

Predicting customers' online word of mouth intention: The theory of planned behavior applied to understand youth Saudi social media behaviors

Ahmed Suhail Ajina^{a*}

^aPrince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia

CHRONICLE

ABSTRACT

Article history:

Received: April 16, 2019

Received in revised format: April 28 2019

Accepted: May 14, 2019

Available online:

May 14, 2019

Keywords:

Word of Mouth

Online Word of Mouth

OWoM

Theory of Planned Behavior

Saudi Arabia

Word of mouth (WOM) is the oldest, yet still a very common form of marketing. Over the years, it has undergone under significant transformation as a result of the changing business strategies and rapid improvement in technology. Today, WOM has gained traction as a very effective and economic form of advertisement. With the increase in the use of internet technology and use of social media for marketing, online word of mouth (OWoM) is significantly changing the sphere. Today, many marketers prefer to use OWoM through platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for marketing their products. However, consumer's behaviors and attitudes are found to strongly influence OWoM. Using the Theory of Planned Behavior, the study explored the factors that predict the use of the OWoM marketing among youths in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Data were collected from 440 samples using structured questionnaires and analyzed using PLS-SEM. The results have succeeded in showing the complex relationship between attitude, behavioral control and subjective norms; the underlying beliefs, and the intention towards the OWoM.

© 2019 by the authors; licensee Growing Science, Canada

1. Introduction

Trade and commerce, which is as old as humanity, has been on a continuous state of transformation (Humphrey, 1985; Jones, 1976). Since the late trade and commerce has become more complex, many of its salient characteristics have had remained stable. A classic example to this is advertisement. In the earlier stages, advertisement was solely in the form of “word of mouth” (WoM) (Anderson, 1998). The owners of goods and services for which they wished to exchange with others would spread the information about their merchandise by WoM (Kozinets et al., 2010). Although such forms of advertisement seem primitive, it has remained relevant over the years and is still practiced today (Söderlund & Rosengren, 2007). WoM has the potential to shape customers' attitudes and perceptions, which in turn could influence product adoption (Charo et al., 2015; Duana et al., 2008).

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: a.ajina@psau.edu.sa (A. S. Ajina)

Though, the concept of WoM has been in existence over a period of time, its platforms and strategies have undergone significant change. However, advertisements have undergone significant transformations over the past few decades. In the 20th century, much of the advertisements were done via the press and print media (Uchenova & Starykh, 2002). Studies have found WoM to have strong positive relationship with customers' level of trust (Bergeron, et al., 2003) and the quality of the services offered (Parasuraman, et al., 1988). It was also found to be associated with the level of consumer satisfaction (Anderson, 1998), the perceived value (Hartline & Jones, 1996; Buttyán et al., 2010) as well as the intention to purchase (Crocker, 1986).

By the turn of the century, though the use of the press and print media remained popular among many advertisers and online-based advertisement assumed precedence over all the other forms (Pires et al., 2006; Tiago & Verissimo, 2014). The growth of online advertisements has been influenced mainly by the internet, and smartphone technology (Bosomworth, 2015; Weinberg et al., 2015). Before the development of smartphone technology, much of the online advertisement could only be accessed through PCs or laptops. Indeed, not every household owned PC or laptop. With the invention of the tablets and smartphones; and their relative affordability, the online advertisement has experienced unprecedented growth. Another complementary factor to the growth of the online advertisement is social media accounts such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter (Alalwan et al., 2017; Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Through these social media, social interaction has grown significantly, and marketers have extensively used the business opportunity presented by social media. Today, almost every major corporation has a dedicated page on at least one of the social media account.

Many advertisers have increasingly preferred social media accounts for marketing their businesses because of their capacity for customer interactions (Dahl, 2018). Facebook, for example, has an interactive segment in which the customers can communicate with representatives of the firms. This interactive forum also provides a crucial source of review for other customers who are unable to access necessary information about a product from other alternative sources. Mercedes Benz, for example, has a Facebook page, with more than one million followers in which it posts its new car models from time to time, and gets reviews from customers. Such feedbacks have been very instrumental, especially in the development of the Mercedes economic model (Parsons, 2013), which is a break from the traditional high-end business strategy that the company has been engaging for a long time. The present study explores the online word of mouth (OWoM) among the youths in Saudi Arabia, in the context of the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 2002). OWoM is a form of advertisement and promotion strategy which primarily relies on customer reviews, communication to spread the news about a product (Bughin et al., 2010). Hennig-Thurau, et al. (2004, p. 39) defined it as:

“any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet”.

A number of researchers (e.g. Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006) have found OWoM to be highly persuasive. As against marketer-generated information, OWoM is more desired by the consumers (Jha & Ye, 2016). Due to its utility and multiple advantages it is widely used by marketers. However, the strategies engaged by many businesses in using OWoM are different. A favorite OWoM strategy entails using celebrities to talk about products and services, particularly in their social network platforms such as Twitter, and Facebook. Since most of the celebrities always have many followers, getting them talking about a given product or service is likely to attract the attention of many of the followers, who are likely to review, or seek more information about it, and probably carry on with the talk. Through this strategy, the information about the goods or service spreads much faster, yet with very little effort, and resources by the advertising firm (Rosario et al., 2016).

Other than the use of celebrity endorsement, another popular method of using OWoM advertisement is getting people talking about a given product or service in a firm's dedicated online platform. This is very common on Twitter. Some companies pay bloggers to tweet and re-tweet about a given product until it trends. This certainly captures the attention of many online customers. Several modifications can be used as long as the goal of getting people talking online, about a product or service is achieved. The success of online-based advertisements and promotion strategy are primarily dependent on the demographic characteristics of the users. Older generations such as the baby boomers are less receptive to technological changes compared with the younger generation (Ooi & Tan, 2016; Sotiriadis & Van, 2013).

