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**Identification and Analysis of Factors Affecting Consumer  
Engagement in Electronic Word-Of-Mouth (e-WOM) in  
Social Networking Sites and Their Purchasing Behaviour –  
An Analysis of Saudi Arabian Women in Purchasing  
Fashion Goods**

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### ***Abstract***

*According to the previous studies, a few crucial characteristics influence consumer engagement and purchasing behaviour in e- WOM through social networking sites. Trust, tie strength, interpersonal influence, fashion, and brand involvement are example of these. A significant lacuna in the literature is the inconsistent conclusions reached by different studies on the significance of trust in social media WOM, as well as the lack of studies on the topic in Saudi Arabia. The study's goal is to determine the elements that influence the relationship between consumer participation in electronic word of mouth and Saudi Arabian women's purchase of fashion products.*

*The research used quantitative methods, which was found more appropriate than qualitative research. This was paired with the deductive approach to examine the data acquired from the quantitative survey (100 replies), which was checked to determine if the data is consistent with the previous assumptions, hypotheses, and theories identified by the researchers in the literature study. Using correlation testing and regression analysis techniques. The studies concluded that brand participation, fashion involvement, and informational influence are the three characteristics that positively influence customer engagement in e-WOM, which is also statistically significant.*



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*To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study that has sought to identify and analyse the elements that influence e- WOM and purchasing behaviour of Saudi Arabian customers, particularly those in the fashion business. Future research on a comparable topic can try to address similar research questions and objectives by using a qualitative research technique since this will lead to the discovery of arguments and conclusions.*

**Keywords: Electronic word of mouth, social media, fashion industry**

#### المخلص

وفقاً للدراسات السابقة، تؤثر بعض الخصائص الحاسمة على مشاركة المستهلك وسلوك الشراء في WOM الإلكترونية من خلال مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي. الثقة وقوة الارتباط والتأثير الشخصي والأزياء ومشاركة العلامة التجارية هي أمثلة على ذلك. تتمثل إحدى الثغرات الكبيرة في الأدبيات في الاستنتاجات غير المتسقة التي توصلت إليها الدراسات المختلفة حول أهمية الثقة في WOM على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، فضلاً عن نقص الدراسات حول هذا الموضوع في المملكة العربية السعودية. تهدف الدراسة إلى تحديد العناصر التي تؤثر على العلاقة بين مشاركة المستهلك في الكلام الشفهي الإلكتروني وشراء المرأة السعودية لمنتجات الأزياء.

استخدم البحث الأساليب الكمية التي وجدت أنسب من البحث النوعي. وقد اقترن ذلك بالمنهج الاستنتاجي لفحص البيانات التي تم الحصول عليها من المسح الكمي (١٠٠ رد) والتي تم فحصها لتحديد ما إذا كانت البيانات متوافقة مع الافتراضات والفرضيات والنظريات السابقة التي حددها الباحثون في الدراسة الأدبية. استخدام تقنيات اختبار الارتباط وتحليل الانحدار. خلصت الدراسات إلى أن مشاركة العلامة التجارية، والمشاركة في الموضة، والتأثير المعلوماتي هي الخصائص الثلاث التي تؤثر بشكل إيجابي على مشاركة العملاء في e-WOM، والتي تعد أيضاً ذات دلالة إحصائية.

على حد علم الباحث، هذه هي الدراسة الأولى التي سعت إلى تحديد وتحليل العناصر التي تؤثر على e-WOM



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والسلوك الشرائي للعملاء السعوديين، لا سيما أولئك الذين يعملون في مجال الأزياء. يمكن أن يحاول البحث المستقبلي حول موضوع مشابه معالجة أسئلة وأهداف بحثية مماثلة باستخدام أسلوب بحث نوعي لأن هذا سيؤدي إلى اكتشاف الحجج والاستنتاجات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الكلام الشفهي الإلكتروني، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، صناعة الأزياء

## 1. Introduction

Advances in technology and the Internet have resulted in a variety of changes in the environment and society; in the context of the web's development, the Internet's functionality has increased. (Kimmel, 2014). According to Wolny and Mueller (2013), social media is day-to-day activities undertaken that has an influential role. The growth of the Internet has had a favourable impact on electronic word of mouth (e- WOM) communication, which is defined as any online statement made positive or negative about a company or product by customers (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004).

