (2018); Cheung & Thadani (2012); J. Wang et al., (2022)) reaffirm that the quality and credibility of online information remain pivotal in driving consumer responses, demonstrating the enduring relevance of this framework in contemporary digital contexts.

Interestingly, the overlap among clusters indicates a high degree of interdisciplinarity in this research domain. For example, brand image and trust are not isolated concepts but are interlinked with both psychological (consumer behaviour) and transactional (commerce and purchasing) perspectives. This suggests that future research directions may increasingly focus on integrative models that capture both attitudinal and behavioral factors in the e-WOM–purchase intention relationship. As noted by Ismagilova et al. (2020), the interplay of e-WOM, social commerce, and trust mechanisms represents an evolving paradigm where consumer engagement is shaped by both informational and emotional cues.

In summary, the results of the mapping analysis through Figures 9 and 10, complemented by the cluster classification in Table 2, provide a comprehensive overview of how e-WOM research has evolved over the last decade. The dominance of purchase intention and e-WOM as core constructs reflects their enduring relevance, while the supporting clusters highlight the

growing importance of trust, information quality, brand-related constructs, and social commerce in shaping consumer decisions. This mapping not only validates existing theories but also points to emerging themes where interdisciplinary approaches are increasingly necessary to understand the complexities of digital consumer behavior. The results presented in Figures 2, 9, and 10, along with Tables 1 and 2, provide a comprehensive picture of publication trends, influential works, and thematic clusters in e-WOM and purchase intention research. Building on these findings, the next section discusses their theoretical and practical implications.

Discussion

This bibliometric study mapped the intellectual structure of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and purchase intention by analyzing 200 Scopus-indexed articles published across 126 journals between 2015 and 2024. Using co-occurrence, co-citation, and network mapping (VOSviewer), the study provides a systematic, data-driven account of thematic evolution, influential contributions, and collaboration patterns in the field — an approach consistent with best practices in bibliometrics (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, et al., 2021; van Eck & Waltman, 2010; Zupic & Čater, 2015). The comprehensive dataset and the analytic procedures ensure that observed patterns reflect the dominant intellectual currents and not idiosyncratic samples (Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, et al., 2021; Ghorbani et al., 2022).

Annual production displays three identifiable phases: an emergent stage (2015–2017), rapid expansion (from ~2018 onwards), and consolidation with a peak in 2023–2024 (see Figure 2). This pattern mirrors broader observations about the acceleration of digital-marketing research following platform maturation and pandemic-induced behavioral change (Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, et al., 2021; Verma & Yadav, 2021; Y. Wang et al., 2021). The 2018–2020 surge likely reflects both methodological pluralism (text mining, large-scale secondary data) and practical relevance as firms and consumers migrated to online channels (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Ismagilova et al., 2020). The temporary dips and rebounds around 2020–2022 are consistent with documented COVID-19 disruptions to fieldwork and shifting research priorities (Donthu, Kumar, Sureka, et al., 2021; Verma & Yadav, 2021).

The corpus spans 126 journals, with disciplinary concentration in Business, Management & Accounting but substantial contributions from Information Systems, Computer Science, and Social Sciences (Figure 3; Results). This dispersion confirms that e-WOM is an inherently interdisciplinary phenomenon — situated at the intersection of information adoption, social influence, and commerce — and supports calls for integrative frameworks that combine cognitive, social, and technological perspectives (Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, et al., 2021; Ghorbani et al., 2022; Zupic & Čater, 2015). The presence of high-visibility outlets (e.g., Journal of Business Research, Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services) underscores the managerial salience of the topic and suggests a translational research trajectory from theoretical insights to practical guidance (Alalwan et al., 2017; Hajli et al., 2016).

Citation analysis (Table 1) identifies a small set of seminal contributions (Filieri et al., 2018; Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández, 2019; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Yusuf et al., 2018; Erkan & Evans, 2018) that collectively foreground information helpfulness, influencer credibility, engagement mechanisms, and platform characteristics as central explanatory factors for purchase intention. These themes echo meta-analytic and review findings which document consistent effects of review quality, source credibility, and engagement on purchase outcomes (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Ismagilova et al., 2020; Verma & Yadav, 2021). The concentration of high citations around studies about review helpfulness and influencer effects suggests that future theoretical refinements should prioritize (a) moderators of credibility (e.g., product type, consumer involvement) and (b) contextual moderators (platform affordances, cultural norms).

The keyword co-occurrence network (Figure 9) positions e-WOM and purchase intention as central, highly connected nodes with dense ties to social media, online reviews, brand image, and trust (Results). This relational pattern empirically supports theoretical assertions from the Information Adoption Model and Social Influence frameworks: consumers first evaluate informational cues (helpfulness, source credibility), which then feed into trust/attitudinal mechanisms that drive intention and behavior (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Sussman & Siegal, 2003). Recent empirical work corroborates that trust functions both as mediator and moderator in e-WOM → purchase intention pathways, particularly under conditions of uncertainty (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Filieri et al., 2018; Ismagilova et al., 2020).

Figure 10's five clusters (detailed in Table 2) reveal how the literature partitions into coherent substreams: (1) consumer behavior & social media; (2) trust/credibility & social media marketing; (3) transactional/commerce concerns; (4) brand equity & social commerce; and (5) information quality & adoption processes. This decomposition clarifies that while e-WOM is the common node, the community addresses it through multiple lenses — psychological (attitudes, involvement), informational (quality, helpfulness), and transactional (purchase mechanisms, social commerce). The prominence of cluster 5 (information quality/adoption) recalls the Information Adoption Model Sussman & Siegal (2003) and recent extensions that incorporate platform affordances and algorithmic curation (Erkan & Evans, 2016); (Cheung & Thadani, 2012); Wu & Wang, 2023). Importantly, trust and brand constructs traverse clusters, operating as cross-cutting mediators that warrant inclusion in integrative models.