Countries in the Middle East and North America represent a vibrant, youthful generation that is very receptive to technological advancement and acceptance as well. According to Statista (2019), the number of consumers using smartphones in Saudi Arabia in 2018 was estimated at 21.87 million. The number is expected to grow and reach approximately 24 million users by the year 2022. Smartphone use represents the largest platform for social media users through user-friendly applications that are compatible with the phones operating system. The increased popularity of telemedicine and other medical phone applications in the country is yet another indication of how widely the smartphone and internet technology is used in the country. This large number of smartphone users in Saudi Arabia represents yet, an essential platform for online word of mouth advertisement and promotion. The advertisement strategy is even favorable especially for the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Saudi Arabia; which represents the majority of the business enterprises (Al-Somali et al., 2015). Given the significance of the OWoM advertisements and promotion, the high use of smartphone and the internet technology in Saudi Arabia, and the importance of the advertisement strategy for SMEs, it is important that the effectiveness of this strategy among youths in Saudi Arabia is understood.

The logic for using TPB is particularly important given that internet technology is the primary determinant of the advertisement strategy. The role of the youth in accepting, adopting and diffusing technology is an important factor in the current study. It is expected that the younger generation, who are the main focus of the study, have a positive attitude, and behavioral intention towards OWoM advertisement strategy. Caution needs to be exercised as sometimes, even the WoM strategy may backfire, especially in the event of the content of the product or service being discovered by the consumers to be false. An assumption of the study is that the respondents would provide information for successful OWoM advertisements. To effectively gain insight into the study, the study proposes a quantitative form of research. The literature review section illustrates the theoretical framework – TPB, as well as the studies that have previously done about the topic.

2. Literature review

This section has two parts. The first part provides the theoretical framework on which the study is designed, and the second part provides a review of previous relevant studies. Review of literature is imperative to establish the existing study gap that needs to be bridged. It also facilitates the researcher to improve on the methodology, by considering the methods that have been used by the previous researchers. This will also facilitate in exploring the strengths and weaknesses of earlier studies and establishing better methods.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

In this study, the leading theory used is the TPB (Ajzen, 2002). An important question in understanding the theory of expected behavior is what informs consumer's purchase decision for particular products and services? A common observation is that every consumer has different tastes and preferences. However, even for the necessary goods and services, there seems to be some underlying determinants of purchase decisions, other than the economic factors. In exploring TPB, it is essential to understand the origin of the theory, and the transformation that it has undergone. The Theory of Integrated Information (TII) was

the first to be postulated that explained the factors that influence consumers' decision to purchase (Oizumi et al., 2014). According to this theory, the information that a consumer has about a particular product or service is important in determining his/her reaction/behavior, which consequently leads to the consumer's purchase decision.

Associated to the TII is the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). Fishbein (1979) developed the TRA as an enhancement of the TII by including the behavioral intent factor, alongside other personal characteristics such as attitudes, and beliefs. As such, the choice by an individual to purchase a given product is not only influenced by his/her attitude, but also the expected outcome from the purchase of the product, or service. TRA was yet again improved by the authors, and later on TPB was developed. The latter is much similar to the former, except for the addition of the underlying factors that are posited as significant determinants of behavioral intent. According to TPB, an individual's behavioral intention is influenced largely by subjective norms (Ajzen, 2002). A subjective norm is considered as that factor which influences an individual, because of its otherwise effect on the larger society. For example, an individual's decision to participate in an OWoM might be influenced by the actions of his/her peer. Since the youths are avid users of the internet, it is generally expected that an individual youth will have a positive attitude towards the internet, not because he/she enjoys, or appreciate the technology, but because the majority of the peers have a positive attitude towards the same. Subjective norm also informs the reason why the older generations are not active on many social media. Another important element of TPB is the perception of an individual to control his/her behavior, which is otherwise referred to as behavioral control (Ajzen, 2002). Therefore, the behavioral intention, which is mainly informed by the individual's attitude and beliefs, determines his/her behavioral intention. Conversely, the behavioral intention is influenced by subjective norms, and a person's perceived behavioral control. The interactions of these elements consequently inform the individual's action, which in this case is purchase decision. Fig. 1 shows the TPB (Ajzen, 2002).

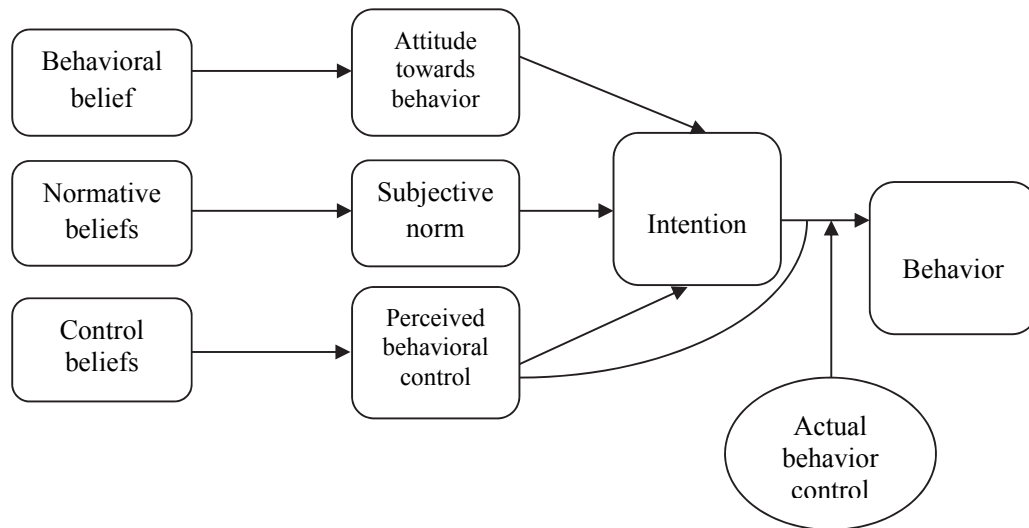


Fig. 1. Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 2002)

As shown in Fig. 1, an individual's attitudes towards a product or service are influenced by perceived behavioral beliefs. The subjective norms are influenced by normative belief, while control beliefs affect perceived behavioral control. The interactions of subjective norms, behavioral control, and attitude determine the intention.