According to a recent e- Marketer (2015) survey, more than two-thirds of those polled said they had higher trust in firms that had better internet evaluations. In contrast, more than 40% of consumers confessed in a



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comparable survey done in 2010 that they did not pay attention to internet evaluation at all or did not let these opinions affect their purchase habits. As a result, it is clear that the quantity of online customer reviews is increasing, as is the importance of e-WOM in the current context.

When it comes to acquiring an insight into customer purchasing behaviour in Saudi Arabia, social media has become increasingly popular. This is because consumers from a variety of backgrounds frequent social media platforms to provide feedback and express their thoughts on their experiences and various purchasing possibilities (Barreto, 2014).

Al-Rasheed and El-garaihy (2014) conducted market research in Saudi Arabia and determined that the level of engagement undertaken by consumers has a substantial impact on their purchase patterns. As a result, Radwan (2016) stated that consumer behaviour is directly influenced by notions in consumers' brains because of marketing activities and commercials.

## **1.2 Research problem**

The finding of Nawi et al., (2016) that e-WOM is a key marketing force indicates the rising importance of e-WOM. In recent years, there has been an increase for literature focusing on the effectiveness of e-WOM communication. However, the scope of studies and research conducted to date on the influence of e-WOM communication remains vast, with studies that are reasonably scattered and lack conclusiveness. This is also true in Saudi Arabia, where there has been a lack of study assessing the influence



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of e-WOM on customer purchasing behaviour according to Mirza and Al Mana (2013).

### **1.3 Research Questions**

This research involves around answering the main question, which is:

**"What are the main factors that affecting consumer engagement in electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOF) in social networking sites and their purchasing fashion good behaviours of Saudi Arabia women?"**

The research will answer the following research sub-questions based on the primary question:

1. What factors influence the relationship between customer participation in electronic WOM and purchase behaviour?
2. What practical rules and ideas that can Saudi retailers and marketing professionals follow?

### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to look into the elements that influence the relationship between consumer participation in electronic word of mouth and the purchase of fashion products by Saudi women. The following research objectives will be addressed in order to attain the goal:



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- To assess the factors influencing the relationship between customers participation in electronic word -of -mouth and consumer purchase of fashion products.
- To conduct a review of existing studies and literature on a similar research topic in order to identify and implement helpful aspects that influence consumer participation in electronic word of mouth and consumer purchase of fashion products.
- To conduct a critical analysis of the data gathered and compare the results to previous research.
- To create practical guidelines and recommendations for retailers and marketing practitioners in Saudi Arabia.

## **2. Literature review**

Factors affecting the relationship between customer engagement in electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) in social networking sites and purchase behaviour will be examined in this chapter. To that end, the chapter begins with an overview of social networking sites (SNS), followed by a discussion of consumer purchasing behaviour, with a focus on the consumer decision-making process. In addition, word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth are investigated. Finally, the literature on six main factors of the relationship between e-WOM and purchase behaviour is reviewed, namely trust, tie strength, normative influence, informational influence, fashion engagement, and brand involvement.



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## 2.1 Social Networking Sites

Social networking sites (SNS) are a subset of social media, which is a collection of internet-based apps that enable users to produce and share content (Kaplan and Heinlein, 2010). User-generated content can be defined as the different ways in which people can use the Internet, for example, in this situation, through using resources such as social networking sites.

Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, and so on) are places where members create public profiles in order to share their knowledge and experiences, exchange and publish personal information, connect with one another, and discuss similar interests (Cheung and Lee, 2010). According to Cheung and Lee (2010), social networking has become an increasingly important component of human connection and communication, influencing people's behaviour and communication style in a variety of ways.

Nowadays, the Internet is more than simply a means of accessing information; it is also a means of interaction, with people using it to share and exchange content, information, and opinions. The extensive usage of the Internet has changed consumer behaviour, as customers are increasingly connecting with one another, including increased connection with businesses (Heinrichs et al., 2011). These social networks influence how consumers and businesses think about marketing, as well as their relationships and interactions with one another (Solomon et al., 2010).

Several social media platforms have been identified as a critical source of information for customers purchasing products and services, as well as an





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effective source of information (Subramani and Rajgopalan, 2003). Heinrichs et al. (2011) agree, concluding that social networking sites in the modern context provide opportunities to engage and communicate with people, as well as the possibility to join virtual communities based on shared viewpoints and activities.

