

EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH: EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS FROM ALGERIAN ONLINE SHOPPERS

Chems Eddine Boukhedimi*

Mouloud Mammeri University, Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria

Abstract

Using the Chi-square test, this paper seeks to investigate the influence of demographic factors on the electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) among 182 Algerian e-shoppers. An online survey was conducted between July 20th, 2023 and January 25th, 2024. The factors examined in this study are namely: gender, age ranges, academic level and marital status. The findings reveal that the independence between these factors and electronic word of mouth is confirmed.

The current study suggests paying more attention to the less frequent variables (i.e. Men; generations X & Z, married e-shoppers, and undergraduate participants). Moreover, it is welcomed to launch a face-to-face survey as a tool to increase the significance of the current research.

Keywords

e-shopping, e-consumer, e-WOM, Chi-square test, Algeria.

JEL Classification

M30, M31

Introduction

Technological achievements have boosted the number of consumers who search for information in a web-based environment. In this regard, the e-commerce has handed along e-WOM, formally known as electronic word of mouth communication (Goker & Ayar, 2020). Hence, Godes and Mayzlin (2004) point out that one of the most significant implications of the development of these digital communities is that it enables firms to pay attention to consumer-to-consumer conversations. Moreover, e-WOM on social media sites, focussing on Facebook, directly affects the consumers' purchase intention as it acts as a marketing tool to communicate and interact with the target audience (Alnsour, 2018). Thus, electronic word of mouth possesses a higher level of speed, convenience, and does not have the pressures compared to face-to-face interactions. (Phelps et al, 2004). In the choice-making process of individuals, a family

* Corresponding author, **Chems Eddine Boukhedimi** - chemsrko@gmail.com

member or a reliable friend might have a significant effect (Buttle and Groege, 2017; Stverkova et al, 2018; Bacik et al., 2019).

However, it is recommended to pay attention with the terms of positive and negative word of mouth. To clarify what online WOM is likely to accomplish, this study is dedicated to make an original contribution by highlighting and investigating the most significant factors influencing on the electronic word of mouth among Algerian online shoppers.

Research question:

Does the demographic factors impact on the e-WOM among Algerian e-shoppers?

Research hypotheses

This research paper outlines four hypotheses, which are presented below:

H.1. Both men and women are significantly different regarding the e-WOM;

H.2. Significant difference could be found between the generations X, Y and Z in terms of recommendations toward online shopping;

H.3. The undergraduate, graduate and post graduate e-shoppers are different regarding e-WOM;

H.4. Significant difference is expected to be identified between married and unmarried e-shoppers in terms of the e-WOM.

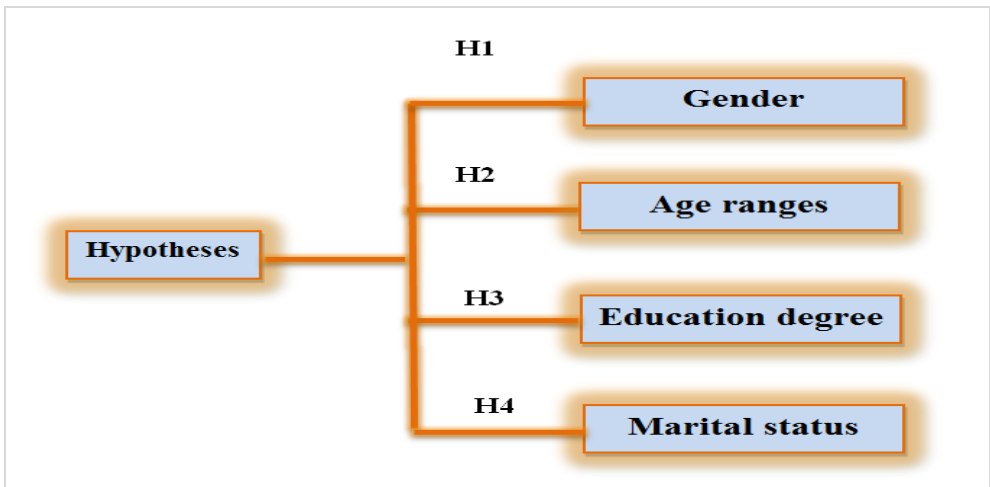


Figure no. 1: Study hypotheses
Source: Author's conceptualization

1. Review of the scientific literature

Before describing the specificity of electronic word of mouth communication, it is important to briefly dwell about e-commerce (online shopping) and word of mouth communication (Offline WOM).