2.2. Review of Relevant Literature

Traditional WoM, which was through face-to-face conversations (Ajina, 2019; Nelson et al., 2005) had played pivotal role in consumers' purchase decisions through influencing their choices (Charo, et al., 2015). WoM has been a matter of academic discussion as early as in the 1950s and has been subjected to empirical examinations (Engel et al., 1969; Katz & Lazarfed, 1955). With internet in general and mobile internet becoming widespread, the focus has shifted to OWoM. Considerable literature has now accumulated about OWoM (Ajina, 2019). They have enabled us to have fairly in-depth knowledge about the various facets of the constructs. OWoM facilitates consumers in interacting socially and in the exchange of experiences online (Blazevic et al. 2013; King, et al., 2014).

Huete-Alcocer (2017) explored consumer behavior concerning OWoM and the traditional WoM. The study employed a meta-analytical research design. The results of the study revealed that traditional WoM is likely to be preferred by customers than the OWoM because of the reliability, and privacy. It was also reported that consumers preferred OWoM advertisement due to its speed. The internet connects a lot of people, and enables people to interact almost simultaneously. Additionally, the results reported that people who receive WoM information are most likely to corroborate the information through the OWoM. According to this assertion, consumers get reviews from multiple users of a product or service. The behavioral intention, in this case, is informed by behavioral beliefs of the consumers, for which information should rather be obtained from multiple sources instead of a single source.

In a more application oriented study, Prasad et al. (2017) explored the association between social media, OWoM, and consumers purchase decision. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The researchers collected data from a sample total of 252 respondents. A structural equation model was used to determine the link between the study variables. Findings of the study reported that social media was positively associated with the consumer purchase decision. The results also reported that the consumer trust on the social media is a significant mediating factor between the relationship of social media and purchase decision. The consumer trust on the social media is most likely predicted by subjective norms, especially the peer behavioral actions towards the social media. OWoM has also been classified as a form of behavioral indicator that occurs as a direct and immediate consequence of the emotional attitudes of the consumer, which happens due to the occurrence of repeat purchases by peers and family members (Verhagen et al., 2013). This buying behavior has also been linked to the causal relationships that exist in traditional marketing (Duan, et al., 2008). A study by Raju et al. (2018), which used PLS, found significant positive influence of website agility, attractiveness and usability on EWOM.

The positive relationship between OWoM and sales have been empirically recorded in a host of studies (Li & Hitt, 2008; Liu, 2006). Its significant influence on the organizational decision making process has also been recorded by Verhagen et al. (2013). Further, effective management of positive OWoM would reduce promotional expenses and in the creation of "community support" for the brands (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). Substantial evidences are available that establishes that products with sizable online reviews go on to attract further reviews (Moe & Schweidel, 2012) and stimulating enhanced sales.

Pham (2016) explored the determinants of WoM concerning normative, and information cues. The normative cues included review ratings, and review credibility, while the information cues included review valance, the strength of the review, credibility of the source, and prior knowledge of the online WoM content. The results of the study reported that information cues were a significant determinant of online WoM. Also, no significant correlation was reported between the online WoM and normative cues. The credibility of the source of information is synonymous to the trust in the social media as reported by Prasad et al. (2017). Similar findings are also confirmed by Huete-Alcocer (2017) who reported that many customers are likely to corroborate even the information received through WoM, and from a known source. To this extent, a salient factor that is emerging from the three studies is information credibility; whether WoM is online, or offline. Pham (2016) also reported that age difference is yet an important

determinant of trust, and use of the OWoM; with the younger population forming the majority of the online word of mouth users.

López and Sicilia (2014) used a meta-analytical research approach to establish factors that determine OWoM. Similar to the findings by Pham (2016), the results also reported that source credibility, valance, and information volume were the significant determinants of consumers' preference and trust in word of mouth. Additionally, the consumer's experience with the use of the internet was also found to be a significant determinant of the online word of mouth. Again, source credibility is confirmed as an essential factor that predicts the use of the online WoM. This information also confirms the reason why sometimes this marketing approach fails as a tool. In most cases, lack of credibility of the information source is a major course of failure of much online word of mouth. It also explains the reason why many people who received offline word of mouth will corroborate the same from the OWoM. Akyüz (2013) explored the predictors of OWoM users. Based on a sample of 251 respondents the study confirmed that source credibility was an important determinant of OWoM. Additionally, the study also reported that customer experience with the use of the internet, and susceptibility to interpersonal influence are also strong predictors of OWoM. Vulnerability to interpersonal influence in this regard is representative of the subjective norms and behavioral control as posited in the theory of planned behavior.

A few studies have also been conducted in Saudi Arabia about OWoM. The following sections provide a fair review about the studies conducted in Saudi Arabia in this regard.

