




# “E-WOM and consumers’ purchase intention: An empirical study on Facebook”

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# E-WOM AND CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON FACEBOOK

## Abstract

Nowadays, organizations use social media to promote their services and products. At the same time, they use different tools to convey their messages, such as Facebook. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the factors that affect the e-WOM on Jordanian consumers' purchase intention over Facebook. The study uses the information acceptance model (IAM) to examine the impact of information credibility, information quality, information adoption, and information usefulness over Facebook on Jordanian consumers' purchase intention. The study uses cross-sectional quantitative research and is conducted online. The questionnaire was distributed through Facebook and WhatsApp, and the people who used only Facebook were allowed to complete the survey. Out of 327 filled questionnaires, only 304 were valid for further analysis. Collected data were coded in SPSS, and after confirming the validity and reliability of the tool, the correlation between variables was checked. In addition, multiple regressions were used to test the hypotheses. Multiple regression results show that the E-WOM can explain 49.2% of the total variation in the consumers' purchase intention, where  $R^2 = 0.492$ . Information adoption has the strongest effect on consumers' purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.489$ ), followed by information usefulness ( $\beta = 0.204$ ). In contrast, information credibility and information quality do not have a significant effect on consumers' purchase intention (0.189 and 0.312, respectively). This study helps companies and businesses that have pages on Facebook to understand how consumers engage in the e-WOM on business pages and consider the consumers' reviews, comments, or posts.

## Keywords

electronic word of mouth, information credibility, information quality, information usefulness, information adoption, purchase intention, Facebook, Jordan

## JEL Classification

M31, L15, L86, D83

## INTRODUCTION

Social media channels have been an essential part of individuals' lives. For instance, according to Facebook's fourth-quarter report, Facebook is the most used tool among all social network platforms. It has monthly active users of 2.80 billion (Facebook, 2021). The dramatic growth in Facebook users has empowered them to openly express themselves, interact with each other, and share experiences through e-word of mouth. On the other hand, marketers have made sure to have a presence on Facebook to communicate with their consumers and influence their purchase decision directly (Tien et al., 2019). Furthermore, e-WOM on social networks, including Facebook, directly influences the consumers' purchase intention as it acts as a marketing instrument to communicate and interact with consumers (Alnsour, 2018).

Since E-WOM has a vital role in social media channels and directly impacts consumers' buying intention, this study is valuable for businesses that try to sell their products and services in Jordan via the Facebook platform. It helps them to understand what factors affect the

Jordanian consumers' purchase intention, so they give more attention to what customers think of their business. In addition, this study is important to buyers who are Facebook users. It encourages them to express their views about businesses and helps users understand that their opinions matter, especially since Facebook is very popular in Jordan. According to a recent statistic by StatCounter (n.d.), Facebook has the majority of the market share of 74.7% in Jordan among other social media channels, followed by YouTube with 15.43%, and 4.51% of Twitter market share (StatCounter, n.d.). Moreover, this study will assist Facebook users in evaluating the e-WOM message and recognize the power that they got as indirect marketers for businesses. Furthermore, this paper will be helpful for future research about e-WOM and social media in Jordan and understanding of what affects Jordanian consumers' purchase intention on social networks.

E-WOM is a trending topic that got many researchers' attention, especially on social networks, where it is noticed that e-WOM has a vital role in consumers' buying intention and has changed the traditional WOM (Elhadidy, 2017). Facebook is a substantial channel of e-WOM, where users have the power as buyers to engage with the business and can openly express their opinions towards products and services and their intentions of purchasing (Wen & Aun, 2020). As a social network channel, Facebook also empowered organizations to interact with buyers and affect their personal opinions without contacting them directly (Bataineh, 2015). However, it was found in previous studies that there is limited research investigating e-WOM in the Middle East including in Jordan (Al-Shibly & Mahadin, 2017). Therefore, this study is dedicated to investigating the effect of e-WOM on consumers' purchase intentions.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