## **2.2 Consumer Purchasing Behaviour**

Solomon et al. (2010, p. 6) propose a current definition of consumer behaviour as "the study of the processes involved when people or groups select, purchase, utilize, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to meet needs and desires." Market segmentation is an important feature of consumer behavior because consumers in a specific category are more likely to demonstrate consistent purchase behavior (Lantos, 2011).

Market segmentation is categorizing consumers based on a variety of factors such as demographics (gender, age, income, social class), geography (country, area), behavioral (benefits, brand loyalty, desire), and psychographic (lifestyle and personality) (Kapferer, 2012). This impacts of social environment has been defined in the form of 'social time,' which refers to time in relation to social processes, schedules, and rhythms in a specific civilization, such as store opening hours, working hours, meal hours, and other institutionalized schedules Solomon et al (2010, p. 68).

In today's dynamic and highly competitive world, customers are increasingly confronted with a plethora of options for products and



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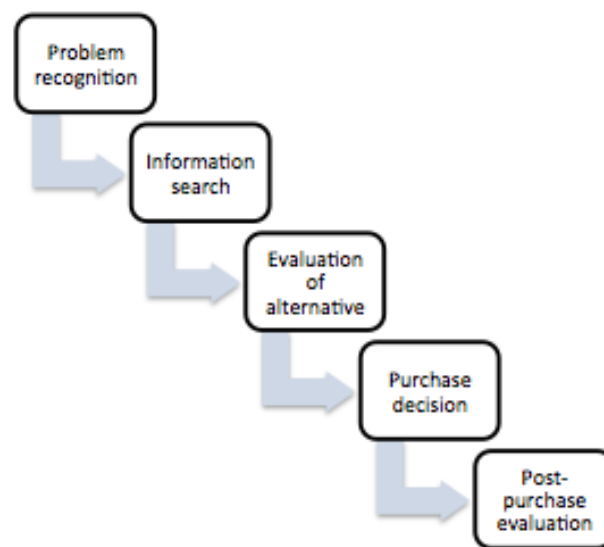
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services, necessitating the need for consumers to make a variety of decisions on a frequent basis. In this regard, Schiffman et al. (2008) contend that consumer behavior encompasses not just a summary of decision-making but also the act of purchasing, the interaction that consumers engage in when acquiring products and services, as well as other peripheral experiences linked with consumption.

Consumer purchasing behavior can be best explained through the analysis of the consumer decision-making process. The decision process is undertaken in the five steps, as illustrated in Figure 1 and explained below:



**Figure (1): Consumer decision-making process: Source: Kardes *et al.*, (2011)**

### **2.2.1 Problem Recognition**

This is the first step in the consumer purchasing decision process, which usually comes as a result of the consumer's expressed demand for a new product or service. These are the decisions that can be easily discovered,



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defied, and resolved (for example, the need for food and basic clothing)  
(Kardes et al., 2011)

### **2.2.2 Information search**

Consumers begin to seek relevant information once a consumer demand and issue have been established. Internal and external information sources are the two sorts of information sources. External search refers to word of mouth, store visits, trials, and online social networking related to social media, whereas internal search refers to the consumers' recall of the products (Kardes et al., 2011). In today's environment, the Internet has become a key tool for the purposes of information search, which has an impact on the level and direction of the consumer's search.

### **2.2.3 Evaluation of alternatives**

This is where buyers begin to compare and evaluate several alternatives in terms of product attributes, as well as their personal requirements and desires that they aim to fulfil. According to Blythe (2008), while consumer decision-making is typically based on a basic decision process (e.g., acquire the most cost-effective product or service), consumer decisions are getting increasingly complicated, as certain selections include multiple phases and procedures. This implies that consumers compare the options that best match their demands.



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#### **2.2.4 Purchase decisions**

After evaluating the many alternative possibilities accessible, consumers make purchasing selections based on these distinct alternatives. The consumer's ultimate decision to acquire a product or service is determined by the attraction of the product or service. Consumers' buying decisions can be influenced by information obtained from a variety of sources, including the Internet (Hawkins and Mothersbaugh, 2010).

#### **2.2.5 Post-purchase evaluation**

This is the final stage, in which consumers compare their initial perceptions of the product to their expectations and actual purchases (Kardes et al., 2011).