2.3. Studies in Saudi Arabia

Studies about OWoM in Saudi Arabia are still in the infancy stage. However, keeping track with the global trend, it is indeed growing at rapid pace (Ajina, 2019; Al Mana & Mirza, 2013; Auf, et al., 2016). The study by AlMana and Mirza (2013) examined online WOM on purchase decision of consumers in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study used a meta-analytic research approach and reported that few studies indeed had been done in connection to OWoM and its determinants in Saudi Arabia. Findings reported that quite a large number of Saudi Arabian citizens use OWoM for product and service review. The important determinants included age, experience with the use of the internet, the credibility of the source, and pre-existing knowledge about the product. Further, most of the respondents used the OWoM to review information on durable products such as cars, and phones, and other machinery.

Auf et al. (2016) studied the link between WOM and the buying behavior of consumers in Saudi Arabia. The study included religious orientation as a mediating factor. Findings suggested that religious orientation was a significant mediator for the link between the electronic WOM, and the use of social media as a platform for OWoM. The influence of religion in this respect can be considered as a subjective norm since it influences the society's perception more than the individual. Recently Ajina (2019) studied consumers' perceived value of social media marketing. The study identified the role of perceived value on online consumer behavior on OWoM and behavioral loyalty. Using a sample of 525 social media users, the study addressed aspects related to perceived value of social media marketing, OWoM and behavioral loyalty on various online channels used in marketing.

2.4. Knowledge Gap

Based on the review, it is evident that only a few related studies have been done in the Saudi Arabian context about OWoM and its determinants. Further, most of these studies have provided inconclusive results. Studies exploring the dimensions of TPB are also scarce. The present study intends to bridge this gap in literature and provide crucial information about OWoM. It is expected that the findings of the study will have significant practical implications for marketers.

3. Hypotheses Development

For the present study the TPB (Ajzen, 2002) is critical in hypothesis development. The proposed relationships as presented in the model forms the foundation in which the hypotheses were developed. The behavioral belief is proposed as the underlying factors that influence the customer's attitude. The attitude, in turn, influences the customers' intention towards the OWoM. The hypothesis developed from the mentioned relationship explored three factors – behavioral beliefs, attitude, and intention. Therefore, the three hypotheses are developed from this proposed relationship are (See Fig. 2):

- H₁: There is a positive association between customers' behavioral beliefs toward the online word of mouth and their attitude toward the OWoM.
 H₂: There is a positive correlation between customers' attitude toward the OWoM and their intention toward the OWoM.

A similar procedure is followed for the second set of hypotheses. The study proposes that there is a correlation between normative beliefs and subjective norms and that the interactions between these two influence the customers' intention towards OWoM. Also, the subjective norm independently affects the intention. The hypotheses are framed as follows:

- H₃: There is a positive correlation between customers' normative beliefs toward the OWoM and their subjective norm toward the OWoM.
 H₄: There is a positive correlation between customers' subjective norm toward the OWoM and their intention toward the OWoM.

A similar procedure is used yet, to develop the hypotheses for the perceived control beliefs, behavioral control, and customers' intention. The hypotheses are:

- H₅: There is a positive association between customers' control beliefs toward the OWoM and their perceived behavioral control toward the OWoM.
 H₆: There is a positive correlation between customers' perceived behavioral control toward the OWoM and their intention toward the OWoM.

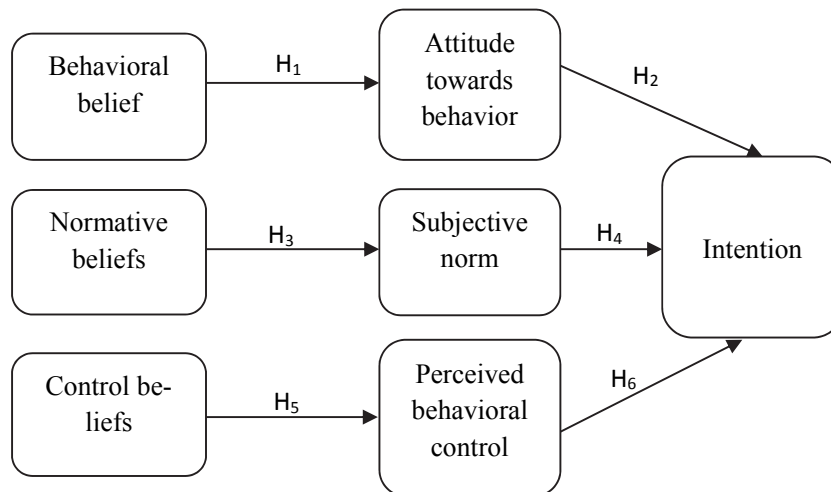


Fig. 2. Default model

4. Methodology

4.1. Data collection tool

Data for the study was gathered through a set of questionnaires, which were administered online through Google Docs. Two questionnaires were used to collect the required data (Ardian et al., 2018; Barnett et al., 2004). The behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs were assessed using Barnett et al. (2004) and attitudes, perceived behavior control, subjective norms, and intention were measured using Ardian et al., (2018). Since response to all the items were made compulsory for the respondents, no responses were left un-responded, and as such no response warranted rejection. The details of the questionnaires used for the collection of the data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Data collection tools

No	Questionnaire	No of items	Cronbach α of the original study	Cronbach α in the current study
1	Behavioral beliefs	7	0.66	.888
2	Behavioral attitude	2	0.73	.874
3	Intention to use OWoM	5	0.91	.956
4	Normative belief	3	0.71	.895
5	Subjective norm	3	0.63	.974
6	Control belief	3	0.90	.920
7	Behavioral control	2	0.84	.888

The Cronbach α standard prescribed for having internal consistency is .70 (Nunnally, 1978). It can be observed that all the tools exhibited high Cronbach α , denoting their reliability. In addition to this the demographic information of the respondents like gender, age, etc. were also collected.

