The Influence of Reviewers on Millennial Consumers
Acknowledgements

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Abstract

Background: The digital world of today alters the way consumers search, communicate, and perceive information significantly. Specifically, the traditional word-of-mouth (WoM), which refers to the exchange of information between consumers about products and brand, has become digitalized. This transforms word-of-mouth into electronic word-of-mouth (eWoM), which serves as a user-generated information resource and can be accessed through various social media platforms.

Problem: The ubiquitous presence of social media platform usage increases consumer’s exposure to electronic word-of-mouth reviews of goods and services. Previous studies primarily emphasized the effect of eWoM review quality and credibility, but neglected the reviewers that create the content of these reviews.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine the influence that eWoM reviewers exert on Millennials’ purchasing behaviors.

Method: A positivist approach was utilized together with a deductive approach in this quantitative study. A self-completion questionnaire which was distributed online, and the data collected from the respondents of it served as the primary data with academic literature serving as secondary data. The analysis of the data was processed in SPSS.

Conclusion: The findings of this study show eWoM reviewers and their social currency affect the purchasing behaviors of Millennials. Furthermore, the study showed that the nature of the influence of eWoM reviewers was directed at entertaining, educating, and persuading Millennials rather than acquainting them with new products.
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1 Introduction

This chapter will provide the reader with a relevant background as well as introduce the problem tackled within the study. It also includes the purpose of the study, research questions, contributions, and definitions of key terms. Additionally, the delimitations of the study can also be found here.

1.1 Background

The rapid increase of Internet usage has altered the way consumers retrieve and process information. The participation of ordinary consumers in generating and distributing content to various online platforms has led to the proliferating phenomenon of user-generated content (UGC). In 2011, UGC websites attracted over 101 million users in the United States of America (Christodoulides, Michaelidou, & Argyrou, 2012). As an effect of this widespread of UGC websites, consumers are no longer solely dependent on the websites of brands or retailers to obtain information about products; but can easily access other users’ generated content about their experiences with the products. This is also the basis of electronic word-of-mouth (eWoM), which is the expression of traditional word-of-mouth (WoM) in online environments. Electronic word-of-mouth has become an essential source of information that influences the purchasing behaviors of consumers, as a result of the growth of UGC. Furthermore, eWoM is evident in the form of a product review, which is defined as the consumer’s description and opinion toward a certain product (Bickart & Schindler, 2001).

The rapid emergence of eWoM reviews has sparked the interest of researchers previously to examine and analyze this phenomenon. Prior research has examined the impact of eWoM reviews (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007; Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009, Sher & Lee, 2009; Cheung, Sia, & Kuan, 2012). However, a majority of the existing research is directed at retailer websites such as Epinions.com and Amazon.com where eWoM reviews are oftentimes anonymous or using pseudonyms; thus there is less interaction between reviewers and other consumers (Cheung et al., 2012; Mudambi, & Schuff, 2010). On the contrary, social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook allow their users, such as eWoM reviewers, to create and distribute personalized content, while
interacting and engaging in conversations with other consumers. Through interacting with eWoM reviewers on social media platforms, consumers can potentially form a sense of discernment towards the eWoM reviewers’ multidimensional social characteristics, which can be referred to as social currency. Furthermore, the perception of the consumers toward eWoM reviewers shifts the previous focus placed on the review itself to the individuals that generate the eWoM.

1.2 Problem

As the usage of social media platforms increases rapidly, so does the accessibility of people to reviews of products and services on the Internet (Park, Lee & Han, 2007). A study conducted by Park et al. (2007) revealed that people are influenced by reviews of products and services they see online, and make purchases based on these eWoM reviews. Electronic word-of-mouth reviews have been researched extensively (Brown et al, 2007, Cheung et al., 2009) however, there is a lack of research on the reviewers behind these eWoM reviews and how they influence Millennials. Furthermore, existing research focuses primarily on the credibility aspects of eWoM reviews while neglecting the social currency dimensions of the individuals behind eWoM reviews.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore how eWoM reviewers on social media platforms influence Millennials’ purchasing behaviors concerning clothing and personal care products. In order to achieve this and construct a theoretical background for this study, social currency and consumer behavior theories will be examined in conjunction with previous literature regarding eWoM.
1.4 Research Questions

RQ1: What nature of influence do electronic word-of-mouth reviewers have on Millennials’ purchasing behaviors?

This question is focused on the different ways by which eWoM reviewers influence Millennials’ purchasing behaviors. The eWoM reviewers could acquaint, educate, entertain, or persuade Millennials when it comes to clothing and personal care products. The nature of the influence for Millennials could be a reflection on how they process the information they receive and what they do with the received information.

RQ2: How does electronic word-of-mouth reviewers’ social currency influence Millennials’ purchasing behaviors concerning clothing and personal care products?

This question aims to explore how Millennial consumers perceive eWoM reviewers and to what degree their purchasing behaviors is influenced by eWoM reviewers. The question is also intent on revealing whether Millennials take any action as a consequence to being exposed to an eWoM reviewer’s content.

RQ3: What social media platforms used by electronic word-of-mouth reviewers influence Millennials’ purchasing behaviors?

The aim of this question is to explore how trustworthy Millennials perceive various social media platforms since how trustworthy they deem a platform is likely to have an impact on how they process the information published by eWoM reviewers on these platforms.

1.5 Method

Consistent with the purpose and research questions stated above, this study adopts a quantitative method to explore how eWoM reviewers influence Millennials’ purchasing behaviors regarding clothing and personal care products. Hence, the primary data used for this study was collected through a self-completion questionnaire distributed to Millennial consumers who provided responses on how their purchasing behaviors regarding clothing and personal care products are influenced by eWoM reviewers.
1.6 Contributions

The contributions that this study offer are academically relevant as they utilize the dimensions of social currency to examine the influence of eWoM reviewers on the purchasing behaviors of Millennials. The findings of this study will strengthen current understanding of eWoM when applied to Millennials’ purchasing behaviors, particularly in a highly interactive online environment that Millennials are native to, such as social media platforms.

1.7 Definitions of Key Terms

This section brings up the definitions of keywords and phrases used in this study to facilitate the reader’s understanding.

**Clothing and Personal Care Products**, in this study, the term refers to products such as skincare and cosmetics items, and clothing and wearable accessories such as jewelry, clothes, shoes, bags, and headwear.

**Electronic Word-of-Mouth Reviewers (eWoM reviewers)**, in this study, is not limited to those whose profession is to review products online, but to any social media users that provide information and have experience using clothing and personal care products which they wish to share. However, the eWoM reviewers mentioned in this study are distinguished from anonymous reviewers, whose identities are not visible online.

**Millennials**, also called Generation Y (Dupont, 2015; Bilgihan, 2016; Mangold & Smith, 2012), is the generational cohort born in the 1980s and the 1990s. This study utilizes the age range provided by the United Nations (2010), which states that 1981 is the first year of the cohort and that 2000 is the last year of it. Those belonging to this cohort are part of the first generation to have been brought up in a world where access to the digital environment and all that it entails has been present throughout their entire lives (Prensky, 2001).
Social Media Platforms, and Social Media, “employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content” (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011, p. 1). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p. 61) offers a slightly different definition were they state that social media is “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content”. The platforms that will be referred to as social media platforms in this study are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat and Tumblr. These were included because of the possibility for interaction between users as well as the possibility of creating one’s own Web presence using these services.

User Generated Content (UGC) is a term that is “usually applied to describe the various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users” (Kaplan, & Haeinlein, 2010, p. 61). This could signify YouTube videos, posts on Instagram, and Snapchat messages.

1.8 Delimitations

The scope of this study has been narrowed down to clothing and personal care products since they are common topics in eWoM reviews. Another delimitation concerns the respondents to the questionnaire; it was distributed to Millennials. The reason for this limitation is that this generational cohort is “a vital component in the evolution of social media becoming a source of product information” (Mangold & Smith, 2012, p. 141). Another reason is that Millennials are more receptive towards eWoM than previous generational cohorts (Barnes, 2015). In addition, limiting this study to one generational cohort helps to decrease the impact of generational differences since different generations may have different preferences, values, and behaviors when it comes to shopping (Parment, 2013). Different sources have defined Millennials differently (Mangold & Smith, 2012), however, the United Nations (2010) define the age range for Millennials as those who were born between 1982 and 2000 and is the age range used in this study.
2 Frame of Reference

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the relevant literature and theories concerning social influence, opinion leadership, social capital, social currency, word-of-mouth, and reviews found online. Furthermore, it provides an overview on the literature on Millennials and their purchasing behaviors.