#### **2.2.6 Limitations of the model**

The consumer decision-making process model, like its usefulness, has some limitations. One major weakness of the approach is that it is overly focused on showing consumer decision-making from the perspective of marketers rather than consumers (Milner and Rosenstreich, 2013). Furthermore, because consumer behaviours are only characterized generally in the model (Kim et al., 2008), it faces the danger of not being particular enough when it comes to analysing factors influencing customer engagement in e-WOM and purchase behaviour.

Furthermore, a significant assumption inherent in the model is that consumers have the ability to assess the various alternatives when



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evaluating them in step 3 of the purchasing decision-making process and, as a result, make a reasonable judgment on the alternative that is best suited. While consumers have a greater variety of options to pick from, it becomes more difficult for them to apply rational judgment when deciding between different possibilities (Milner and Rosenstreich, 2013).

### **2.3 Word-of-Mouth Communication**

This section will briefly examine word-of-mouth communication, electronic word-of-mouth communication, and the primary reasons why people engage in these activities.

#### **2.3.1 WOM**

Word-of-mouth (WOM) is an expression that is commonly used but not fully understood. Arndt (1967) provides one of the earliest definitions of WOM communication as person-to-person communication that involves communicating market information and influencing people's behaviours toward products, services, and brands. Westbrook (1987) defines word-of-mouth as any informal communication with other consumers regarding the usage, ownership, or attributes of specific goods or suppliers.

People engage in WOM communication for four reasons, according to Engel et al. (1993). Involvement, self-enhancement, concern for others, and dissonance are examples of these. Involvement in communication is defined as the level of interest in the product. WOM enables individuals to acquire attention and demonstrate their knowledge, resulting in self-enhancement. Finally, dissonance relates to the necessity to alleviate



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consumer uncertainties following a purchase decision (Engel et al., 1993).

### 2.3.2 e- WOM

E-WOM is the online counterpart of traditional WOM that has grown in popularity because of the vast and ubiquitous use of the Internet (Wang et al., 2015). Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) define e-WOM as an online remark (positive or negative) by future, actual, or past consumers regarding a product or firm, which is one of the most often used definitions. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), e-WOM is becoming increasingly important over time as firms implement social marketing strategies, which has contributed to significant growth in e-WOM users, as well as a rapid rise in the number of people who share or post their experiences or opinions with others.

The type of message, own knowledge and experience of the customer, as well as the sender's knowledge and experience have an effect on the way in which consumers respond. Figure (2) defines the impact of e-WOM as follows:

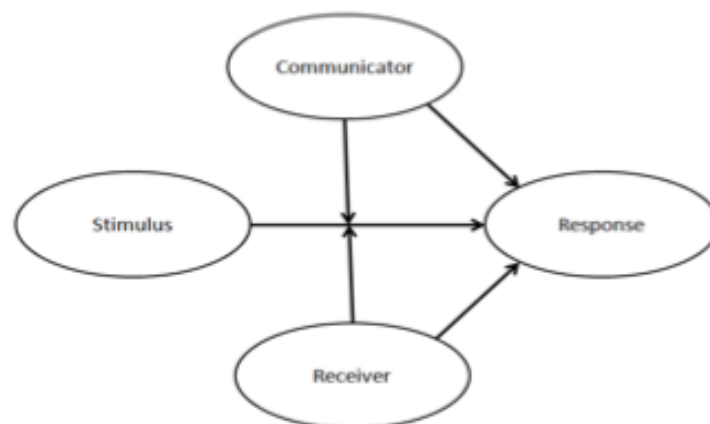


Figure (2): the impact of e-WOM



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The sort of message and its source are referred to as the stimulus. Several studies on the stimulus have incorporated the rating connected with the recommendations (Cheung et al., 2009), the number of reviews (Park et al., 2007), and the length of the review (Park et al., 2007). (Park and Lee, 2009). Furthermore, the type of review is proven to have an influence (Xia and Bechwati, 2008), where the message can be negative or positive, with negative messages having a greater impact than good WOM messages.

The communicator is the individual who sends the message. The communicator has a huge impact because it can significantly influence consumer behaviours when it comes to acquiring items or services (Lee and Youn, 2009). For example, if a friend, who is an expert on automobiles offers advice on the purchase of a car online; this is regarded as a highly reliable e-WOM message.