4.2. Sampling

A scientific sampling is essential for the conduct of a professional empirical research. Questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. Since the study intends to use PLS software, certain other stipulations need to be met regarding minimum number of samples to have accurate calculation. Hair et al. (2013) suggests a minimum of 200 samples to generate valid results on PLS. Further, Levine et al. (1999) are of the opinion that 385 samples are essential to conduct a proper research for a population exceeding one million (to obtain 95% confident level with 5% standard errors, to achieve a SD of 5 and Z score of 1.96). With due respect to these standards, and to maintain a wide spread of samples, data were collected from a total of 440 Saudi youngsters. The questionnaire was administered online to collect data. Since this method was adopted for administering the questionnaires, there was no missing data and no responses warranted rejection. Care was taken to see that only data was collected from respondents below the age of 35 years. The demographics of the sample are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographics of the Sample

	Particulars	Number	Per Cent
Gender	Male	275	62.5
	Female	165	37.5
	Total	440	100
Age (in years)	Less than 24	166	37.7
	25 and above	274	62.3
	Total	440	100

5. Results and Discussions

5.1. Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive statistics of the sample are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics

No	Variable/Factor	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
1	Behavioral beliefs	1.00	5.00	3.41	0.2465
2	Behavioral attitude	1.00	5.00	3.06	0.4291
3	Intention to use OWoM	1.00	5.00	3.71	0.3794
4	Normative belief	1.00	5.00	3.69	0.7197
5	Subjective norm	1.00	5.00	3.00	0.4408
6	Control belief	1.00	5.00	3.58	0.3836
7	Behavioral control	1.00	5.00	2.71	0.3922

5.2. Measurement model

There is a definite need to exercise caution in the process of arriving at the appropriate model. The need for care increases when it is to be for a causal model like that in the present instance. Such a mode attempts in explaining how the change(s) in a particular variable lead to resultant change(s) in one or more other variables. The causal inferences for the present study were arrived at based on the three assumptions including covariation, the existence of probably no spurious relationships and temporal precedence. Great care was taken in the present study with respect to all the three assumptions. The measurement model is presented at Fig. 2.

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of the summated scales. The convergent and discriminant validities, as well as the internal consistency reliability can be assessed based on the measurement model (Ringle et al., 2014; Phahle, 2014). The Average Variance Extracted (AVEs) provides cues regarding convergent validities. The values of AVEs need to exceed the minimum threshold value of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2009). In the present case, the values of all AVEs are well ahead the prescribed threshold value. It can be seen from Table 4 that the AVE ranges between .862 and .901 – well above the required threshold value. Further, it can be observed from the table that the composite reliability (CR) ranges between .939 and .964. All the CR values are very high, and meet the stipulated threshold limits. As stated elsewhere the Alphas also exceed threshold value of .70 (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Summated Scales

No	Variables/	Average Variance Ex-	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
1	Behavioral beliefs	0.886	0.874	0.939
2	Behavioral attitude	0.896	0.888	0.945
3	Intention to use OWoM	0.862	0.920	0.949
4	Normative belief	0.844	0.956	0.964
5	Subjective norm	0.901	0.895	0.948
6	Control belief	0.897	0.888	0.946
7	Behavioral control	0.888	0.947	0.959

Table 5 presents the data pertaining to the discriminant validity. It can be observed from the table that the square root of AVE (diagonal values) all the constructs are larger than the correlations. This denotes highly acceptable levels of reliability as well as both convergent and discriminant validities (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 5
Discriminant validity

	Attitude Towards Behaviour	Behavior Beliefs	Control Beliefs	Intention	Normative Beliefs	Perceived Behaviour Control	Subjective Norm
Attitude Towards Behaviour	0.941						
Behavior Beliefs	-0.465	0.947					
Control Beliefs	-0.211	-0.292	0.928				
Intention	0.137	-0.261	-0.067	0.919			
Normative Beliefs	0.016	-0.258	0.398	0.009	0.949		
Perceived Behaviour Control	-0.436	0.593	-0.334	-0.241	-0.316	0.947	
Subjective Norm	-0.045	0.253	-0.173	0.015	-0.252	0.275	0.942

Notes:

1. The diagonal value is square root of AVE
2. Non-diagonal values are inter-construct correlations

5.3 Structural Model Assessment

Since PLS does not allow interval estimation, it calls for bootstrapping (Peng & Lai, 2012). This is required to calculate the various path coefficients, the statistical significances and various other associated parameters. Bootstrapping helps in assessing the variability of the sample data and in assessing the precision of the various estimates. This also has the advantage of being transparent, and its assumptions have the quality of being nonrestrictive too. Table 6 presents the path coefficients derived from the PLS analysis. The paths that represented the influence of Behaviour benefits on attitude towards behaviour (H₁); Normative beliefs and subjective norms (H₃); Control beliefs and perceived behaviour control (H₅); as well as Perceived behavior control and intension (H₆) were found to be negative and significant. Thus these null hypotheses that there is no relationship between the variables have been rejected. The paths that represent Attitude towards behavior and intension; and Subjective norm and intension did not have any significant relationship as the p values were high (Table 6).