1.1. e-commerce (e-shopping)

Online commerce is one of the main ways that information technologies are improving human life (Bartok,2018). It should be remembered that E-shopping has been increasing quickly during the Covid19 crisis as governments attempt to reduce disease dispersion by complying with necessary preventative measures, considering travel restriction, social distancing and physical store closure (Le, & Chu, 2022). Hence, E-commerce in short, is the process of shopping in the electronic marketplace that has transitioned away from being a situation where customers only pay the cost and buy the product (Goker & Ayar, 2020).

1.1.1. E-Commerce Types

According to Jain, Malviya and Arya (2021), there are typically six basic forms of electronic shopping, as illustrated in (figure no. 2) below:

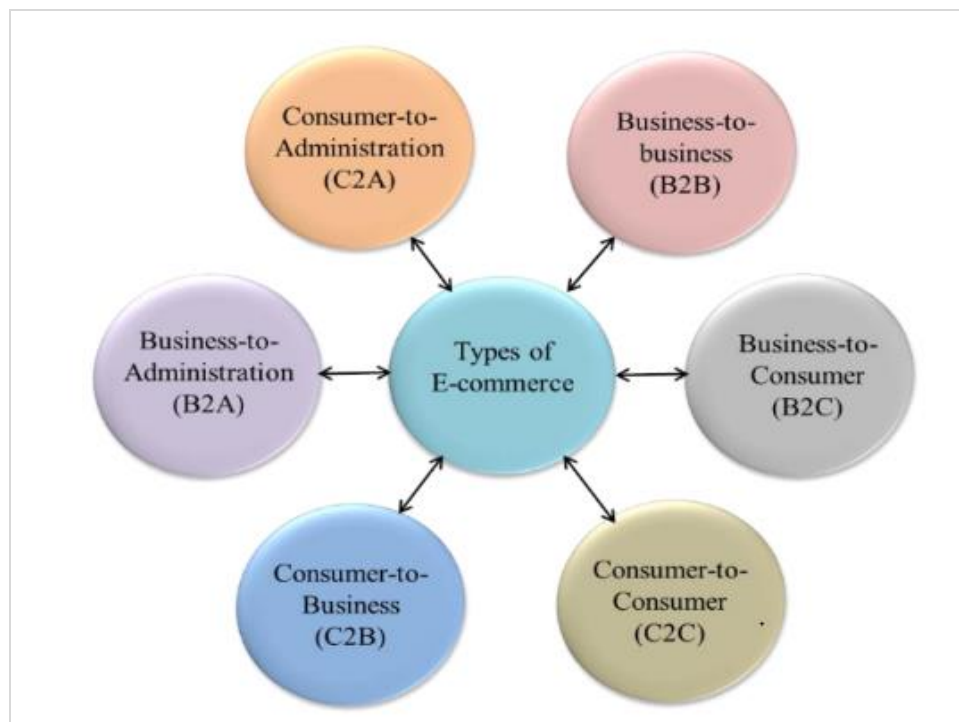


Figure no. 2: Schematic illustration of the types of online shopping depending on their characteristics

Source: Jain, Malviya and Arya (2021)

✚ Business-to-Business (B2B):

Web-based commerce (B2B), is a concept that belongs to all electronic products and/or services exchanged between enterprises. Overall, managers and traditional artificial import and export businesses use this process for electronic trading.