Ultimately, the response is how e-WOM influences consumer purchasing behaviours. The study ends on the many types of e-WOM effects on consumers, such as trust (Hsu et al., 2013), choice (Huang et al., 2008), loyalty, and buy intention (Park et al., 2007).

## **2.4 Conceptual Model and Hypothesis**

This section will discuss the key factors that affect the engagement of consumers in e-WOM and the ultimate purchase of fashion products. The specific factors discussed in the section include trust, tie strength, interpersonal influence, normative influence, fashion involvement and brand involvement.



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### 2.4.1 Trust

- **H1: Trust is positively related to eWOM and subsequent purchase of the product**

Several studies have indicated that there is a beneficial association between e-WOM and trust (Pigg and Crank, 2004). Individuals' willingness to share their information, experiences, and resulting opinions is positively associated to more communication and interaction (Jarvenpaa and Leidner, 1998). According to Huang et al. (2008), trust is crucial when it comes to consumer behaviours, particularly in the context of online shopping. They find that trust is determined by the communicators' emotional intensity, time availability, mutual confidence, and mutual services. This is because trust leads to an individual's perception that others will act in accordance with a set of expectations and with a high level of integrity.

Trust has a considerable influence on the purchase of products and services online, as Kolsaker et al. (2004) find that the creation of trust can reduce perceived risk. Trust is vital because it enables consumers to overcome their perceptions of uncertainty and risk when purchasing items and, as a result, participate in trust-related behavior with the seller, such as revealing personal information and making purchases (See-To and Ho, 2014).

When it comes to social media, customers see it as a more trustworthy





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source of brand information than market-generated content transmitted through the traditional promotional combination, which includes sales promotion, advertising, and public relations (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Chu and Kim (2011), communication on social networking sites (e.g., Facebook or Twitter) are integrated into the existing network of consumers, thus, perceived as more trustworthy and credible than advertisers with a stake are or influence did.

Hsin and Wen (2008), on the other hand, discover that trust is not always a crucial component in e-WOM and its impact on customer purchase decisions. Because of the increased abundance of information available to consumers, Hsin and Wen (2008) find that perceived risk in the products purchased is more important than trust.

#### 2.4.2 Tie strength

- **H2: Tie strength positively influences consumer engagement in e-WOM behaviour and the ultimate purchase of the product**

The potency of the bond between members of a network is described as "the strength of the bond between members of a network" (Mittal et al., 2008, p. 196). Social ties can be classified as weak or strong (Granovetter, 1973). Weak links are frequently part of less intimate and weaker interactions that include a broader number of colleagues and acquaintances, resulting in information seeking on a variety of issues (Pigg and Crank, 2004). Stronger ties, on the other hand, include family and friends, which are closer and stronger relationships that are part of an



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individual's personal network. Strong links can also provide important emotional and material support (Pigg and Crank, 2004).

Weaker links and ties highlight a vital bridging function at the macro-level (which takes into account communication flow across groups), allowing knowledge to travel and disperse amongst various groupings. The micro-level (communication flow within smaller groups), on the other hand, implies stronger linkages that are more likely to be triggered for the flow of referral behavior (Brown and Reingen, 1987).

Although stronger ties have a greater impact at the small group or individual level when it comes to influencing consumer purchasing behaviours via social networking sites, it is the connective and asynchronous features of the SNS that allow weak ties to increase their potential effect by extending consumers' personal networks to include external groups and communities.

### **2.4.3 Interpersonal influence**

Interpersonal impact is defined as a social component that influences consumer decision-making, word-of-mouth, and the adoption of current technologies (Bearden et al., 1989, D'Rozario and Choudhury, 2000). Several studies have concluded that WOM and eWOM are becoming increasingly powerful sources of information and, as a result, the source of consumer purchase decisions, particularly when consumers are subjected to interpersonal influences (Meuter et al., 2013).

There are two basic sorts of interpersonal influences recognized in the literature in this area. The tendency to accept information from other



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competent contacts and, as a result, be guided in terms of brand, product, and store search is referred to as informational influence (Bearden et al., 1989). Normative influence, on the other hand, explains the inclination to conform to the expectations of others, as well as the influence on attitude, values, and norms (Cheung et al., 2009).