Table 6
Path Coefficients

Hypotheses	Path Coefficients	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	t – Value	P Value
H1	Behavior Beliefs → Attitude Towards Behavior	-0.465	0.042	11.045	0.000
H2	Attitude Towards Behavior → Intension	0.032	0.061	0.527	0.598
H3	Normative Beliefs →subjective norm	-0.252	0.03	8.405	0.000
H4	Subjective norm → Intension	0.085	0.053	1.618	0.106
H5	Control Beliefs -> Perceived Behavior Control	-0.334	0.047	7.068	0.000
H6	Perceived Behavior Control → Intension	-0.25	0.056	4.489	0.000

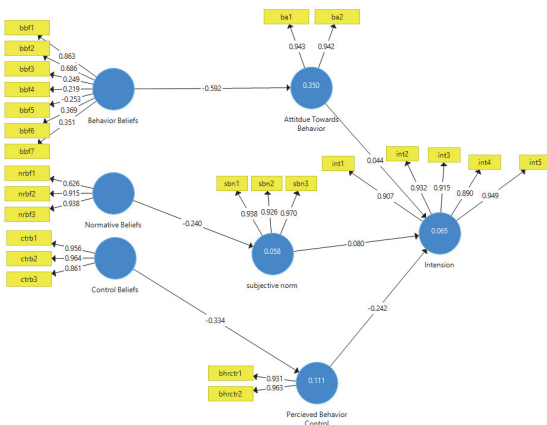


Fig. 3. Algorithm of the measurement model

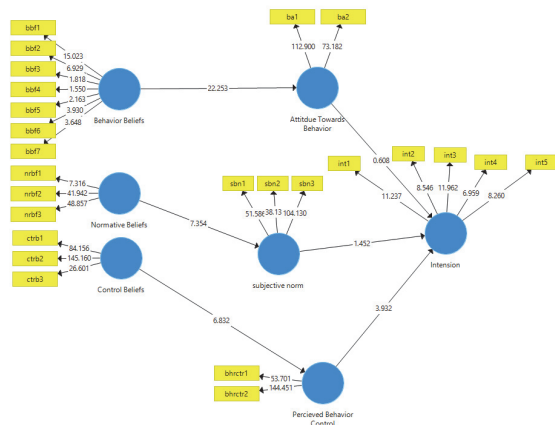


Fig. 4. Bootstrapping the measurement model

Based on the path coefficients the hypotheses other than H₂ and H₄ are rejected, as significant negative correlations are observed. No significant correlations are found in H₂ and H₄ signifying that the variables have no relationships. Based on the PLS the Algorithm of the measurement model is presented as Fig. 3, and the bootstrapping of the default model is presented in Fig. 4. The models present a fair view of the analysis. The relationship between youth customer behaviour and OWoM has been a matter of deep empirical research in the recent past (Almossawi, 2015; Torlak, 2014; Wensi, 2017). The studies have found that OWoM is having a profound impact on purchase decisions of youth population. It is in this premise that the present study was undertaken. Using SMART-PLS the study has arrived at a model to explain this complex behaviour. This is presumably the first study of its kind to be conducted in Saudi Arabia. The model developed by this has helped in understanding the consumer behaviour of youth in the online context by examining their intention to mark their OWoM about supporting a product or service. The TPB has facilitated in guiding the researcher to predict OWoM via behavioural, normative and control beliefs. The developed model will be of high practical implication as it can help marketers to increase the use of positive customer OWoM to support their marketing campaigns. Further, the youth are tech-savvy and they are more inclined to use OWoM as a source of gaining information to make purchase decisions. Further, with the use of technology among younger generation makes it important to study the e-consumer. Towards this direction, the present work has done significant contributions.

6. Discussion

Only few studies have been conducted in the Saudi context about OWoM and its determinants. Studies exploring the dimensions of TPB are almost nonexistent. The TPB has proposed that an individual's behavioral intention is influenced largely by the subjective norms (Ajzen, 2002). The present study, which is first of its kind in Saudi context, has attempted to bridge this gap in literature based on OWoM. It is expected that the findings of the study will have significant practical utility for marketers and future researchers. The implications of the study are that behavioral aspects of a consumer significantly influence the purchase decision about a particular product. The behavioral aspects of the customer, on the other hand, are significantly influenced by several underlying aspects which include attitude and beliefs (Auf et al., 2016). Different customers are likely to have a different attitude towards a given product or service due to several reasons. Beliefs, particularly subjective beliefs influence a customer's attitude, behavior and consequently his/her intentions towards a given product or service (Prasad et al., 2017). The subjective beliefs proposed under the TPB (Ajzen, 2002) are significantly influenced by collective society's beliefs, or attitude towards a particular issue, product, or service. In addition to this, customers' information towards a given product or service is crucial in changing their behavior and attitudes. The study also suggests that other than the subjective norms, the individual's own belief is equally important in determining the extent to which intention towards a given product is shaped. This is a dimension which has not been examined so far empirically in the Saudi context. Not all consumers are vulnerable to subjective norms. As such, the interactions of the behavioral control, and subjective norms should be explored. The ability of the customers to control their behaviors towards a given product or service; under the influence of the subjective norms should be determined. The study also shed lights on online consumer behavior via the social media as the numbers of social media users are dramatically increasing among youth especially in such an emerging market i.e. Saudi Arabia. Lack of studies that explores the differences between tradition and online consumer behavior affords this study a special importance. Furthermore, the social media aspect of online consumer behavior has not been fairly examined according to the relatively recentness of the implication for the concept in the literature.