An extensive revision of the recent related studies indicated that the information acceptance model was mainly applied to study e-WOM on consumers' purchase intention. The information acceptance model (IAM) was created in 2003 by Sussman and Siegal (2003). IAM is developed from two models: ELM (Elaboration Likelihood Model) and TAM (Technology Acceptance Model). IAM aims to describe how consumers can be convinced by information (Li et al., 2016; Watts & Wyner, 2011; Zhang et al., 2014). IAM has four main factors: information credibility (IC), information usefulness (IU), information quality (IQ), and information adoption (IA) (Erkan, 2016; Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Tien et al., 2019). Furthermore, many researchers in related literature have used IAM to understand peoples' intentions toward information on social networks. It was found to be the most suitable model to be used when applied to studies that explore the effect of e-WOM on consumers' purchase behavior in the context of online social networks (Abedi et al., 2020; Erkan & Evan, 2016; Le-Hoang, 2020; Tien et al., 2019). This study has applied IAM and its components (information credibility, information usefulness, information quality, and information adoption) to study the

effect of e-WOM on consumers' purchase intention over Facebook in Jordan, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

In general, purchase intention is people's probability of buying a service or product (Tien et al., 2019). Purchase intention for e-WOM is described as a process of evaluating word-of-mouth information concerning a product or service. It also eventually leads to the buying decision (Sutanto & Aprianingsih, 2016). When the message of e-WOM on social networks is positive and powerful, it is highly expected to impact consumers' purchase intention (Erkan, 2016). Therefore, purchase intention is a process that may lead to purchase decisions when the e-WOM information is credible, useful, offers acceptable quality to consumers, and in the end, is adopted by consumers.

According to related studies that discussed e-word-of-mouth, it is described as the feedback content from a consumer's viewpoint, which can be negative or positive related to a business, product, or service through different internet platforms (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). E-WOM benefits consumers by providing clear information about other consumers' views and experiences as an alternative to what businesses advertise about themselves (Erkan & Evan, 2016; Forman

et al., 2008). Different online platforms like social media channels, including Facebook, have offered consumers the opportunity to express their word-of-mouth about businesses (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Thus, e-WOM can be defined as a freeway of expressing a consumer's view regarding products or services, whether negative or positive, over various online channels, especially social network websites. It was reported in the literature that e-WOM was found to be highly significant in consumers' purchase intentions (Chan & Ngai, 2011; See-To & Ho, 2014; Zhang et al., 2010). Similarly, according to Erkan (2016), e-WOM is also found to influence consumers to buy their goods and services online, especially on social media.

The increasing use of social media platforms has changed people's lives (Saleem & Ellahi, 2017). It created opportunities for e-WOM conversations that allow users to rate the services and products with their families, friends, and acquaintances, which plays a dynamic role in reshaping and affecting the consumers' purchase intentions (Erkan, 2016; Saleem & Ellahi, 2017). As mentioned before, the e-WOM has an influential role in assessing the products and services from negative and positive comments on social media platforms, which has affected the consumers' purchase intentions (Saleem & Ellahi, 2017). It was found that e-WOM significantly affects consumers' purchase intentions (Chan & Ngai, 2011; See-To & Ho, 2014; Zhang et al., 2010).

### 1.1. IAM factors

Previous studies defined information credibility (IC) as consumers' perception of the word-of-mouth message on different internet platforms (Cheng & Zhou, 2010; Sweeney et al., 2012). For a message to be credible, it should be knowledgeable, logical, and honest to the recipients (Bataineh, 2015; Cheung et al., 2008). Thus, when consumers perceive a credible message, they are more likely to engage in it and believe it. The related literature shows that IC is crucial to encouraging consumers' buying intention (Abedi et al., 2020; Erkan, 2016; Yusuf et al., 2018).