2.1 Social Influence and Opinion Leadership in Marketing

In the two-step flow of communication model proposed by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948, as cited in Bobkowski, 2015), individuals who exert a certain level of influence in public opinion by interpreting and diffusing the information they receive from the media to their social network are conceptualized as opinion leaders (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948 as cited in Bobkowski, 2015). Katz (1957) elaborates that the distinction of an opinion leader is related to “(1) to the personification of certain values (who one is); (2) to competence (what one knows); and (3) to strategic social location (whom one knows)” (Katz, 1957, p. 73). Opinion leaders serve a central role in the two–step flow communication model as they convey the efficacy of interpersonal relations in the flow of information from the media to public.

In the field of marketing, the influence of opinion leaders (as emphasized by the two–step flow communication model) is essential to the concept of influencer marketing. The opinion leaders become a source of influence for consumers’ purchasing behaviors. It can be elaborated that opinion leaders participate in the process of influence marketing by taking on the role of information mediators and distribute information on certain products and services that is filtered through their own interpretation (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948, as cited in Bobkowski, 2015). Influencer marketing endorses the premise that consumers’ purchasing behaviors are influenced by the information dispersed by opinion leaders. Furthermore, influencer marketing relates closely to WoM and is especially prominent in eWoM in the form of reviews. Therefore, eWoM reviewers can be considered opinion leaders who coincidentally are involved in the process of influencer marketing.
2.2 Social Capital and Opinion Leadership in Marketing

Similar to the two-step flow communication model, the social capital theory proposes that the interaction in social relationships generates beneficial resources for members of a social group (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). The social relationships between family members, friends, and mutual acquaintances benefit people with “the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit in the various senses of the word” (Bourdieu, 1986, as cited in Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, p. 243). The interaction and exchanging of information between eWoM reviewers and their followers can be interpreted as a manifestation of social capital on the Internet.

Social capital theory, which establishes that the coordination between individuals fosters mutual benefits, provides a foundation for Lobschat, Zinnbauer, Pallas, and Joachimsthaler (2013)’s conceptualization of social currency. An individual’s social currency is made up of six dimensions; affiliation, conversation, utility, advocacy, information, and identity (Zinnbauer & Honer, 2011).

Affiliation refers to the feeling of connection and emotional attachment that an individual shares with others in the community (Lobschat, et al., 2013; Zinnbauer & Honer, 2011). It stems from the interaction between eWoM reviewers and their followers as well as between followers who share similar interests and experiences.

Another dimension of social currency is conversation, which accounts for the discussion of products and brands that consumers partake (Lobschat et al., 2013). Conversations may emerge from the interactions between eWoM reviewers and their followers on various social media platforms about their mutual consumption interest (Zinnbauer & Honer, 2011). The more frequent a product appears in social media discussions, the more memorable it is in the customer’s mind, which can influence the consumer’s purchasing behavior.

Utility is a social currency dimension that conveys a consumer's motivation to interact with other members of a community (Lobschat et al., 2013). Prior sociological studies have recognized that the interaction and connection in a community stimulate positive benefits in terms of personal development for the community’s members (Davidson &
Cotter, 1991, as cited in Lobschat et al., 2013). For instance, the utility community members can derive from interactions with eWoM reviewers can be increasing their self-confidence, personal happiness, and gratification.

*Advocacy* pertains to the promotional effects that arise as a result of a consumer’s interaction with other members of a social media community (Zinnbauer & Honer, 2011). For instance, when eWoM reviewers actively post on their social media platforms about a product or a brand, they are signifying the qualities and benefits of this product and brand to others (Lobschat et al., 2013). Advocacy can spark the interest and shape a mental image of a product and brand in the consumer’s mind.

The functional benefits of sharing information and learning from each other is referred to as *informational values* (Zinnbauer & Honer, 2011). Information values can range from gaining new knowledge about products or receiving support when problems around a product occur (Zinnbauer & Honer, 2011; Lobschat et al., 2013). Informational values are particularly highly valued by new members of a community on social media platforms, as they tend to perceive the community primarily as a source of information (Zinnbauer & Honer, 2011), while social support on solving problems around a product is usually sought out by long-time members of the community.

*Identity* embodies the way consumers introduce and present themselves in a new community or social setting (Zinnbauer & Honer, 2011; Lobschat et al., 2013). The consumers’ identities represents their personalities and characteristics, as well as the similarities they may share with the community they introduce themselves into. These shared similarities strengthen the relationship between consumers, and thus, possibly, reinforce a sense of loyalty within the community (Zinnbauer & Honer, 2011; Lobschat et al., 2013).

Each dimension of the social currency defines a characteristic of the social interaction between consumers and eWoM reviewers as well as representing the subsequent benefits that are inherent in these interactions. Consequently, these social currency dimensions can measure the nature and level of influence that eWoM reviewers establish and exert
on consumers’ purchasing behaviors through social interactions on social media platforms.

2.3 Electronic Word-of-Mouth versus Offline Word-of-Mouth

Word-of-mouth is conceptualized as an interpersonal process of exchanging information about products and services between consumers (Brown & Reingen, 1987). It is demonstrated to be an influential source of information in the marketplace as well as a strong ally for marketing products and services (Lee & Youn, 2009; Dichter, 1966), because consumers generally trust their peers’ personal experience more than paid marketers (Sen & Lerman, 2007). Word-of-mouth communication research prior to the development of the Internet, focuses on the verbal and face-to-face conversations between communicators in close proximity (Brown, Broderick, Lee, 2007). Several studies relate the determinants that make offline WoM successful to the relationship strength between customers as well as the similarities between customers (Brown & Reingen, 1987; Dichter, 1966; Bone, 1992). In a study conducted by Brown and Reingen (1987), the effectiveness of WoM is analyzed based on the strength of the social ties between consumers as well as the degree of homophily. The strength of the social ties refers to the level of closeness between individuals while homophily emphasizes the similarity in attributes that different individuals possess (Brown & Reingen, 1987). It is revealed by Brown and Reingen (1987), that strong social ties such as close friends and family members have significantly more influential power in WoM communication than weak social ties between strangers or acquaintances. On an interesting note, WoM communication arises more often in casual conversation between people who hold weak social ties with one another. This finding is further discussed in a study by Bone (1992), in which it is explained that people with less social tie strength tend to speak about their past experiences with products and services more in order to find a common ground. While relationships with stronger strength focus on daily events because they know each other well. Therefore, past experiences on products and services rarely arise in conversations (Bone, 1992).

As mentioned previously, offline WoM is limited to direct face-to-face interactions. Therefore the term “review” is rather inapplicable to offline WoM. Traditionally, offline
WoM remains as a one-to-one interactive process and to expand WoM from one to many is time consuming. However, the rapid development of the Internet sees the emergence of UGC, which allows consumers to share their opinions and experience with products on the Internet. This opportunity for consumers to actively exchange product information and experience in the online world is also regarded as a variety of eWoM (Chen & Huang, 2013, Willemsen, Neijens, & Bronner, 2012). Electronic word-of-mouth expands the reach of offline WoM from one-to-one to unlimited global consumers’ reach. It becomes an abundant source of product information for customers to easily access and research prior to making a purchase (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Lee & Youn, 2009; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Sen & Lerman, 2007; Dellarocas, 2003). In contrast to offline WoM, where opinions on products are often articulated verbally and can “disappear into thin air”, eWoM persists on the Internet and can be easily retrieved at any time (Dellarocas, Zhang, & Awad, 2007).

Steffes and Burgee (2009) evaluated whether existing literature on social ties and homophily is relevant in an online context. Their study reveals that, contrary to traditional offline WoM reviews, eWoM reviews do not have to be dependent on strong social ties in order to be effective. Electronic reviews from virtual strangers are equally valued and sometimes preferred by consumers on social media platforms. This finding is also supported by Brown, et al., (2007), which observes that the idea of people prioritizing reviews and information from strong social ties is irrelevant in an online world.