This suggests that consumer susceptibility to interpersonal effects is another important variable that may be used to explain the factors influencing the relationship between consumer participation in e-WOM and purchasing behaviours in the setting of SNS. Chu and Kim (2011) contend that in SNS, both informational and normative aspects influence users' e-WOM behaviours. SNS users who are influenced by norms are anticipated to seek social acceptability and to conform to the expectations of others in their e-WOM and purchasing behaviours. This is accomplished through the use and acquisition of brands and items that lead to social approbation.

Users of SNS who are subject to informational influence, on the other hand, are expected to demonstrate a greater need to obtain heightened guidance and information from various family and friends contacts in order to narrow their purchasing options, which ultimately influences their engagement in e-WOM in the context of social media (Chu and Kim, 2011). As a result, consumer exposure to both informational and normative impact is likely to influence their participation in e-WOM on SNSs. As a result, the following hypotheses will be tested:

**H3: Social media users' exposure to informational influences from**



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**their contacts is positively related to the users' engagement in e-WOM and their purchase of the product.**

**H4: Social media users' exposure to normative influences from their contacts is positively related to the users' engagement in e-WOM and their purchase of the product.**

#### **2.4.4 Fashion and brand involvement**

**H5: Consumers with high fashion involvement are more likely to undertake fashion related e-WOM and subsequently purchase fashion products**

**H6: Consumers with brand fashion involvement are more likely to undertake fashion related e-WOM and subsequently purchase fashion products.**

It is crucial to address fashion and brand involvement in the context of a discussion of the factors that influence e-WOM in social networking websites and purchase behaviours. Fashion and brand involvement are indicators of enduring and analysing the level of involvement displayed by consumers (Wolny and Mueller, 2013). In terms of long-term participation, brands are becoming increasingly important because individual consumers



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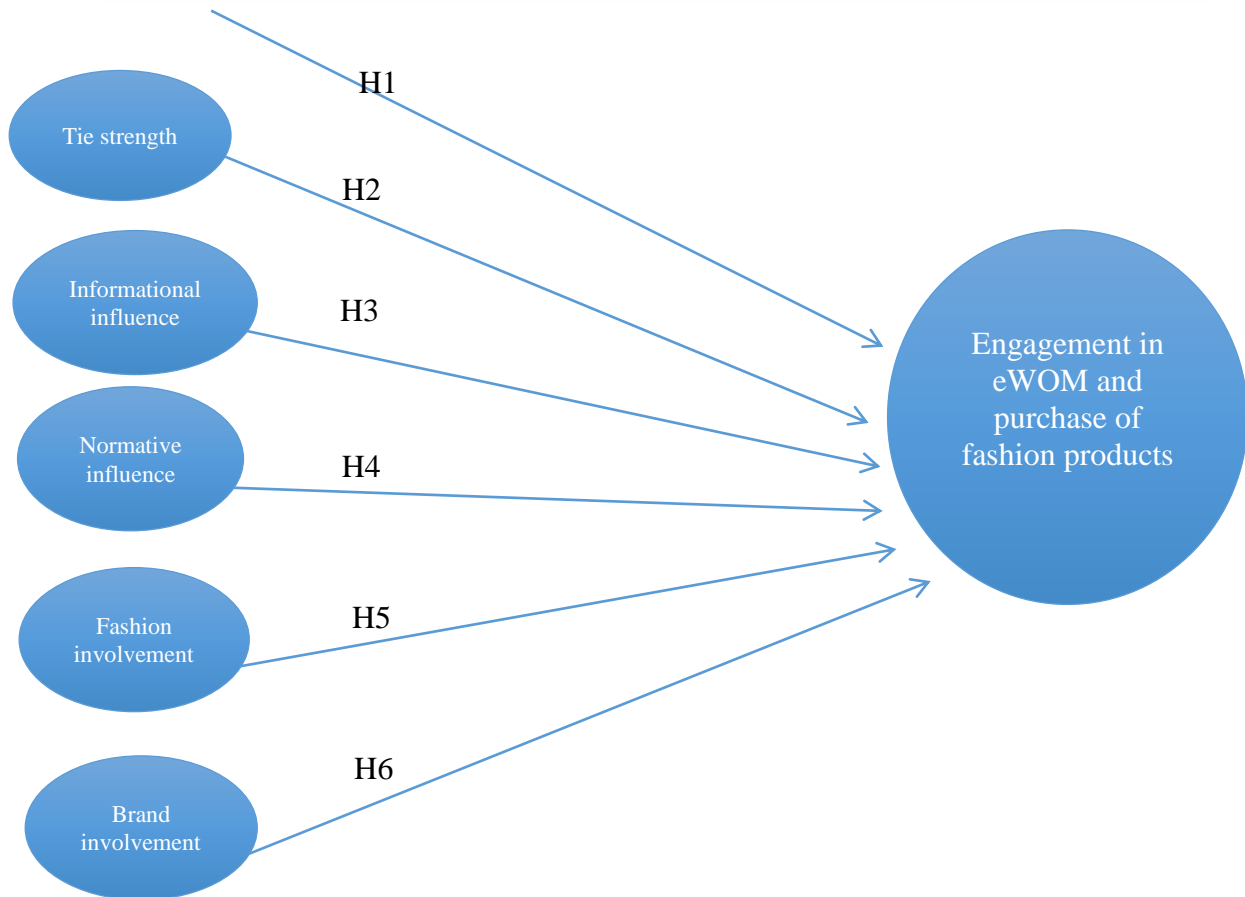
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can associate the items or services they purchase to their self-image and attach hedonic attributes to the product (Higie and Feick, 1989).