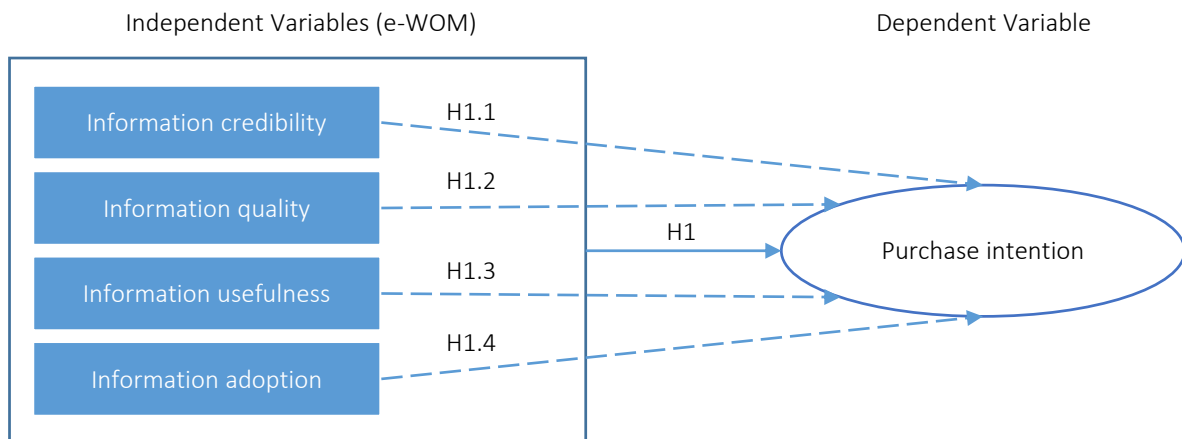
The literature review shows that information quality (IQ) is the power of the words' meaning of

the message (Yeap et al., 2014). In addition, IQ is the way of goods and services evaluation (Filiari & McLeay, 2014). In the context of the e-WOM message, IQ can be described as the convincing strength of a message, which is a vital factor of e-WOM in IAM (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Yusuf et al., 2018). Therefore, IQ is critical to consumers who intend to make their purchases online as it enables them to evaluate the message and decide accordingly. Existing literature has examined IQ as part of e-WOM on consumers' purchase intention and indicated that IQ significantly affects consumers' buying intention over social media (Bataineh, 2015; Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Erkan, 2016; Lee & Shin, 2014).

Previous research defined information usefulness (IU) as consumers' evaluation of the word-of-mouth message and the belief that this message can enhance the consumers' intention (Bailey & Pearson, 1983; Cheung et al., 2008; Erkan, 2016; Zeng & Seock, 2019). Moreover, the perception of useful WOM messages on social media channels can support the purchase intention (Abedi et al., 2020; Cheung et al., 2008). Thus, the more the e-WOM message is perceived as useful, the more it engages in consumers' purchase intention. Most studies found that IU significantly affects consumers' purchase intention (Abedi et al., 2020; Erkan, 2016; Lee & Koo, 2015; Liu & Zhang, 2010).

Information adoption (IA) is a psychological act that can influence people through online platforms, including social networks (Le-Hoang, 2020). Moreover, IA is defined as the act where people absorb the message they find online intentionally (Cheung et al., 2008). Thus, IA can also be defined as the process of connecting online information and the intention to purchase according to the message. Previous studies show that IA as a constant of e-WOM has the highest effect on consumers' purchase intention (Cheung et al., 2008; Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

To conclude, there has been a general agreement between a large number of works of literature that studied the effect of e-WOM on consumers' purchase intention over social media networks about the significance and the positive influence of IQ, IC, IU, and IA on purchase intention. This study aims to investigate the factors that influence the



**Figure 1.** Research model

consumers' e-WOM over Facebook and their impact on the purchase intention among Jordanian consumers. Therefore, according to the discussion above, the model, the hypothesis, and sub-hypotheses have been developed:

- $H_i$ : *E-WOM over Facebook impacts Jordanian consumers' purchase intention at a significant level of  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ .*
- $H_{1.1}$ : *Information credibility of e-WOM over Facebook impacts Jordanian consumers' purchase intention at a significant level of  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ .*
- $H_{1.2}$ : *Information quality of e-WOM over Facebook impacts Jordanian consumers' purchase intention at a significant level of  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ .*
- $H_{1.3}$ : *Information usefulness of e-WOM over Facebook impacts Jordanian consumers' purchase intention at a significant level of  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ .*
- $H_{1.4}$ : *Information adoption of e-WOM over Facebook impacts Jordanian consumers' purchase intention at a significant level of  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ .*