From a practical perspective, these findings suggest that marketers should focus on enhancing review helpfulness, ensuring transparency in content curation, and cultivating strong brand communities to strengthen purchase intention. Likewise, platform providers and policymakers can leverage these insights to design mechanisms that reduce misinformation, promote credible reviews, and foster user trust—ultimately amplifying the positive influence of e-WOM on consumer behavior.

Co-authorship and country maps show concentration in major research hubs (India, USA, China) with notable activity from Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia) but relatively peripheral participation from many regions (Results; Figures 6–7). This unequal geography is consistent with bibliometric studies in marketing and signals a risk: over-representation of certain contexts may limit external validity. Strengthening cross-country, cross-platform collaborations would allow testing of cultural moderators and platform-specific boundary conditions (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Chinchilla-Rodríguez et al., 2019; Estevez et al., 2022). Practically, building bridges between high-output hubs and under-represented regions will diversify empirical settings and enrich theory.

While the corpus features robust quantitative work (surveys, experiments) and an increasing use of large secondary datasets and text analytics, important methodological gaps remain: (i) limited longitudinal studies that can identify causal sequences of e-WOM influence over time; (ii) scarcity of cross-platform comparative work (short-video platforms vs. traditional review sites); and (iii) few mixed-method studies that combine large-scale mining with in-depth qualitative insights (Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2024; Verma & Yadav, 2021). Addressing these gaps would improve causal inference and external validity and is aligned with the cluster evidence that platform affordances meaningfully condition e-WOM (Erkan & Evans, 2018; Y. Wang et al., 2021).

The mapping consistently shows that review helpfulness, reviewer/source credibility, and brand/community ties are high-leverage levers to increase purchase intention. Managers should therefore invest in verified-purchase badges, reviewer reputation mechanisms, and community engagement strategies (Alalwan et al., 2017; Casaló et al., 2020; Filieri et al., 2018). Additionally, platform design choices (ranking algorithms, presentation of metadata) that

surface high-quality reviews and credible influencers will likely improve conversion rates and trust recovery in crisis contexts (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Z. Y. Wang et al., 2012).

Building on the taxonomy and gaps identified, we recommend three priority lines for future Sinta-quality contributions: (1) cross-platform causal comparisons experimentally and longitudinally examine how short-form video (TikTok, Reels) e-WOM differs from traditional review sites in credibility processing (Casaló et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2024) (2) algorithmic and AI influences study how recommendation systems and AI-generated reviews alter perceived helpfulness and trust (N. Chen & Yang, 2023; Verma & Yadav, 2021); and (3) contextual generalizability expand empirical work in under-represented regions (Africa, Latin America) and across product categories to test boundary conditions (Ismagilova et al., 2017; Donthu et al., 2021). Mixed-method (text mining + experiments) and cross-national collaborations are particularly encouraged to tackle these topics.

In sum, the bibliometric mapping (2015–2024) demonstrates that e-WOM and purchase intention are the enduring core constructs of a maturing but still dynamic field. The cluster structure reveals multiple complementary research streams informational, social, and transactional with trust and information quality operating as key bridging mechanisms. For scholars and practitioners alike, the maps offer a scaffold for integrative theory building and targeted managerial interventions; for the research community, they point to clear empirical and methodological priorities that will enrich understanding of digital consumer behavior in the years ahead.

CONCLUSION

This study systematically examined the development of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and purchase intention research from 2015 to 2024 through a bibliometric analysis of 200 Scopus-indexed articles. The findings addressed the three research questions by identifying the publication trajectory across emergence, rapid growth, and consolidation phases, mapping influential journals, authors, and contributing countries, and revealing dominant thematic clusters alongside existing research gaps. The results confirm that information helpfulness, credibility, trust, brand-related constructs, and social commerce remain central drivers within the evolving e-WOM–purchase intention framework.

Theoretically, this study contributes by providing a structured intellectual mapping of the field and integrating fragmented findings into a coherent knowledge structure. By synthesizing citation patterns and thematic developments, the study clarifies the progression of key constructs and strengthens the conceptual foundation of digital consumer behavior research. The longitudinal perspective offered through bibliometric analysis enhances understanding of how scholarly discourse on e-WOM and purchase intention has evolved over the past decade.

Practically, the findings highlight the strategic importance of managing online review ecosystems and strengthening credibility mechanisms across digital platforms. Firms are encouraged to prioritize authentic user-generated content, improve review quality, and implement trust-building strategies to enhance purchase intention. The growing role of social commerce and AI-driven personalization further indicates the need for adaptive digital marketing strategies aligned with platform-specific dynamics.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The analysis was restricted to Scopus-indexed English-language publications and relied primarily on keyword co-occurrence and network visualization techniques, which may limit thematic depth and generalizability. In addition, the focus on the direct e-WOM–purchase intention relationship may overlook contextual mediating and moderating factors. Future research should expand database coverage, incorporate cross-cultural comparisons, and employ advanced analytical approaches such as sentiment analysis, topic modeling, and longitudinal designs to capture evolving digital consumer dynamics. By addressing these areas, future studies can further

strengthen theoretical development and managerial relevance in digital marketing and social commerce research.

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