✚ Business-to-Consumer (B2C):

Companies and final client electronic companies link-up online-commerce businesses with consumers. It's therefore the e-shopping category, where traditional commerce normally takes place. Each of these cooperation styles could be simpler, more complicated and intermittent and need to be discontinued. This business type has grown significantly because of the emergence of the Internet, with a number of online stores and centers that offer visitors' products of various sorts, along with electronics devices, books, food, etc. In contrast to retail deals in conventional business, the shopper always has detailed information on perceptive products/services that are accessible, and it's widely accepted that it is possible to buy more cheaply without losing any individualized client experience, as well as enabling easy transaction and distribution.

✚ Consumer-to-consumer (C2C):

The form of Consumer-to-consumer (C2C) in e-commerce is used to refer to all electronic transactions of products or services between individuals. Typically, this deal is implemented by a third party that provides an online sale forum.

✚ Consumer-to-business (C2B):

The transaction between consumers and-business is largely developed in crowdsourcing-based businesses. In this case, customers may be able to sell their products or services.

✚ Business-to-administration (B2A):

This type corresponds to all internet transactions between companies and the government. It refers to of a many different programs, particularly in areas of legal attestation and records, healthcare, social care, taxation, etc.

✚ Consumer-to-administration (C2A):

The C2A principle relates to all online dealings between governments and individuals. This particular group consists of the following:

- Education: Providing and sharing information, use of e-learning, etc.
- Taxes: Filing tax returns, payments, etc.
- Communication for social Security: By sharing information, and making payments, etc.
- Health: Information related to illnesses, medical appointments, and payment of health services.

1.2. Word-of-mouth (WOM)

The word of mouth communication depends on consumers' positive or negative opinion about a brand, product, or service (Turgut, Akyol and Giray, 2016). Therefore, analysing and assessing the WOM is extremely important for assisting companies and consumers to make their decision (Chen, Luo & Wang, 2017). Moreover, the word-of-mouth (WOM) is a communication form of purchasing products or services between web-based retailers and e-consumers (Yang, Zhang & Wu 2010). Furthermore, Word of mouth communication is the most trusted method that consumers adopt in the process of making a purchase decision (Goker & Ayar, 2020). According to the definition of Gülmez (2011), word of mouth communication consists of consumers' expressing their positive or negative experiences about products or services purchase to other people. Additionally, Word of mouth communication (wom) is seen as the positive or negative form of verbal communication between people, representing potential customer groups such as family, friend circle and business environment. (Ennew, Ashish, and Derek, 2000). In another definition, Word of mouth communication describes people's mode of getting each other's opinion regarding a particular product or brand, in a way that does not necessarily include commercial content (Gülmez, 2010; Chankoson & Thabhiranrak, 2019). In addition to that, Yang, Zhang and Wu (2010) reported that word-of-mouth (WOM) is a communication method of purchasing products or services between online retailers and online consumers.

1.3. Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM)

The current advancement plays a powerful role in influence on society in some life dimensions as well as business (Izzah & Sutrisno, 2019). Therefore, with the growth of large scale internet access and the spread of social media, there certainly appears to be a wide-scaled prevalence of interest in e-WOM (Agarwal & Singh, 2018). Thus, Al-Haddad et al (2022) outlined that online WOM is one of the main strategies of marketing communication to persuade or drive customers to make a purchasing decision. Accordingly, purchase intention is a process that tends leading to purchase decisions when the e-WOM content is reliable, helpful, offers a satisfactory quality to consumers, and it is accepted by consumers. considering that e-WOM has a crucial impact in social media networks and directly affects consumers' buying intention. Facebook therefore is a primary website of e-WOM, where members have the opportunity as buyers to be involved with the business and can freely express their points of view towards products and services and their intents of purchasing (Wen & Aun, 2020).