Brand engagement, also known as brand commitment, is defined as the chance that customers will tolerate changes to the brand (Dholakia, 1997) and a good feeling of affiliation to a brand (Beatty and Kahle, 1988). According to Mangold and Faulds (2009), consumers who have a high commitment to a firm and, as a result, a higher level of brand participation are more likely to convey a positive message about the brand.

However, the same consumers are more likely to be dissatisfied if the product or service falls short of expectations. Hur et al. (2011) highlighted brand involvement and commitment as major characteristics that influence customer behaviours in the context of social media and networking in this respect. Similarly, other research on the subject have confirmed the preceding premise, concluding that effective consumer brand involvement facilitates e-WOM and, ultimately, consumer purchasing behaviours (Harrison-Walker, 2001; Cheung et al., 2009). Based on the above discussion in the literature review chapter, the following model Figure 3 has been proposed in the context of determinants that influence consumer engagement in eWOM and purchase of fashion products.

Trust



**Figure 3: Factors influencing consumer engagement in e-WOM and purchase of fashion products**

### 3. Methodology

The quantitative research technique was regarded more appropriate than the qualitative research approach since the study is focused on finding the important elements that influence the e-WOM behavior of customers in the



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Saudi fashion industry. This was combined with the deductive approach to assess the quantitative survey data, which would be followed by testing to see if the data is compatible with the researcher's previous assumptions, hypotheses, and theories identified in the literature study.

The researcher conducted an electronic survey (using the website Survey Monkey). The specific purpose of the research, as well as the underlying reasons for conducting the survey-based questionnaires, were also explained to the research participants. The research subjects were advised that they might withdraw from the study at any moment without providing any prior explanation or justification, and that their participation in the study was voluntary.

A statistical process is used to analyze the data, therefore, the quantitative data is analyzed using a statistical software package SPSS. The survey requests were distributed using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Whatsapp. These inquiries were initially directed towards Saudi women who are friends of the researcher on social media networks, before being extended to the researcher's wider social circle, including friends of friends. This "snowball" sampling method is convenient, but it adds a bias in that respondents are more likely to locate other respondents who are similar to them. 100 survey responses were obtained, representing a response rate of 55.6 percent. In this research, 35 survey participants were involved in the pilot study from whom; useful feedback was obtained before launching the full-scale study.



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### **3.1 Reliability and Validity**

The extent to which the researcher's data gathering methodologies or analytic procedures provide consistent results is referred to as reliability (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). The following three questions have been addressed in terms of reliability:

1. Will other scholars achieve comparable results when researching the same topic?
2. Is there sufficient transparency in terms of how the raw data was interpreted?
3. Will the measures provide the same results on subsequent occasions?

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient will be used to assess the measures' reliability. SPSS was used to conduct the reliability analysis. According to Eisinga et al. (2013), for the variables to be considered reliable, the reliability measures for each independent variable must be greater than 0.6, which is the lowest allowable limit for Cronbach's alpha.