7. Conclusion

Studies about OWoM are also emerging in Saudi Arabia (Ajina, 2019). The present study has been successful in presenting the complex relationship between the beliefs, OWoM and purchase decision in the Saudi context. In this regard the contribution of the present study to the emerging field of OWoM

literature is significant. However, the study has its own limitations. One of the major limitations of the study is the inherent complexity of measuring attributes such as attitude, behaviors, and intentions. Essentially, every attribute measured in the study as proposed under the hypothesis is subjective and cannot be quantified directly. However, the scales that were used to capture information on the variables of the study are time tested and their utility has been established time and again. Another aspect is that the questionnaires being self administered, which could have the normal inherent limitations. Overall, the study has succeeded in making significant contribution to marketing literature. There are many new areas and aspect that has emerged from the study. One such area is the credibility aspect of online information. It has to be borne in mind that the source credibility of the information is a critical determinant of OWoM. This is so even for traditional offline marketing. Future works need to include the crucial aspect of credibility of social media information. Attempts need to be made to establish what users consider most important in determining the credibility of sources. Such a dimension will be of paramount importance to marketers when they design WoM advertisements, particularly when the focus is on OWoM. It is expected and hoped that future researchers will look into this crucial aspect.

References

- Ajina, A. S. (2019). The perceived value of social media marketing: An empirical study of online word-of-mouth in Saudi Arabian context, *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues*, 6(3), 1512-1527
- Ajzen, I. (2002). Perceived behavioral control, self-efficacy, locus of control, and the theory of planned behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 32(4), 665-683.
- Akyüz, A. (2013). Determinant factors influencing eWOM. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(11), 159.
- Al Mana, A. M., & Mirza, A. A. (2013). The impact of electronic word of mouth on consumers' purchasing decisions. *International Journal of Computer Applications*, 82(9), 23-31.
- Alalwan, A. A., Rana, N. P., Dwivedi, Y. K., & Algharabat, R. (2017). Social media in marketing: A review and analysis of the existing literature. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(7), 1177-1190.
- Almossawi, M. A. (2015). The Impact of Word of Mouth (WOM) on the Bank Selection decision of the Youth: A Case of Bahrain. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 10(4), 123-134.
- Al-Somali, S. A., Gholami, R., & Clegg, B. (2015). An investigation into the factors affecting e-commerce adoption decisions by SMEs: A study in Saudi Arabia. In *Strategic e-commerce systems and tools for competing in the digital marketplace* (pp. 206-243). IGI Global.
- Anderson, E. W. (1998). Customer satisfaction and word of mouth. *Journal of Service Research*, 1(1), 5-17.
- Ardian, N., Afshani, S. A., Morowatisharifabad, M. A., Mahmoodabad, S. S. M., Vaezi, A. A., Refahi, S. A. A., & Mahmoodabadi, H. Z. (2018). Evaluating Reliability of Theory of Planned Behaviour Questionnaire for Withdrawal of Divorce Petition. *Macedonian Journal of Medical Sciences*, 6(8), 1512.
- Auf, M. A. A., Salleh, S. B. M., & Yusoff, R. Z. (2016). The relationship between word of mouth and consumer buying behavior mediating by religious orientation in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. *International Review of Management and Marketing*, 6(4), 1034-1038.
- Babić Rosario, A., Sotgiu, F., De Valck, K., & Bijmolt, T. H. (2016). The effect of electronic word of mouth on sales: A meta-analytic review of the platform, product, and metric factors. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 53(3), 297-318.
- Barnett, W., & Presley, A. (2004). Theory of planned behavior model in electronic learning: A pilot study. *Issues in Information Systems*, 5(1), 27-28.
- Bergeron, J., Ricard, L., & Perrien, J. (2003). Les déterminants de la fidélité des clients commerce auxdansl' industrie ban cairecanadienne [The determinants of commercial customer loyalty in the industry Canadian bank]. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 20(2), 107-120.
- Bickart, B., & Schindler, R. M. (2001). Internet forums as influential sources of consumer information. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 15(3), 31-40.

- Blazevic, V., Hammedi, W., Garnefeld, I., Rust, R. T., Keiningham, T., Andreassen, T.W., Donthu, N. and Carl, W. (2013). Beyond Traditional Word-of-Mouth: An Expanded Model of Customer Influence. *Journal of Service Management*, 24(3), 294–313.
- Bosomworth, D. (2015). Mobile marketing statistics 2015. *Leeds: Smart Insights (Marketing Intelligence) Ltd*.
- Bughin, J., Doogan, J., & Vetvik, O. J. (2010). A new way to measure word-of-mouth marketing. *McKinsey Quarterly*, 2, 113-116.
- Buttyán, L., Dóra, L., Félegyházi, M., & Vajda, I. (2010). Barter trade improves message delivery in opportunistic networks. *Ad Hoc Networks*, 8(1), 1-14.
- Charo, N. Sharma, P. Shaikh, S. Haseeb, A and M. Z. Sufya. (2015). Determining the impact of e-Wom on brand image and purchase intention through adoption of online opinions. *International Journal of Humanities and Management Sciences*, 3(1), 41-46.
- Crocker, K. E. (1986). The influence of the amount and type of information on individuals' perception of legal services. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 14(4), 18–27.
- Dahl, S. (2018). *Social media marketing: Theories and applications*. Sage.
- Duana, W., Gu, B., & Whinston, A. B. (2008). The dynamics of online word-of-mouth and product sales—An empirical investigation of the movie industry. *Journal of Retailing*, 84(2), 233–242.
- Engel, J. F., Kegerreis, R. J., & Blackwell, R. D. (1969). Word-of-mouth communication by the innovator. *Journal of Marketing*, 33(3), 15–19.
- Fishbein, M. (1979). Theory of reasoned action: Some applications and implications. *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, 27, 65-116.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(3), 39–50.
- Goldsmith, R. E., & Horowitz, D. (2006). Measuring motivations for online opinion seeking. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 6(2), 2–14.
- Hartline, M. D., & Jones, K. C. (1996). Employee performance cues in a hotel service environment: Influence on perceived service quality, value, and word-of-mouth intentions. *Journal of Business Research*, 35(3), 207–215.
- Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, D. D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet? *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(1), 38–52.
- Huete-Alcocer, N. (2017). A Literature review of word of mouth and electronic word of mouth: implications for consumer behavior. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 1256.
- Humphrey, C. (1985). Barter and economic disintegration. *Man, New Series*, 20(1), 48-72.
- Jha, S., & Ye, C. (2016). The impact of demographic variables on perception of importance and continued usage of Facebook in the US. *Global Business Review*, 17(1), 1-15.
- Jones, R. A. (1976). The origin and development of media of exchange. *Journal of Political Economy*, 84(4, Part 1), 757-775.
- Katz, E., & Lazarsfeld, P. F. (1955). *Personal influence: The part played by people in the flow of mass communications*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- King, R. A., Racherla, P. and Bush, V. D. (2014). What We Know and Don't Know About Online Word-of-Mouth: A Review and Synthesis of the Literature. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28, 167–183.
- Kozinets, R. V., De Valck, K., Wojnicki, A. C., & Wilner, S. J. (2010). Networked narratives: Understanding word-of-mouth marketing in online communities. *Journal of marketing*, 74(2), 71-89.
- Li, X., & Hitt, L. M. (2008). Self-Selection and Information Role of Online Product Reviews. *Information Systems Research*, 19(4), 456-474.
- Liu, Y. (2006). Word-of-Mouth for movies: Its dynamics and impact on box office revenue. *Journal of Marketing*, 70(3), 74-89.
- López, M., & Sicilia, M. (2014). Determinants of E-WOM influence: the role of consumers' internet experience. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 9(1), 28-43.
- Moe, W. W. & Schweidel, D. A. (2012). Online product opinions: Incidence, evaluation, and evolution. *Marketing Science*, 31(3), 369-547.