## 2. METHODOLOGY

A quantitative method was applied based on related studies (Erkan, 2016). This method was used to determine the opinion and behavior, as well as to generate a result in a numerical statistical form that can test the hypothesis discussed in the pre-

vious section. Moreover, it helps to explore the effect of the independent variables (IQ, IC, IU, and IA) on the dependent variable (purchase intention of the Jordanian consumers). The study uses the cross-sectional sampling method to collect responses from as many participants as possible in a short period. The questionnaire was prepared by an expert translator (the official language in Jordan) and was translated back into English (the original questionnaire language) to make sure that the Arabic translation was accurate (Brislin, 1970). The survey was built using the Google forms program in both languages (Arabic and English) and distributed online via several online communication channels like Facebook and WhatsApp, as recommended by many researchers of related studies (Troise et al., 2021). The online survey is the most convenient method to collect responses cost-effectively from an enormous number of people in a limited time, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, where a face-to-face approach is impossible. Finally, the questionnaire was sent to the professor in marketing for testing purposes.

### 2.1. Measurement, scaling, and data collection

The questionnaire was created based on Erkan (2016), Sutanto and Aprianingsih (2016), and Yusuf et al. (2018). It resulted in 22 items, as shown in Table 1. The items cover the subject of the study and can analyze the hypothesis in a way that is easy to answer and time-saving for the respondents. This study borrowed a five-point Likert scale



(Yusuf et al., 2018) (the marks were from 1 as strongly agree to 5 as strongly disagree). A 5-point scale is more likely to prescribe borders of an item as well as can explain the respondents' behavior (Finstad, 2010).

The items were divided into five sections. The first section is about IC evaluated in four items, as recommended by Prendergast et al. (2010). The second section is about the purchase intention with five items, as suggested by Jalilvand and Samiei (2012). The third section is for IQ, with five items as used by Park and Lee (2008). The fourth section is for IU, with four items referencing Cheung et al. (2008) and Cheung (2014). And the last section is for IA measured by four items mentioned by Cheung et al. (2008). Three extra questions were added to obtain the demographic information: gender, age, and educational level, to help make the sampling more convenient (A. Rahman & M. Rahman, 2020).

The sample size of the survey has targeted all people in Jordan with an active Facebook account and 15 years old and over. The questionnaire was collected from 327 participants; the sample size was chosen through judgmental sampling, so respondents were selected based on their experience (Etikan & Bala, 2017). Out of the 327 participants, 304 answered "Yes" to the filtering question "Do you have an active Facebook account?" and completed the questionnaire. Moreover, the valid data and results were downloaded and analyzed using SPSS (Yee, 2016). Therefore, the sample size is a valid reference to the rule of the minimum acceptable sample size, which is between 30 and 500. Also, according to Hill (1998), in multivariate studies like multiple regression, the minimum acceptable number of respondents must be at least ten times larger than the number of variables.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The online survey was used to collect the data from 304 participants who have an active Facebook account and are willing to share their experience of e-WOM and its influence on their purchase intention. The data from the demographic information is illustrated in Table 1. Thus, the data analysis and explanation can be easily in-

terpreted, as recommended by Al Khasawneh and Shuhaiber (2013). The demographic information involved gender, age, and educational level to help make the sampling more convenient for the study (A. Rahman & M. Rahman, 2020). Table 1 shows that the majority of the participants were females (68.4% of the research sample). The respondents' ages ranged between 15 and over, while the two highest percentages were between 15-25 years old with 37.5% and 26-35 years old with 27% of the sample size. The analysis of the respondents' education level showed that 66.1% hold a bachelor's certification.

**Table 1.** Demographic analysis

Variable	Category	Number	Percentage information N ( )
Gender	Female	208	68.4%
	Male	96	31.6%
Age	15-25	114	37.8%
	26-35	82	27%
	36-45	81	26.6%
	46-55	23	7.6%
	56-60 and above	4	1.3%
Educational	High school and less	27	8.9 %
	Bachelor's degree	201	66.1%
	Postgraduate degree	76	25.0%

Table 2 shows the descriptive analysis, which includes the means and standard deviation of the items obtained from 304 active Jordanian Facebook users.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics and reliability test

Variable	Items	Mean	St. Dev.	Alpha
Information credibility	4	3.175	0.649	.770
Information quality	5	2.851	0.537	.600
Information usefulness	4	2.693	0.648	.767
Information adaption	4	2.364	0.694	.846
E-WOM	17	2.771	0.501	.901
Purchase intention	22	2.449	0.657	.761

The study uses Cronbach's Alpha to measure the tool's reliability (A. Rahman & M. Rahman, 2020; Troise et al., 2021). Table 2 proves that all variables have Cronbach's Alpha value above the threshold of 0.50, which was proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Similarly, all constructs combined have Cronbach's Alpha of about 90%. Therefore, it is concluded that all constructs are reliable and valid.