According to Bryman and Bell (2015), validity is concerned with determining whether the findings are truly what they appear to show, i.e. whether the relationship between the two variables (in this case, trust, tie strength, etc. as independent variables and e-WOM as a dependent variable) is a causal relationship.

### **4. Results analysis**

The first hypothesis was investigated to see if trust is related to e-WOM





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and subsequent product purchase. The regression analysis and correlation testing results indicated that, while trust has a positive link with e-WOM and subsequent product purchase, this relationship is not statistically significant. This result is congruent with the findings of Hsin and Wen (2008), who discovered that trust is not a significant criterion when it comes to e-WOM and its impact on consumer purchase decisions.

The second hypothesis investigated if tie strength effects consumer participation in e-WOM behavior and eventual product purchase. According to the results of the regression analysis and correlation testing, although tie strength has a positive link with e-WOM and subsequent product purchase, this relationship is not statistically significant. This study contradicts Chu and Kim (2011)'s contention that the underlying product selections of customers are positively influenced by the strength of the relationships, which contributes to the acceleration of e-WOM communication within a vast and wide-scale network.

The third hypothesis investigated if the informational influence of social media users from their network is positively connected with their participation in e-WOM and subsequent purchase of the product. The findings indicated that informational influence has a positive association with user participation in e-WOM and product purchase; the relationship was shown to be statistically significant. This data supports Chu and Kim's (2011) conclusion that users of social networking sites have a tendency to accept information from other knowledgeable connections, which influences their participation in e-WOM on social networking sites.

The fourth hypothesis addressed in the study was if the normative influence



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of social media users from their network is positively connected with their participation in e-WOM and subsequent purchase of the goods. The tendency of social network users to comply with the expectations of others is referred to as normative influence (Cheung et al., 2009). The regression analysis and correlation testing results indicated that, while normative influence has a positive association with e-WOM and subsequent product purchase, this relationship is not statistically significant.

This finding contrasts with Chu and Kim's (2011) conclusion that it is a combination of informational and normative influences that drive users' e-WOM behavior, as the study only found that informational influence has an impact on e-WOM behavior and normative influence is statistically not significant.

The fifth hypothesis investigated whether customers with a high level of fashion involvement are more likely to engage in fashion-related e-WOM and then purchase fashion products. The results of the regression analysis and correlation testing indicated that fashion involvement has a positive link with user engagement in e-WOM and product purchase; the relationship was confirmed to be statistically significant.

Because the fashion business has long been thought to be a high involvement industry, Goldsmith and Emmert (1991) argue that individuals who score high on fashion involvement are more likely to buy fashion products, keep an interest in fashion, and, as a result, participate in WOM and e-WOM. The findings of this study are congruent with the findings of Goldsmith and Emmert (1991), who concluded that consumers with a high level of fashion interest are more likely to engage in fashion-



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related e-WOM.

The final hypothesis investigated whether customers with a high level of brand involvement are more likely to engage in brand-related e-WOM and then purchase fashion products. The findings of the regression analysis and correlation testing indicated that brand involvement has a positive link with user engagement in e-WOM and product purchase; the relationship was validated as statistically significant. This results is consistent with Harrison-(2001), Walker's and Hur et al(2011) findings that devoted consumers who are associated with a brand have good feelings of attachment to the brand and, as a result, engage in e-WOM about the brand.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The following are the research's main goals and how they were met:

1. To assess the elements that influence the relationship between customer participation in electronic word of mouth and consumer purchase of fashion products.
2. To conduct a review of existing studies and literature on a comparable research topic in order to identify and implement helpful aspects that influence consumer participation in electronic word of mouth and consumer purchase of fashion products.
3. Conduct a critical analysis of the data gathered and compare the findings to previous studies.
4. To create practical guidelines and recommendations that retailers and



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marketing practitioners in Saudi Arabia can use.

The dissertation's investigation and results reveal numerous intriguing tendencies in terms of the factors affecting e-WOM. To begin, when fashion firms seek to increase customer awareness of their brands and products using e-WOM, they do not necessarily need to prioritize trust and relationship strength as essential variables driving e-WOM. Second, consumers with a high level of fashion and brand involvement are more likely to participate in strong WOM behavior in relation to fashion brands and their products. As a result, the most useful for fashion firms aiming to build awareness of their brands and goods in Saudi Arabia.

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