Contrasted to traditional WOM, in the online-WOM the information circulates faster and the potential influence of electronic WOM on customers' purchase decision processes can be more significant than that of traditional WOM (Jeong & Jang, 2011). These developments over time have changed the way of word of mouth communication and resulted in the electronic model of word of mouth communication (Sarıışık & Özbay, 2012). Meanwhile, people can simply access the viewpoint of strangers, which was not easy in the traditional context (Agarwal & Singh, 2018). In this regard, electronic word-of-mouth communication is positive or negative responses issued by e-consumers on the Internet referring to any institution, product, brand

or company (Özbük & Aksoy, 2017). Furthermore, the idea of online word-of-mouth had emerged during the mid-1990s, when the Internet changed the way consumers came into contact with each other (Chu, 2021). In this way, several studies were emphasized the subject of e-WOM (Hennig-Thurau et al, 2004; Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Sarıuşık & Özbay, 2012; East, Atkin, Bateman, Clark, & Dolwani, 2017; Yang, 2017; Agarwal & Singh, 2018; Verma & Yadav, 2021; Chu, 2021).

Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler, (2004) noted that online word-of-mouth appears in the for positive or negative comment posted from future or actual customers about a product or services offered in the company, which is freely available to institutions and a wide range of people through the Internet. Furthermore, one of the major benefits of online WOM is that people can obtain information at their own gait, and that the electronic form can allow the information to be preserved and unchanged, when transmitted from one user to another (Sun, Youn, Wu and Kuntaraporn, 2006; Gurbuz, Kilic, & Yegin, 2017). The electronic WOM, in the other manner, is the decision-making system of individuals by reviewing the comments and suggestions made by other online consumers about the product and brand (Goker & Ayar, 2020). From the other side, according to the study research of East et al (2017), positive and negative word of mouth (PWOM, NWOM), are relevant to the receiver's willingness to decide whether to buy or not products or services. Consequently, positive word of mouth (PWOM) has two implications, the first is the client acquisition, and the second is reflected in the client's retention. Despite that, the negative word of mouth (NWOM) seems to have more than four times as much impact in stopping the acquisition of new buyers as it has on decreasing buyer retention.

2. Research methodology

This study mixed qualitative and quantitative methods. For the qualitative method, it was driven to focus on the conceptual frameworks, which are primarily based on e-commerce, offline word of mouth and online word of mouth, as it was addressed across the conceptual part through reviewing articles from Google Scholar, Science Direct and Research Gate. In addition to that, specific keywords were explored, such as: e-commerce, e-WOM, and WOM. Moreover, the quantitative method was used to examine the suggested hypotheses. In this instance, this research was performed using an online survey and the Chi square test.

2.1 Sampling

The sampling unit was: consumers who have purchased products online at least once from Algeria. Given that the total number of users of e-commerce in Algeria was 14.05 million in 2022 (Saifaddin, 2023), the sample size ($n=182$) is representative as per the central limit theorem (CLT), as it was referred to (Chang et al, 2006; Polya, 1920; Johnson, 2004; Tomothy, 2005; Berenson et al, 2012; Naval, 2013; El Sherif, 2021; Nair, Wierman & Zwart, 2022; Boukhedimi et al, 2023; Sriram, 2023), Where they stated that as long as one has a sufficiently large sample size. (e.g, $n=30$). Hence, the sampling distribution of the mean will be normally distributed

2.2 Data collection

A questionnaire has been chosen as a data collection method, where the surveyed are asked with questions related to online purchasing and their satisfaction. The online survey’s period started on July 20, 2023, and ended on January 25, 2024, and the sampling method was probability (random mode). Then, the collected data were entered into SPSS software V26 in order to enable the examination of study hypotheses

3 Results and discussion

3.1 Disruptive statistics

3.1.1 Sociodemographic statistics

On the count of gender, 64.5% of the sample was women, and men represented 35.5 % of the sample surveyed. However, looking at the count by age category, respondents are mostly from Generation Y (83.9%) and only 16.1 % from Generation X. Additionally, the majority of online shoppers (93.5%) in our sample are graduates and postgraduates (i.e., bachelor, master and PhD degrees). While the rest were undergraduates. On the other side, considering the marital status, 67.7 % of the sample study wasn’t married, and 25.8 % were married with children. However, there were 6.5 % of respondents who have children.