**Table 3.** Correlations

Variable	Credibility	Quality	Usefulness	Adoption	Intention
Credibility	–	–	–	–	–
Quality	.544**	–	–	–	–
Usefulness	.448**	.628**	–	–	–
Adoption	.353**	.463**	.616**	–	–
Intention	.361**	.448**	.571**	.665**	–

Note: \*\* means the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis shows a significant positive correlation between variables, as shown in Table 3, where  $p < 0.01$ . When correlation coefficients take a value between 0.21 to 0.40, it shows a weak correlation; when it is between 0.41 to 0.60, it shows a moderate correlation, while a strong correlation takes a value from 0.61 to 0.80 (Hair et al., 2010). Table 3 shows that most of the relationships between the variables are moderate, while there is a strong relationship between IU and IQ, IA and IU, and purchase intention and IA. On the other hand, IC and IA have a weak correlation with customers' purchase intentions.

The study uses multiple regressions to examine the relationships between the four independent variables (IC, IQ, IU, and IA) and customers' purchase intention. According to Table 4, the value of  $R^2$  is 49.2%, which indicates that 49.2% of the total variation in the consumers' purchase intention could be described using the four constructs. The outcomes of the multiple regression analysis are shown in Table 4. Table 4 proved that the differences between the variables are statistically significant since  $R^2 = 0.492$ ,  $F = 72.302$   $p$ -value = 0.000, which shows that e-WOM significantly affects consumers' purchase intention.

As shown in Table 4, the overall significance of e-WOM shows that e-WOM significantly affects consumers' purchase intention ( $R^2 = 0.492$ ,  $F = 72.302$ , Sig. = 0.000), as the significant value for the coefficients of the regression analysis shows whether the relationship is statistically significant or not. Therefore, the significance level should be less than 0.05, as advocated by Sedgwick (2015).

This means that consumers in Jordan are influenced by the online messages and are likely to intend to buy or not because of the e-WOM; thus, the first hypothesis is accepted.

Table 5 demonstrated that there is an insignificant impact of IC on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.066$ ,  $t = 1.316$ , Sig. = 0.189). This means that the IC of e-WOM over Facebook does not influence Jordanian consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, the first sub-hypothesis,  $H_{1,1}$ , is rejected. Similarly, there is also an insignificant impact of IQ on purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.058$ ,  $t = 1.013$ , Sig. = 0.312,) which means that the IQ of e-WOM over Facebook does not influence Jordanian consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, the second sub-hypothesis,  $H_{1,2}$ , is rejected. On the other hand, it is found that there is a significant influence between IU and purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.204$ ,  $t = 3.374$ , Sig. = 0.001) and between IA and purchase intention ( $\beta = 0.489$ ,  $t = 9.251$ , Sig. = 0.001). This means that Jordanian consumers' purchase intention is affected by the word-of-mouth message over Facebook; when the message is useful and offers sufficient information, they are willing to engage in this message and adopt it. Thus, the third and fourth sub-hypothesis are both accepted.

This study aims to explore the factors that affect the e-WOM on Jordanian consumers' purchase intention over the Facebook platform. The model was examined quantitatively by using an online survey to collect data. The model of this study is theoretically based on existing literature that has used four variables of the information acceptance model (IAM): IC, IQ, IU, and IA. The find-

**Table 4.** Model summary (ANOVA<sup>a</sup>)

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	F	Sig
1	0.701 <sup>a</sup>	0.492	0.485	0.47170	72.302	0.000 <sup>b</sup>

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Intention, b. Predictors: (Constant), Adoption, Credibility, Quality, Usefulness.