Another construct used to analyze both offline WoM and eWoM reviews is homophily, which is the extent to which pairs of individuals resembles each other in terms of age, gender, lifestyle, et cetera (Rogers, 1983). According to Brown, et al., (2007), online homophily is based on the evaluation of similar interests, regardless of personal characteristics. In contrast, Steffes and Burgee (2009) argue that people tend to believe and value opinions from those who are similar to them in terms of characteristics such as age, income, and education, both in the online world and the offline world.
2.4 Distinguishing Anonymous Reviews and Personal Reviews

Anonymity is perhaps the most significant factor that distinguishes eWoM reviews from offline WoM reviews. Anonymous eWoM reviews allow consumers to share their opinions on products without having to disclose their personal information online, which completely detaches customers from the face-to-face interactions that are quintessential to traditional offline WoM. Anonymous reviews are more common on product review websites (e.g. Epinions.com and TrustPilot.com), brands’ websites (e.g. BarnesandNobles.com and CVS.com) as well as retailers’ websites (e.g. eBay.com and Amazon.com). For instance, customers on eBay.com are encouraged to rate the products they purchased as well as to leave a brief review without revealing their personal details to other customers. The anonymity of certain eWoM reviews motivates customers to write about their experience and share it with others, thus elevating the growth of eWoM according to Lee and Youn (2009).

While this increasing number of anonymous eWoM reviews provides an abundant source of free information for customers, it also implies a disadvantage in terms of credibility and quality. When eWoM reviews are anonymous, they exhibit limited to no clues for customers to evaluate the credibility of the reviewer and the actual quality of the products being reviewed. Thus, customers are faced with the challenge of assessing the opinions of complete strangers (Dellarocas, 2003; Lee & Youn, 2009; Jensen, Averbeck, Zhang, & Wright, 2013). Generally, anonymous eWoM reviewers do not have any obligations or responsibility for the consequences of the information they provide online since other customers are complete strangers to them (Lee & Youn, 2009).

Due to the anonymity of reviews from review websites, brands’ websites, and retailers’ websites, the reviewer is separated from the reviews (Jensen, et al., 2013). However, when customers post eWoM reviews in a more personal online environment, such as social media platforms (for example Facebook and Instagram), the identity of the reviewer is attached to the credibility and quality of the review. Social media becomes one of the most powerful tools for eWoM due to its prevalence as well as its ability to globally distribute information (Choi & Kim, 2014; Eisingerich, Chun, Liu, Jia, & Bell, 2015). Electronic word-of-mouth reviews posted on social media platforms that reveal the identity and personal information convey a more personal feeling and therefore, will be
referred to as personal eWoM reviews in this section, as opposed to anonymous eWoM reviews. Comparing these two types of eWoM reviews, Bickart and Schindler (2001) demonstrate that personal eWoM reviews on online forums are more effective in generating interest from consumers than anonymous eWoM reviews posted on brands’, retailers’ and review websites. Their study also reveals that personal information of reviewers on online forums can engender trust and thus initiate more powerful influence in comparison to anonymous eWoM reviews (Bickart & Schindler, 2001). Furthermore, personal eWoM reviews are often illustrated with various media such as video, pictures, and the like, in combination with text. Personal eWoM reviews shared on social media platforms can receive comments and messages, which can make personal eWoM reviews to be considered as more interactive than anonymous reviews.

Another important attribute that distinguishes personal eWoM reviews from anonymous reviews is the visibility of an eWoM reviewer’s social currency. As mentioned above, social currency reveals not only the identity of eWoM reviewers, but also their affiliation, information, advocacy, utility, and conversation. These dimensions provide consumers with abundant resources to evaluate personal eWoM reviews as opposed to anonymous eWoM, and thus, influence their perception and trust towards the eWoM reviewers. This distinction is particularly important when it comes to analyzing the purchasing behaviors of Millennial consumers because this unique group of consumers have more social interactions in the online world than offline (Barnes, 2015). As such, it is important to study the role of the social aspects (i.e. social currency) of personal eWoM reviews.

2.5 Millennials’ Purchasing Behaviors

Millennials as a generational cohort is the largest one since the cohort called Baby Boomers (Smith, 2012). The sheer size of the group translates into a considerable amount of purchasing power (Mangold & Smith, 2012; Parment, 2011), one which can be assumed to increase as the group’s discretionary income expands. This growth in discretionary income is expected to take place along with the growth in use of social media by Millennials (Mangold & Smith, 2012; Smith, 2012). The way in which Millennials use information technology, such as the Internet and various social media, can be seen as a result of the group consisting of digital natives instead of digital
immigrants which is a term used to describe previous generational cohorts’ adoption of the digital environment (Prensky, 2001). By describing Millennials as digital natives it is demonstrated that the generational cohort in question is the first one who has had access to the various aspects within the digital environment their entire lives (Prensky, 2001), barring exceptions. As exemplified by Smith (2012), Millennials have grown up online, both using the opportunities to socialize and to make purchases. Bolton et al. (2013) does not go as far as to say that Millennials have had access to information technology their entire lives and instead states that they had early and frequent exposure to it. However several sources seem to agree that Millennials being technologically savvy is a typical trait of the cohort (Bolton et al., 2013; Young & Hinesly, 2012; Farris, Chong, & Danning, 2002; Nusair, Bilgihan, Okumus, & Cobanoglu, 2013). This acceptance of technology is further displayed in the ease with which the usage of online resources comes to Millennials in how they use social media for networking (Parment, 2013), purchase products via e-commerce (Smith, 2012), and use technology for entertainment (Bolton et al., 2013).

This savviness when it comes to technology shows when Millennials can process information from websites faster than previous generations (Kim & Ammeter, 2008). This could be useful in today’s society where people are inundated with advertisements constantly (Smith, 2012). As Parment (2013) states a “constant and overwhelming flow of information has become the rule for this cohort” (p. 192). Perhaps as a response to this constant flow of information to process, Millennials do not want to have information given to them non-stop; they want to decide when, where, and how to be reached themselves (Parment, 2013). Something which is further echoed by Powers and Valentine (2013) who state that Millennials are fairly selective with what they pay attention to. It is plausible that the Millennials’ interest in seeking out their own information when it comes to products they are interested in is a reaction to this flow of information since they are in control of their own information search activities. Millennials are considered to be more likely to place value in other people’s opinions on social media (Bolton et al., 2013) and also view these opinions as more credible than information received from advertising due to that the information from peers have passed through an evaluation of people similar to themselves (Allsop, Bassett, & Hoskins, 2007). This opinion is further echoed by Smith (2012) and, Mangold and Smith (2012) who similarly state that Millennials consider the
opinions and views of fellow peers to be more trustworthy than the information provided by traditional media and the companies producing the products discussed. The fact that Millennials more often than the general population talk about products online (Smith, 2012) strengthens the view that the cohort prefers the information given by peers to that given by traditional media and the companies behind the products. Furthermore, the reliance on product information provided by peers is not a one-way street but Millennials are willing to take time out of their day to detail their own experiences with products in reviews and product feedback, as well as promoting their own favorite brands to their peers (Smith, 2012). Consequently, Millennials are both being influenced by their peers while looking for information about a product before a potential purchase as well as acting as influencers for their peers by influencing their purchasing behaviors by way of the reviews they have written on social media platforms.

Parment (2013) states that Millennials have a high degree of image-awareness, and with it comes the concept of social risk. The members of the cohort place great importance in how they, and the products they purchase, are perceived by their social environment. This can be connected to that Millennials grew up in, and live in, a very materialistic society that views purchases as a way to express personality and as a way of showing financial strength (DongHee & SooCheong, 2014). Furthermore, Millennials have a propensity to use the way they consume, and what they consume, to show the world who they are as individuals (Parment, 2011; 2013). The social risk of this is that people in the social environment may not perceive these self-expressions as they are intended, or they may be misunderstood leading to misconceptions of the Millennial behind the products. Further characteristics used to describe Millennials include their need for instantaneous real-time interaction (Young & Hinesly, 2012), investigative nature (Mangold & Smith, 2012), openness to change (Young & Hinesly, 2012), and connectivity (Novak, 2012 via Bucuta, 2015). It can be argued that these characteristics can all be connected to the Millennials’ use of the Internet and the habits that usage has created, for better or for worse.

All of the above mentioned characteristics found in Millennials and their purchasing behaviors could potentially be connected to how they view and assess eWoM reviewers. The social risk connected to purchases may be eliminated or at least decreased by eWoM
reviewers. Additionally, eWoM reviewers may satiate Millennial consumers’ need for information that is not produced by the companies behind the products and services of interest. Furthermore, the higher propensity of Millennials in comparison to previous generations when it comes to discussing products may have a positive impact on the existence of eWoM reviewers.
3 Method

In this chapter the chosen methods used for this study are described and arguments are provided for the choices made in regards to these methods. Furthermore, the data collection and the data analysis is detailed and discussed, along with the construction of the questionnaire. Additionally, reliability and validity issues are brought up.