Table no. 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variables	Frequency (n)	Rate (%)
Gender	182	100 %
Men	79	43.4 %
Women	103	56.6 %
Age	182	100 %
Generation X	9	4.9%
Generation Y	140	76.9 %
Generation Z	33	18.1 %
Academic degree	182	100 %
Graduate/post-graduate	166	91.2 %
Undergraduate	16	8.8 %
Marital status	182	100 %
Married with children	10	5.5 %
Married without children	9	4.9 %
Unmarried	163	89.6 %

Source: Survey data

3.2. Measuring the impact of demographic factors on the “electronic word of mouth”:

The Chi-square test was explored to investigate the independence between the dependent variable (e-WOM) which is illustrated with the question of whether the respondents follows the comments and takes into the consideration the suggested recommendations, and the independent variable which is formed of demographic factors (Gender, age ranges, educational level, and marital status).

- **Null hypothesis (H₀):** Correlation isn't significant if p-value > 0.05
- **Alternative hypothesis (H₁):** Correlation is significant if p-value < 0.05

Table no. 2. Results of Chi square test of independency

Factors \ Results	Gender	Age ranges	Educational level	Marital status
<i>p</i> -value	0.382	0.078	0.833	0.998

Source: Survey results

From (table no. 2) above, it can provide comments on the results obtained. In this way, an independence relation is confirmed between the demographic factors and the online word of mouth. On the other hand, there is no significant impact of these factors on the e-WOM.

Further, the cross tabulations reflected in the table below, help to understand the meaning of the Chi square test results. Thus, it is evident to outline that most of the men and women are affected by the online word of mouth. Moving to the other demographical variable, the majority of all age cohorts pay a particular attention to the comments posted through social networks. Besides, the academic level doesn't impact on the e-WOM. Finally, it can be confirmed that there are no significant differences between married with or without children and unmarried e-buyers regarding the purchase decision that is based on e-WOM.

Additionally, it should be noted that one missed response was observed for each variable (n=182).

Table no. 3. The cross tabulation of the study

Variables		Yes	No	Total	Σ
Gender	Men	69	10	79	181
	Women	94	8	102	
Age ranges	Generation X	7	2	9	181
	Generation Y	130	9	139	
	Generation Z	26	7	33	
Educational level	Postgraduates /graduates	148	17	165	181
	Undergraduates	15	1	16	
Marital status	Married with children	9	1	10	181
	Married without children	8	1	9	
	Unmarried	146	16	162	

Source: Survey data

Based on the findings of this study, (table no.4) summarizes the results, in which the analysis reveals that all hypotheses were rejected.

Table no. 4. Study result

Hypotheses	Variables	(p-value)	Relationship	results
H1	Gender	0.382	Independence	Rejected
H2	Age ranges	0.078	Independence	Rejected
H3	Educational level	0.833	Independence	Rejected
H4	Marital status	0.998	Independence	Rejected

Source: Survey results

Conclusions

This paper presents an analysis that offers insights into the demographic factors influencing electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) in Algeria. Overall, the results indicate that there are no significant differences between men and women (p-value: 0.382), age groups (p-value: 0.078), academic levels (p-value: 0.833), or marital status (p-value: 0.998). Consequently, the findings of this study could be considered useful to scientific research.

In line with the study limit, the survey was performed through an online method using Google Form. Therefore, it is recommended that future research be expanded with the involvement of face-to-face surveys to increase the rate of reliability and make the study more meaningful. Another issue is that the study participants showed concentration above some factors (for example, unmarried, women, generation Y, graduates, and postgraduates). Therefore, it is welcomed to take into consideration these points through other research by incorporating the missed characteristics.

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