**Table 5.** Coefficients

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.382	.162		2.361	.019
1 Credibility	.067	.051	.066	1.316	.189
Quality	.071	.070	.058	1.013	.312
Usefulness	.207	.061	.204	3.374	.001
Adoption	.463	.050	.489	9.251	.000

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Intention, b. Predictors: (Constant), Adoption, Credibility, Quality, Usefulness.

ings show that the research model is valid and can explain the effect of e-WOM on consumers’ purchase intention. Furthermore, the data analysis of  $H_{1,1}$  shows that IC does not influence the consumers’ purchase intention. Taking this point further, the findings of this study indicate that consumers are not influenced by the credibility of the e-WOM message on Facebook. This is consistent with a similar study conducted in Jordan (Mehyar et al., 2020).

According to Thomas et al. (2019), there is an increasing debate about false online messages because of consumers’ growing awareness regarding this topic, which highlights the message’s credibility. For example, some companies use manipulative word-of-mouth messages regarding their products and services to influence purchase behavior. However, this result contradicts a few studies that found a significant effect of information credibility on purchase intention (Abedi et al., 2020; Erkan, 2016; Yusuf et al., 2018).

The data analysis of  $H_{1,2}$  in this study indicates that IQ does not influence the consumers’ purchase intention. This finding contradicts the results of previous studies that found information quality significant (Bataneh, 2015; Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Erkan & Evan, 2016; Lee & Shin, 2014). This finding is new to e-WOM research and should be tested for future research. The results of data analysis of  $H_{1,3}$  and  $H_{1,4}$  show that IU and IA affect the consumers’ purchase intention significantly. This means that consumers in Jordan are influenced by the usefulness of the e-WOM message on Facebook and believe that it can enhance the perception of the message and they can validate their purchase intention. Similarly, it is found that the data analysis of  $H_1$  shows that e-WOM message on Facebook inspires the consumers of Jordan and improve the likelihood of message adoption. These results are consistent with Abedi et al. (2020), Cheung et al. (2008), Cheung and Thadani (2012), Erkan and Evan (2016), Lee and Koo (2015), and Liu and Zhang (2010).

## CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to explore the effect of e-WOM on Jordanian consumers’ purchase intention over Facebook. The study uses the information acceptance model (IAM), which includes the following independent sub-variable: information credibility, information usefulness, information quality, and information adoption, and the dependent variable is customers’ purchase intention. Data were collected online using a survey, and 304 responses were used for analysis. The findings show that e-WOM significantly affects Jordanian consumers’ purchase intention over Facebook. The information adoption has the strongest influence on Jordanian consumers’ purchase intention, then the information usefulness, while the information credibility and the information quality of Facebook were not having a significant effect on Jordanian consumers’ purchase intention. Therefore, the marketers have to support their customers to spread positive e-WOM about their brand, service, or product by asking satisfied consumers to write reviews, posts, or comments without pressuring consumers to do so and without any deceptive practice because such unethical acts may lead to further negative e-WOM.

Marketers may also provide channels for unsatisfied consumers to express their experiences and communicate promptly with them to solve their claims and encourage them to change their negative e-WOM.



Additionally, the findings of this study show that IC and IQ have no impact on Jordanian consumers' purchase intention. It is recommended that marketers may create forms for customers' attention and educate them on how to use them, so the reviews will have better quality and be perceived as credible information by the readers. This study focuses on e-WOM over Facebook. This can help companies understand how consumers engage in the e-WOM on business pages and take the consumers' reviews, comments, and posts into significant consideration, especially the negative ones.

Finally, despite the above findings, many limitations are recommended to be resolved in future research. First, this study has examined four variables related to IAM and has not examined any external variables. Therefore, it is recommended to include other factors that are related to e-WOM, which may influence the consumers' purchase intention. Second, a cross-sectional approach was applied to understand the consumers' purchase intention at one point in time. Thus, future studies are required to repeat the study by applying a longitudinal approach to explore the effect of e-WOM on purchase intention at multiple points in time. Third, the findings of this study are related to Jordan. Thus, conducting similar research in other settings is recommended to study individual consumers' purchase intentions in different cultures and regions. Finally, this paper explored the impact of e-WOM on all businesses in general. In contrast, in future studies, it is worth focusing on a specific industry to investigate all aspects that may affect e-WOM.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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Visualization: Shafiq Al-Haddad.

Writing – original draft: Lana Harb, Maisam Abdelfattah.

Writing – review & editing: Shafiq Al-Haddad, Abdel-Aziz Sharabati.

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