3.1 Philosophy of Science: Positivism

The philosophy of science concerns a system of assumptions and beliefs about knowledge development (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). Five research philosophies to consider for research within business and management are positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and pragmatism (Saunders et al., 2016). For this study positivism was adopted as the appropriate scientific philosophy.

Positivism, according to Bryman (2016), is not easy to succinctly and precisely describe since the use of the word can vary between various authors. The knowledge development within positivism relies on facts that are measurable and observable by researchers (Saunders et al., 2016). It is a research philosophy with its roots in the natural sciences and its factual approach to data (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012). Furthermore, positivism as an approach makes use of methods from the natural sciences and applies them to relevant fields of interest. Typically research that employs positivism is deductive, uses quantitative methods of analysis, and has large samples (Saunders et al., 2016). Positivism as a research philosophy has as its ontology that there is only one reality and that is one that can be measured and observed (Saunders et al., 2016). Additionally, a positivist approach is often interested in distinguishing cause and effect relationships in the collected data to explain observed behaviors (Saunders et al., 2016). An important factor of positivism is that the researchers themselves keep an objective stance in regards to the research conducted, as well as stay detached, independent, and neutral to the research. It is a scientific philosophy that does not value interpretations of data but does value the observable and measurable facts the data presents. Furthermore, this results in the possibility of drawing generalizations that can be close to law-like from the data collected for the current research (Saunders et al., 2016). These law-like generalizations along with
the previously mentioned reliance on observable and measurable facts, and the previously mentioned cause and effect relationships are part of the epistemology of positivism; what is deemed as acceptable knowledge for positivism (Saunders et al., 2016).

Positivism was chosen as the scientific research philosophy for this study because of its suitability in connection to quantitative methods and a deductive research approach. Its lack of value-based interpretation of data is well-suited to research with large sample sizes as is the case with this study. Furthermore, the approach’s reliance on data analysis using software facilitates the work conducted with this study since it eases the workload for the authors while at the same time providing various potentially usable conclusions. Additionally, the aspect of the approach involving generalizations drawn from the collected data provided an interesting feature for the topic of the study. However, as previously mentioned, it was ultimately the scientific philosophy’s compatibility with a deductive research approach and quantitative methods that acted as a deciding factor for this study. This compatibility was crucial to attain in order to aid the process of working with the study as much as possible.

3.2 Scientific Research Method: Deductive Approach

Scientific research has three possible approaches; a deductive approach, an inductive approach, and an abductive approach (Saunders et al., 2016). The deductive approach for scientific research begins with a theory which then leads to observations and findings (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As a contrast to the previously mentioned method the inductive approach ends with a theory and begins with the observations and findings of a study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The abductive approach is a combination of the two previously mentioned methods. The approach focuses on collecting data in order to explore a particular phenomenon, theme, or pattern that then allows the for the generation of a new theory or modification of an already existing one, subsequently the theory is tested through more data collection (Saunders et al., 2016). The authors chose to use a deductive approach for this study.

The deductive approach to scientific research begins with a theory, often found during the work conducted for the literature review, one or several hypotheses are then created
stemming from the theory, then a strategy is created to test the theory in question, and in the end the theory is falsified or verified by the undertaken research (Saunders et al., 2016). That the starting point was something that already existed and the compatibility of the deductive approach with positivism was a deciding factor in choosing a deductive approach to the scientific research. It is crucial that all the methods chosen for the study act in symbiosis since the various methods act together to create a whole approach to the conducted research and this desired end result would be hindered if the chosen methods were not compatible. Furthermore, the chosen approach fits well with the study since the study itself has a theory at its base and from which the study stems. Additionally, the added rigidity of the deductive approach, while it is more restrictive, aids the work process of the study since it maintains the neutrality and objectivity established by positivism.

3.3 Quantitative Research Method

Another consideration in deciding on the method for our study is that of the choice between a quantitative research and a qualitative research. Quantitative research is a strategy that focuses on the gathering and analysis of numeric data, for example with the help of questionnaires, and has a deductive relationship between the theory and research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Qualitative research is more interested in words than numbers, for example with the help of in-depth interviews, and has an inductive relationship between the theory and the research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The research method chosen for this study was quantitative.

Quantitative research focuses on the collection of various numerical data which can be collected through a research instrument such as questionnaire that can be distributed in various ways (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This research approach has four main preoccupations: generalization, measurement, causality, and replication (Bryman & Bell, 2015). When it comes to generalization the preoccupation chiefly concerns if the findings of a study can be generalized for a greater number of people than those who participated in the research. For measurement the preoccupation lies with issues concerning the validity and reliability of the results of conducted research. The preoccupation when it comes to causality is the interest in finding and understanding the underlying causes to
observed behavior. Replication has the possibility of recreating the undertaken research as its main concern.

Since the authors of this study are interested in discovering what a large number of people think of the topic of this study a quantitative approach was chosen. Additionally a quantitative approach would be more time-effective in gathering responses while also requiring less dedication from the authors. This may not be ideal, but due to the time constraints placed upon the research it was seen as a valid reason for the chosen approach.

3.4 Data Collection, Sampling, and Data Collection Tool

For this study the authors chose to use convenience sampling as the sampling technique and the choice of collection tool fell on a self-completion questionnaire. These choices are explained and discussed below.

3.4.1 Type of Data and Data Collection

There are two types of data sources to use while conducting research; primary and secondary data (Malhotra et al., 2012). Primary data is data collected for the purpose of a specific research project being while secondary data is data that was collected for another purpose than the one it is currently being used for (Saunders et al., 2016). Primary data is what will be used for this study. A section about the literature search then follows, which explains the process of gathering the information for the literature review.

The primary data for the study was collected through a self-completion questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed using the online tool Google Form and distributed to the respondents online. The first part of the self-completion questionnaire was designed to establish basic facts such as age, gender, education level, and current profession. Furthermore, this first part also helped the authors to determine that the respondents indeed belonged to the Millennials cohort. The main body of the self-completion questionnaire featured 38 fixed-response alternative questions. The fixed-response alternative questions consisted of both Likert scale questions, where respondents had to answer to what degree they agreed or disagreed with a statement (Malhotra et al., 2012),
and multiple-choice questions where the respondents had to choose one or more of the alternatives presented.

3.4.2 Literature Search

The academic articles used in this study were collected using electronic search engines. The two primary sources were Jönköping University’s own search engine, called Primo, and Google’s search engine for literature of a scholarly nature called Google Scholar. Google Scholar was further utilized as a way of seeing how often potential articles had been cited as a way of measuring their quality initially.

Examples of search phrases used during the literature search: online purchasing behavior, word of mouth, online word of mouth, social media influencers, social media and word of mouth, Millennials, online reviews, online reviewers, electronic word of mouth, generation Y, user-generated content, social networks, social media marketing, celebrity advertising, paid endorsement, social media influencers, social capital, influencer marketing, social currency.

Books, both physical and online, found at the Jönköping University Library were also used as reference material for various parts of the study.

3.4.3 Sampling Technique

The self-completion questionnaire was sent out to potential respondents with the use of various social media platforms used by the authors. This type of sampling is a version of convenience sampling. Convenience sampling is a form of non-probability sampling where researchers select the participants in a sample group because they were easily available to them (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The choice to use a non-probability sampling method instead of a probability sampling method came down to the time available for the collection of data. There were a total of 101 valid respondents participating in the self-completion questionnaire out of the 130 people it was sent to.
3.4.4 Collection Tool: Self-Completion Questionnaire

A self-completion questionnaire, sometimes called a self-administered questionnaire, is one in which the respondents themselves complete the questionnaire once it has been received (Bryman & Bell, 2015). There are several ways of distributing or conducting a questionnaire; distribution can be over the Internet or through the postal system, the questionnaire can be completed over the telephone or it can be completed during a face-to-face meeting. There are several advantages and disadvantages to consider when it comes to a self-completion questionnaire, for example convenience, response rates, lack of possibility of collecting additional data, and types of questions being asked (Bryman, 2008). For this study a self-completion questionnaire distributed online was chosen.

The reasons why the authors of this study chose to utilize a self-completion questionnaire are several but the deciding factor was the time constraint placed upon the study and its completion. While reviewing what type of quantitative research method to use time and ease of collection were the two most important considerations. In comparison to conducting a multitude of structured interviews, which would be time-consuming in regard to both the interviews themselves as well as the additional time dedicated to transcribing them, a self-completion questionnaire would be a more efficient use of the limited time at hand and it would enable the collection of data from more people than the alternative would have. As just mentioned a questionnaire would make it possible to gather data from more people but, furthermore, it would also make the collection of data easier for both parties involved. The authors could send out the self-completion questionnaire and the respondents could complete it when they had the time. While there are clear disadvantages with the chosen method of data collection the authors’ awareness of said disadvantages enabled them to mitigate the potential impact of those on the questionnaire and the collected data.