- Nelson, R. R., Todd, P. A., & Wixom, B. H. (2005). Antecedents of information and system quality: An empirical examination within the context of data warehousing. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 21(4), 199–235.
- Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory* (2nd Ed.), New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Oizumi, M., Albantakis, L., & Tononi, G. (2014). From the phenomenology to the mechanisms of consciousness: integrated information theory 3.0. *PLoS Computational Biology*, 10(5), e1003588.
- Ooi, K. B., & Tan, G. W. H. (2016). Mobile technology acceptance model: An investigation using mobile users to explore smartphone credit card. *Expert Systems with Applications*, 59, 33–46.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). Servqual. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12–40.
- Parsons, A. (2013). Using social media to reach consumers: A content analysis of official Facebook pages. *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*, 17(2), 27–36.
- Peng, D. X., & Lai, F. (2012). Using partial least squares in operations management research: A practical guideline and summary of past research. *Journal of Operations Management*, 30(6), 467–480.
- Phahle, N. W. (2014). *Developing countries coalition evolution in the WTO: Causes and consequences*, Unpublished Doctoral dissertation.
- Pham, T. D. (2016). *Determinants of electronic word of mouth perceived credibility: a study of cosmetic purchasing behavior*, Unpublished Thesis, University of Twente.
- Pires, G. D., Stanton, J., & Rita, P. (2006). The internet, consumer empowerment, and marketing strategies. *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(9/10), 936–949.
- Prasad, S., Gupta, I. C., & Totala, N. K. (2017). Social media usage, electronic word of mouth and purchase-decision involvement. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, 9(2), 134–145.
- Raju, A. G., Roy, S. and Mandal, S. (2018). Determinants of Website Usability: Empirical Evidence from Tourism Sector in India, *Global Business Review*, 19(6) 1640–1662.
- Reichheld, F. F., & Sasser, E. (1990). Zero defections: Quality comes to services. *Harvard Business Review*, 68, 105–111.
- Söderlund, M., & Rosengren, S. (2007). Receiving word-of-mouth from the service customer: An emotion-based effectiveness assessment. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 14(2), 123–136.
- Sotiriadis, M. D., & Van Zyl, C. (2013). Electronic word-of-mouth and online reviews in tourism services: the use of twitter by tourists. *Electronic Commerce Research*, 13(1), 103–124.
- Statista (2019). *Number of smartphone users in Saudi Arabia from 2015 to 2022 (in millions)*. Retrieved on 16 January 2019 from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/494616/smartphone-users-in-saudi-arabia/>
- Tiago, M. T. P. M. B., & Veríssimo, J. M. C. (2014). Digital marketing and social media: Why Bother? *Business Horizons*, 57(6), 703–708.
- Torlak, O, Ozkara, B. Y., Tiltay, M. A., Cengiz, H. and Dulger, M. F. (2014). The Effect of Electronic Word of Mouth on Brand Image and Purchase Intention: An Application Concerning Cell Phone Brands for Youth Consumers in Turkey. *Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness*, 8(2) 2014, 61–68.
- Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R. (2017). *Social media marketing*. Sage.
- Uchenova, V. V., & Strykh, N. V. (2002). *History of advertisement*. SPb.: Peter, 10.
- Verhagen, T., Nauta, A., & Feldberg, J. F. M. (2013). Negative online word-of-mouth: Behavioral indicator or emotional release? *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(4), 1430–1440.
- Weinberg, B. D., Milne, G. R., Andonova, Y. G., & Hajjat, F. M. (2015). Internet of Things: Convenience vs. privacy and secrecy. *Business Horizons*, 58(6), 615–624.
- Wensi, P. (2017). *The Influence of Negative Online Word-of-Mouth on Consumers' Hotel Purchase Intention in China: Taking Trip Advisor as an Example*. Unpublished thesis submitted to Turku University of Applied Sciences.