3.5 Questionnaire Construction and Description of Components

The following sections explain the design process of the self-completion questionnaire as well as describe the functions of the various parts of it.
3.5.1 Construction of the Self-Completion Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data to later be analyzed for the study. The authors designed and phrased the questionnaire with simple everyday language in order to for it to be easy to understand. Several terms related to the research topic, which respondents might not be familiar with, were explained at the beginning of the questionnaire. Thus making the questionnaire and its more specialized features easier to comprehend for the respondents.

The questionnaire was constructed to be divided into several different parts, all of which are described in the next section below. However, a majority of the questions within the self-completion questionnaire utilizes a Likert scale to capture the respondents’ agreement or disagreement with statements provided in said questionnaire. A Likert scale is a tool which helps researchers to explore whether attitudes toward statements are positive or negative with the help of a multi-step scale (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The scale for the questionnaire contained five steps: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. A questionnaire with questions as statements with a Likert scale as a response tool aids researchers when it comes to analyzing the data, however, the neutral option may be used by respondents as a way to not answer the question which does not provide any useful data. The decision to use a Likert scale as a response tool for the self-completion questionnaire was made based on the ease of use for the subsequent data analysis and that the format is easy to use by respondents.

The questionnaire was published on Google Form, a tool for distributing questionnaires provided by Google, and then a link to it was sent to potential respondents via social media platforms. The questionnaire was self-administered and the respondents completed and submitted the answers themselves. This mode of distribution was chosen for its ease of use as well as it being one used frequently by the age group at the focus of this study - Millennials.

3.5.2 Measures of Variables

The self-completion questionnaire is divided into ten sections, each measures a different variable related to the research questions posed in this study (see Appendix I for the full
questionnaire). It starts with a short description and purpose of the questionnaire. This is then followed by the questions regarding the participant’s demographics such as; age, gender, level of education, and employment status. These demographic questions were asked in order to achieve a better understanding when analyzing the results, depending on the similarities of the answers and whether these were able to be grouped with the different demographic groups. The demographic questions would help the authors see whether a certain group (for example females) answered questions similarly. Asking the participant’s age was crucial to this study as Millennial is the generational cohort the study places it focus on. If participants were not within the range of the generational cohort then their answer would be annulled. The relevant variables and their measures then followed in order:

a. *Millennial Consumers’ Purchasing Behaviors* (dependent variable):
This variable was estimated as a composite measure with questions 9 to 15 (see Appendix I). These questions were formulated with the aim to understand how respondents perceive the different ways eWoM reviewers influence their purchasing behaviors; and whether or not they have taken corresponding actions to the content of eWoM reviews.

b. *eWoM Reviewers’ Influence*:
This variable was estimated as a composite measure of eWoM reviewers’ social currency. However, the conducted factor analysis extracted the variables that have significant correlation with eWoM reviewer’s social currency, and reduced the number of eWoM reviewer’s social currency from 28 questions to 12. While these 12 questions demonstrate notable loadings to eWoM reviewer’s social currency, the result of the factor analysis also suggests that they might not represent the dimension of social currency that they were initially designated to in the questionnaire. The decision to reevaluate the questionnaire in accordance with the social currency theory was taken in order for the authors to determine the appropriate variables that best convey social currency dimensions.

i. eWoM Reviewer’s Identity:
Question 16 to 22 in the questionnaire (see Appendix I) were originally formulated to examine the extent to which the respondents perceive the eWoM reviewer’s identity.
However, as a result of the factor analysis, the authors took the decision to use question 16 and 17 (Appendix I) to illustrate reviewer’s identity in this study. This decision was made with considerable reference to previous research regarding social currency, in which eWoM reviewers’ identities are defined as the way they introduce themselves into a community (Lobschat et al., 2013). Identity is also the expression of personal characteristics and interests of an individual in order to develop a sense of connection with others. Question 16 and 17 reflect this definition more distinctively without overlapping other dimensions within social currency, in comparison to other social currency related questions.

ii. eWoM Reviewer’s Affiliation:
In order to reassure that eWoM reviewer’s affiliation was measured accurately, social currency related questions in the questionnaire were reevaluated. Question 24 and 25 (see Appendix I) are the result of the revision, as they effectively convey the sense of belonging and personal attachment to a community that previous social currency research described as affiliation (Lobschat et al., 2013). The decision to retain these questions as measurements for eWoM Reviewer’s Affiliation is also due to their contribution to the objective of this study. For instance, question 24 enabled the authors to observe how receptive respondents are toward eWoM reviewers that are affiliated with a social media community of shared mutual interests. The data from question 25 can reveal whether peer recognition is a motivation that influences the respondent’s purchasing behavior.

iii. eWoM Reviewer’s Conversation:
Question 27 and 30 in the questionnaire were selected to estimate respondents’ behavior towards eWoM reviewer’s conversation (see Appendix I). The essence of the social currency conversation is effectively projected in these two questions in the way that they encourage respondents to reveal their reactions to the conversations among eWoM reviewers and their followers.

iii. eWoM Reviewer’s Utility:
Question 32 and 33 in the questionnaire (see Appendix I) underline the main aspect of utility, which is the motivation for respondents to interact with the eWoM, as well as the values the respondents derive from these interactions. According to David and Cotter
(1991, as cited in Lobschat et al., 2013), personal happiness and increased self-esteem are a few of the values that people derive from interactions with others. Question 32 and 35 effectively translate this sociological insight to the topic of the influence eWoM reviewer’s engender in Millennials’ purchasing behaviors, and therefore are qualified as measurements for social currency.

v. eWoM Reviewer’s Advocacy:
An eWoM reviewer’s advocacy can be measured by how actively and frequently the reviewer discusses and recommends a certain product or brand to others. In reference to this theory, question 38 and 39 were formulated (see Appendix I). They allow the authors to observe different behaviors of the respondents towards eWoM reviewers who imply a biased attitude towards a certain product versus those who display no loyalty towards any brand or product.

vi. eWoM Reviewer’s Information:
Questions 40 and 42 (see Appendix I) are selected from the questionnaire to measure the respondent’s preference and attitude towards the eWoM reviewer’s information, which is the functional benefit that respondents obtain from their interactions with eWoM reviewers.

3.6 Data Analysis
The data collected through a quantitative method such as a questionnaire, requires compiling and processing to be transformed into meaningful information for further interpretation and analysis (Saunders et al., 2016). The collected data from the questionnaire is processed by IBM SPSS, which is a statistical software that manages data and performs analyses in order to solve research questions (International Business Machines, n.d.). The data compiling process began with importing the raw data from Google Form to SPSS and coding the responses in accordance to the Likert scale in the questionnaire. Each question in the questionnaire is also abbreviated and assigned a unique variable name. In order to answer the research questions that this study aims to explore, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted as the first method of analyzing the
collected data. Then a correlation analysis is conducted, which is followed by a multiple linear regression analysis in order to understand the relationship between variables.

3.6.1 Factor Analysis

The purpose of a factor analysis is to determine the underlying structure among the variables in a data set (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Specifically, in larger data sets, factor analysis reduces the number of variables and compiles them into coherent representative factors (Pallant, 2010). In this study, factor analysis is used as the first analytical step to identify the factors that would later be used in other analyses such as correlation and multiple linear regression.

Prior to conducting a factor analysis it is important to determine whether the data set of the study is suitable for a factor analysis. The suitability of the test is evaluated by two statistical values generated by SPSS, which are the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (Pallant, 2010). Another concern of factor analysis is to assess the strength of the relationship between variables, and to determine whether the statements in the questionnaire correlate adequately to be appropriate for a factor analysis. The six dimensions of social currency such as identity, affiliation, utility, conversation, advocacy, and information as well as the nature of influence and level of influence are subjected to a factor loading analysis.

The second step in a factor analysis is to perform a factor extraction. This step involves detecting variables that correlate strongly to one another and consequently extracting a factor that optimally represents the relationship between these variables. Within this step, any variable that has factor loading lower than 0.5 would be disregarded, as it indicates a weak correlation to other variables. After the factor analysis is completed, the variables that have strong factor loadings within identity, affiliation, utility, conversation, advocacy, and information as well as the nature of influence and level of influence are compiled into new variables.
3.6.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were performed in order to calculate the average answer for questions regarding social media platform usage, and the content format for eWoM that was found most useful. This analysis enables the authors to gain deeper understanding of the data by showing the mean values of each question given by the respondents’ answers. Additionally, median and mode were also used in the case of the eWoM reviewers’ nature of influence since it was deemed better suited in that instance.

3.6.3 Regression

Multiple regression is another form of correlation, however, it allows researchers to evaluate the contribution of the variables to one another. Furthermore, it is used when one wants to analyze predictive ability that a set of independent variables have on a continuous measure (Pallant, 2013). For this particular study, the six social currency dimensions of identity, affiliation utility, conversation, advocacy, and information are plotted in a multiple linear regression analysis to measure the Millennials’ purchasing behaviors.

3.7 Quality of Research: Reliability and Validity Issues

Reliability and validity are the two criteria that evaluate the quality of a quantitative research, according to Saunders et al. (2016). Reliability concerns the consistency and stability of the research’s measures, whereas, validity refers to the authenticity of the findings drawn from a research. Validity evaluates whether the questions or statements within a quantitative study actually convey the concepts that they are supposed to denote (Saunders et al., 2016). Each question in the questionnaire in this study is constructed based on the social currency, which is a theory that has been researched extensively in previous research (Zinnbauer & Honer, 2011; Lobschat et al., 2013; Trudeau & Shobeiri, 2016). Additionally, this study is based on previous theories regarding Millennials’ purchasing behaviors (Parment, 2011: 2013; Smith, 2012). Furthermore, to ensure the validity and reliability of this research, the authors disregarded the answers provided by respondents that did not belong to the generational cohort of interest. However, the questionnaire being distributed online could lead to a few issues regarding the integrity
of the respondents. Therefore, there was a small amount of missing data in the research, as a few of the respondents did not provide answers to some questions.
4 Empirical Findings

In this section the results of the study are presented and analyzed. The demographics of the respondents will be presented along with the findings from the various analyses conducted to explore and help determine the answers to the research questions.

4.1 Demographics

The questionnaire received 103 responses in total, however, two of the respondents did not belong the age group that this study focuses on. Therefore, these two respondents were disregarded, leaving a 101 valid responses for the research. The self-completion questionnaire was sent out to 130 people that were chosen as participants by using convenience sampling. Out of the 130 people the self-completion questionnaire was sent to 101 people completed it, and were within the right age bracket, which corresponds to approximately a 77.7% response rate. According to Mangione (1995, via Bryman, 2008) this can be seen as a very good response rate, however his numbers were for postal questionnaires. The authors of this questionnaire, based on Mangione (1995, via Bryman, 2008), were satisfied with a 77.7% response rate.

4.1.1 Age

Only respondents who belong to the generational cohort of Millennials are considered in the study. The age distribution of the respondents can be seen in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Distribution of the age of the respondents
4.1.2 Gender

Out of all the respondents 41 identified as male (40.59%), 57 (56.43%) as female (56.43%), and 3 identified as other (2.97%). The distribution can be seen in Figure 2 below.

![Gender Pie Chart]

*Figure 2: Respondents’ gender*

4.1.3 Level of Education

Only 1 (0.99%) of the respondents put their highest level of education as compulsory school, 13 respondents (12.87%) had a high school as their highest level of education, the largest group 64 respondents (63.37%) indicated that their highest level of education was undergraduate studies, and 23 respondents (22.77%) put their highest level of education as postgraduate studies. The distribution can be seen in Figure 3 below.

![Level of Education Pie Chart]

*Figure 3: Respondents’ level of education*
4.1.4 Current Employment Status

The employment status of the respondents is as follows; 10 are unemployed (9.90%), 32 are employed (31.68%), and the largest group of respondents, 59 people, were students (58.41%). The distribution can be seen in Figure 4 below.

![Current Employment Status](image)

*Figure 4: Respondents’ current employment status*

4.2 Reviewers’ Nature of Influence

The collected data used to explore the nature of the influence from eWoM reviewers, which is the focus of the first research question, is presented in Figure 5 below. Figure 5 contains the data collected presented in a bar chart. It is evident that the three most popular answer options for each of the four questions were: neutral, agree, and strongly agree. While the questions asking about if eWoM reviewers educate, persuade, or entertain the respondents the most popular answer was one of agreement which can be seen in both Figure 5 and Table 1, both below, the most popular response for the question about whether or not eWoM reviewers acquaint respondents with clothing and personal care products the most popular answer was one of neutrality. This may be due to that respondents are actually neutral about the question or they alternative was chosen as a way of avoiding to give a proper answer to the question. Table 1 presents several descriptive values but the ones of interest in this specific case, according to Jamieson (2004), are the median and the mode. While the mean is a common variable to look at it is not always an appropriate measure for data collected using a Likert scale since it is data of an ordinal nature (Jamieson, 2004). The mean in this specific case is not helpful in
pointing out the popularity in the answer choices and is even misleading in the case of question 14 about persuasion. The mean for that question is lower than the mean for question 12 about eWoM reviewers’ ability to acquaint respondents with new clothing and personal care and clothing products despite that question having a lower median and mode, as can be seen in Table 1. The reason for this is that the mean for question 14 was affected by that fewer people had chosen the answer choice for strong agreement which resulted in the mean having fewer extremes than for the other three questions. Since the median only points out the value in the middle when all the values are placed in a numerical order it does not necessarily provide any useful data. However, in this study the median values for the relevant questions correspond with the values for mode. The mode for the relevant questions can be found in Table 1 below. The mode was deemed as a more relevant measure to use since it points out the answer choice for each of the four questions that was the most popular one. What is evident from Table 1 is that the respondents of the questionnaire look to eWoM reviewers to educate, persuade, and entertain them with the content published on social media platforms. However, the respondents do not look to eWoM reviewers to acquaint them with new clothing and personal care products since the most common response was one of neutrality.

Figure 5: Reviewers’ nature of influence
4.3 Reviewers’ Social Media Platforms

The following sections will analyze the collected data using descriptive statistics and factor analysis.

4.3.1 Preferred Social Media Platforms, Content Format, and Trustworthiness

The data that was collected to explore how social media platforms, which are used by eWoM reviewers, influence Millennials’ purchasing behaviors is presented below in various figures and tables with accompanying explanations.

![Figure 6: Social media usage and frequency of use](image)

Table 1: Mean, median, and mode

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Figure 6 above shows that, Tumblr, Pinterest, and Twitter have lower means in comparison to YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. Particularly, the mean value for Facebook is 3.06, which indicates that Facebook is the most popular social media platform among respondents, while the least being Tumblr with a mean of 1.46. In terms of the frequency that respondents come across eWoM reviews on social media platforms, YouTube takes first place as the social media platform that the respondent seeks/comes across eWoM reviews the most (2.74). It is followed by Instagram (2.42) and Facebook (2.25).

![Figure 7: Mean values for content format](image)

Figure 7 indicates that the respondents found text to be the least useful format since it has the lowest mean, 2.96. Content in photo format was found to be more useful as its mean value is 3.37, text and photos incorporated topped that with a mean value of 3.99, while video was the most useful format since it had the largest mean at 4.26. As seen in Figure 7, the formats with a focus on visual and detail aspects achieve the higher mean values, which indicate that they are seen as more useful to respondents.
As seen in Figure 8, the mean value for YouTube shows the highest mean value at 3.94, which indicates that the respondents found YouTube as the most trustworthy. Followed by Facebook (3.08), Instagram (3.02), while the least trustworthy platforms were Snapchat (2.35) Pinterest (2.33), Twitter (2.28), and Tumblr (2.17) according to the respondents.

4.4 Reviewers’ Social Currency

The variables within the six social currency dimensions of eWoM reviewers, level of influence and nature of influence were subjected to a factor analysis. The factor analysis extracted two components with an eigenvalue greater than 1. Variables that display cross-loadings are removed while variables that indicate strong loadings are extracted and compiled into one factor for further analysis.

4.4.1 Factor Analysis: Reviewers’ Social Currency and Millennials’ Purchasing Behaviors

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy ranges from 0 to 1, where .6 indicates a minimum value for a good factor analysis (Pallant, 2010). Another value to consider when measuring the validity of a factor analysis is Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity, which should be significant with p<.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Therefore,
the KMO value of .904 together with p = .000, as seen in Table 2 below, suggest a strong indicator that factor analysis is appropriate for this data set.

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett’s test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</th>
<th>.904</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx. Chi-Square</td>
<td>129.327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Rotated component matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Component</th>
<th>eWoM Currency</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Millennials’ Behaviors</th>
<th>Purchasing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Influence -Follow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Influence -Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Influence -Unplanned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Influence -Acquaint</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Influence -Educate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Influence -Persuade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Influence -Entertain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIdentity3</td>
<td>.726</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIdentity4</td>
<td>.738</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIdentity5</td>
<td>618</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCIdentity7</td>
<td>.649</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAffiliation1</td>
<td>.693</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAffiliation2</td>
<td>.733</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAffiliation3</td>
<td>.742</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAffiliation4</td>
<td>.731</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCConversation3</td>
<td>.693</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCUtility1</td>
<td>.637</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCUtility4</td>
<td>.690</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAvocacy1</td>
<td>.772</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 3 above, the variables that measures “Millennials’ purchasing behaviors” indicates significant factor loadings (> .5). As shown in Table 3 above, the variables that have significant factor loadings (greater than .5) and any values lower than .35 are suppressed. Any variables that exhibit cross-loadings are eliminated. Out of the 28 variables originally designed to measure eWoM social currency, the factor analysis extracted 12 variables. These 12 variables display strong loadings in social currency, indicating that they are highly relevant in measuring social currency. However, the performed factor analysis also signifies that variables that measure social currency might have been mislabeled during the questionnaire design, as mentioned previously in section.
3.5.2 in the third chapter. Therefore, the authors reevaluated the 12 variables extracted above in order to detect which social currency dimension they represent best.

4.4.2 Multiple Regression Analysis: Reviewers’ Social Currency and Millennials’ Purchasing Behaviors

A multiple linear regression was conducted in order to answer the second research question, which concerns the social currency of eWoM reviewers and how it influences Millennial consumers’ purchasing behaviors.

In this analysis, social currency is the predictor variable that measures the dependent variable, which is Millennials’ purchasing behaviors. As seen in Table 4, the value for R square in Model 2 is greater than in Model 1 (.428 > .281). This suggests that when control factors such as age, gender, employment, and education are added, it strengthens the impact of social currency in the variance of Millennials’ purchasing behaviors. Expressed in percentage, social currency explains 42.8% of the variance in Millennials’ purchasing behaviors, when controlled by age, gender, employment, and education.

Table 4: Model summary for social currency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.530</td>
<td>.281</td>
<td>.273</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>.428</td>
<td>.396</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Model summary for social currency
Table 5 below shows that the predictor, eWoM reviewer’s social currency, is significant in relation to the dependent variable, Millennials’ purchasing behaviors, since beta= .561, p=.000. Therefore, eWoM reviewer’s social currency has a notable influence on the Millennials’ purchasing behaviors.

Table 5: Multiple linear regression analysis for social currency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficient</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eWoM Social Currency</td>
<td>.530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eWoM Social Currency</td>
<td>.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>-.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent Variable: Millennials’ Purchasing Behavior
5 Results

This chapter contains the discussion of the separate research questions based on the analysis found in the previous chapter.

5.1 What Nature of Influence Do Electronic Word-of-Mouth Reviewers Have on Millennials' Purchasing Behaviors?

The results of the study show that Millennials look to eWoM reviewers to entertained, educated, and persuaded when it comes to clothing and personal care products rather than to be acquainted with new products within those categories. This reflects what Smith (2012) and, Mangold and Smith (2012) say about that Millennials look to peers for information about products they are already interested in. That is, the Millennial consumers have found out about the clothing and personal care products from somewhere or someone else and use eWoM reviewers to hear what they think about the products in question. This can potentially occur since Millennials are more likely to believe the opinions of other people than the information transmitted through advertising, as pointed out by Allsop et al. (2007). However, since the most popular response for the question concerning eWoM reviewers acquainting Millennials with new clothing and personal care products was one of neutrality it is difficult to fully trust the answer since respondents may have chosen the option as a way of avoiding the question.

The evident popularity of the entertainment aspect of eWoM reviewers could be viewed as reflecting Bolton et al.'s (2013) view that Millennials use technology, and what it contains, for entertainment purposes. However, this does not exclude the possibility of Millennials gaining useful information at the same time. Millennials may gain further knowledge about a clothing or personal care product, or the eWoM reviewers persuade them to buy a clothing or personal care product. Perhaps, the entertainment factor of the content published by eWoM reviewers is important in making Millennials view it since they are selective with what they pay attention to, as pointed out by Powers and Valentine (2013). Although, the study does not provide data to strengthen this claim, it is one to consider as a possibility.
The popularity of looking to eWoM reviewers for persuasion when it comes to clothing and personal care products can be seen as an expression of what Parment (2013) calls social risk. Millennials care about what people think of them and that includes their purchasing behaviors. If eWoM reviewers put their virtual stamps of approval on certain clothing and personal care products the social risk may be decreased and Millennials become more confident in the products they buy and that they will not reflect badly upon them. This virtual stamp of approval may also aid Millennials in the evaluation stage of the purchasing process since the opinions of eWoM reviewers may sway their stance when it comes to the purchase of a product. Furthermore, the persuasion aspect of the nature of influence of eWoM reviewers could be viewed as connected to the social currency aspect focused on information. As stated by Zinnbauer and Honer (2011) it is about the benefits one receives when sharing information among people, and in the case of the persuasion aspect of eWoM reviewers the sharing of information may have a positive or negative impact on the purchasing process of Millennials.

Furthermore, the information aspect of social currency, as defined by Zinnbauer and Honer (2011) may also be connected to the educational aspect of eWoM reviewers’ impact on Millennials. The knowledge gained from content published by eWoM reviewers can potentially help Millennials to know more about the products they are interested in, both the positive and negative aspects, before purchase. The power eWoM reviewers have when it comes to educating, and persuading, Millennials in their choices of clothing and personal care products could be viewed as the eWoM reviewers acting as opinion leaders. The personal opinions and views of eWoM reviewers and the distribution of those can be seen as corresponding to the way in which Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1948, as cited in Bobkowski, 2015) as well as Katz (1957) views what it means to be an opinion leader. Therefore, the involvement of eWoM reviewers in dispersing product information as opinion leaders can be seen as closely connected to influencer marketing which could use the power of the eWoM reviewer to influence the purchasing behaviors of Millennials. Lastly, to reiterate, the nature of influence of eWoM reviewers lays in their abilities to entertain, educate, and persuade Millennials with their content, not in acquainting Millennials with new clothing and personal care products as per the results of this study.
5.2 How Does Electronic Word-of-Mouth Reviewers’ *Social Currency* Influence Millennials’ Purchasing Behaviors Concerning Clothing and Personal Care Products?

The dimensions of social currency are intended to assess the various facets of social interactions. In application to this study, it is employed to measure the level of influence that eWoM reviewers exert on Millennials’ purchasing behaviors through their interactions that take place on social media platforms. Through the preceding multiple linear regression analysis, it is shown that there is a relationship between eWoM reviewers’ social currency and Millennials’ purchasing behaviors. The significance level of this relationship is notable, as it is .000 and is <.05. The beta coefficient, which is .561, indicates that the predictor variable, eWoM reviewer’s social currency, has a positive and significant influence on the variable Millennials’ purchasing behaviors. This significant influence can be explained in conjunction with theories previously presented in this study.

Firstly, the result of the multiple linear regression analysis is aligned with the notion that, eWoM reviewers are opinion leaders on social media platforms, who distribute information about clothing and personal care products. The information dispersed by eWoM reviewers is received and assessed by Millennials, which in turn, influences their purchasing behaviors towards the reviewed products. This influence can be formed by the Millennials’ perception of the eWoM reviewers’ social currency on social media platforms. Perhaps the visibility of the identity, affiliation, conversation, utility, advocacy, and information of the eWoM reviewers provide Millennials with an abundance of resources that allow them to make assessment on the eWoM reviewer’s content and intention. Furthermore, due to Millennials’ positive acceptance of technologies and their nativity to the Internet, strong social ties are irrelevant to the way they collect and perceive information. As Steffes and Burgee (2009) pointed out, the effectiveness of eWoM is not estimated based on strong social ties. Therefore, the availability of the eWoM reviewers’ social currency replaces social ties as a crucial factor that affects the way Millennials gather information on clothing and personal care products, and thus, influencing their purchasing behaviors.

Furthermore, the sense of affinity with a community can act as Millennial’s motive in purchasing certain products. In other words, Millennials rely on social currency as a
measure of which product enhances their self-representation and social connection with the community they want to associate themselves with. Especially, the social currency dimensions of opinion leaders such as eWoM reviewers exert a significant influence on Millennials’ purchasing behaviors, as revealed in the empirical findings. The identity, affiliation, conversation, utility, advocacy, and information of an eWoM reviewer can signify their social status in the perception of Millennials. This perceived social status of the eWoM reviewer can influence Millennials’ purchasing behaviors in the sense that it encourages Millennials to purchase products that are reviewed by the eWoM reviewers in order to enhance their own social status. Furthermore, since the products considered in this study are clothing and personal care, which due to that they are often used to alter or improve a person’s appearance, they can perhaps play a key role in enhancing that person’s social status.

5.3 What Social Media Platforms Used by Electronic Word-of-Mouth Reviewers Influence Millennials’ Purchasing Behaviors?

As previously mentioned eWoM can be based on the strength of their level of homophily, and due to the rapid growth of the Internet people are able to share opinions about products in the online world with other individuals. Moreover, eWoM can be retrieved from the Internet at any given moment, often from a social media platform. Through the empirical findings, it is evident that the frequency of use of Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube were the highest; with mean values of 3.06, 2.86, and 2.68 respectively. Furthermore, these three social media platforms were also the three platforms where the respondents indicated they came across eWoM reviews most often; with mean values of 2.25, 2.74, and 2.41 respectively. The three social media platforms were also considered the most trustworthy; with mean values of 3.08, 3.02, and 3.94 respectively. The clear preference and popularity of Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube can mean that Millennials prefer social media platforms, for eWoM reviews, where they can actually get closer to the people behind the reviews and know something about the reviewers themselves. Furthermore, the platforms, while showing more of the person behind the review, also make it easier to connect with the person unlike the less popular choices of Tumblr and Pinterest. This may increase the likelihood of Millennials placing trust in the eWoM reviewers’ opinions and, as previously pointed out, Millennials are more likely to
consider the opinions of other people as trustworthy, compared to those of companies (Smith, 2012; Mangold & Smith, 2012).

The previously mentioned concept of homophily, a tendency where individuals connect more with others whom similarly resemble themselves, show in eWoM through that individuals appreciate reviews from others who resemble themselves, within similar demographics, interests, and lifestyles than those who are vastly different from themselves. The construct of homophily is apparent on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram where such characteristics are more easily apparent than on social media platforms such as Tumblr and Pinterest. Although, YouTube may not have as strong of a social interaction aspect as Facebook and Instagram, it is still considered as a useful social media platform to the respondents in regards to seeking out eWoM. Additionally, the social currency aspects of eWoM reviewers are more easily visible in the content formats of the three most popular social media platforms in the study which may be an additional reason as to why they were the most popular choices. The least popular platforms such as Tumblr, Twitter, and Pinterest rely heavily on text and may, therefore, provide less opportunities for the Millennials to discern the social currencies of the eWoM reviewers behind the posted content, which makes the platforms less appealing when searching for credible eWoM.

Therefore, the empirical findings on this study supports Steffes and Burgee’s (2009) theory, which states that, homophily is relevant to eWoM, as people tend to value opinions from those that share similar interests with them. Electronic word-of-mouth reviewers on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube can easily exhibit their social currency aspects of identity, affiliation, conversation, utility, advocacy, and information, which in turn help consumers find similarities between themselves and the eWoM reviewers. Social media platforms have become powerful tools used for eWoM due to their rapid ability to globally distribute information as well as their ubiquity (Choi & Kim, 2014; Eisingerich et al., 2015). The eWoM reviews posted on social media platforms greatly reveal social currency dimensions of the eWoM reviewer and thus, provide individuals with a more personal feeling.
6 Conclusions

In this chapter the authors conclude the study by giving a brief summary of the results of the study.

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence that eWoM reviewers exert on Millennials’ purchasing behaviors. The authors succeeded in fulfilling the purpose and answering the three research questions posed at the beginning of the study with the help of primary data collected using an online self-completion questionnaire.

The first research question concerned the nature of influence of eWoM reviewers on Millennials. The study concluded that Millennials look to eWoM reviewers to educate, entertain, and persuade them when it comes to clothing and personal care products. Furthermore, the study concluded Millennials do not look to eWoM reviewers to acquaint them with new products within the aforementioned categories of products. The second research question concerned the impact of eWoM reviewer’s social currency on Millennials and the empirical findings concluded that there is a relationship with a notable significance between the two. The various aspects of an eWoM reviewer's social currency impact the opinions Millennials have of clothing and personal care products which can lead them to making a purchase or to avoid making a purchase. This impact stems not just from the information the eWoM reviewers transmit but also in the way it is presented and in the way they present themselves. Furthermore, the study’s results point to social currency aspects replacing social ties as a crucial factor affecting the purchasing behaviors of Millennials. The third, and final, research question concerned what social media platforms used by eWoM reviewers influence Millennials’ purchasing behaviors. According to the empirical findings of the study the social media platforms that most influence Millennials were Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Additionally, these social media platforms were also the ones the respondents found to be the most trustworthy as well as being more suited for interactions with the eWoM reviewers. Furthermore, the previously mentioned social media platforms correspond well with the preferred formats of the content posted by eWoM reviewers, which were video, photos, and text and photos together.
The findings of the study indicate that there ought to be more focus on the eWoM reviewers behind the content published on social media platforms since they exert influence over the purchasing behaviors of Millennials, specifically the purchasing behaviors connected to clothing and personal care products. Research regarding eWoM reviews is substantial (see Brown et al., 2007; Cheung et al., 2009, Sher & Lee, 2009; Cheung et al., 2012) however, the role played by eWoM reviewers, has not been brought to light. During the process of this study, it has been pointed out that eWoM reviewers, specifically; their social currency dimensions, play an important role in influencing Millennials’ purchasing behaviors. This may be especially important when it comes to Millennials as a generational cohort, since they place value in the opinions of people they see on social media platforms (Bolton et al., 2013), and they view this information as credible if it is from individuals similar to themselves (Allsop et al., 2007). However, as was shown in the study through the popularity of the social media platforms that focus on video and photos, Millennials seem to want to be able to know more about the people behind the reviews, about the eWoM reviewers’ social currency, in order to trust the opinions shared and distributed by them. In this instance the existing literature is lacking and research about the social currency held by eWoM reviewers could increase the understanding of Millennials’ purchasing behaviors and how they evaluate products using social media platforms. Such research could aid brands, stores, and marketers when trying to reach Millennials with their products in more effective and efficient ways.
7 Implications of the Findings and Limitations of the Study

This chapter contains the implications of the results from the conducted study as well as the limitations of it.

7.1 Implications

This study offers a new angle to previous research within the topic of electronic word-of-mouth. Although, eWoM has been researched rather extensively, there is a lack of focus placed on the individuals behind eWoM and eWoM reviews. While this study suggests that the social currency of eWoM reviewers has a significant influence on the purchasing behaviors of Millennials, it also examines the nature of such influence. Therefore, this study contributes to the existing literature regarding eWoM reviewers and their impact, thus encouraging further study to deepen the knowledge on this topic.

Furthermore, this study offers useful knowledge regarding the purchasing behaviors of Millennials that can be applied in practice as well. As this study suggests, the social currency of an eWoM reviewer has a significant influence on the purchasing behaviors of Millennials. For practitioners this information can be used, for example when conducting a market research in regards to how Millennials perceive eWoM provided by eWoM reviewers. Moreover, this information is worthwhile for practitioners as the study analyzed the way Millennials use and behave on popular social media platforms. Additionally, the study showed a connection between eWoM reviewers and influencer marketing, and therefore delivered relevant and practical knowledge.

7.2 Limitations

While this study aims to fill a gap in the existing literature it does have its shortcomings that act as potential limitations on the applicability of the results. One such limitation is the size of the sample, the data analysis was conducted on responses from 101 individuals which can be seen as a small sample size. A larger sample size would have provided findings with more accuracy and generalizability since they would have been based on the responses of more individuals. However, due to the specificity of the topic and the
limited time frame a small sample was used. A second potential limitation is the use of the Likert scale in the self-completion questionnaire. The Likert scale provides a limited amount of responses for the individual to choose from and the choices presented may not fully represent the individual’s opinion in the question. However, the use of the Likert scale aids the study in that it simplifies the task of analyzing the data collected in the study. Some may question the use of a quantitative approach in a study such as this and may have preferred a qualitative approach to truly find the reasons behind the responses given by respondents. However, the aim of this study was to achieve an overview of the impact of eWoM reviewers on Millennials, and for that a quantitative approach was suitable.
8 Suggestions for Future Research

This chapter contains suggestions from the authors on future research that can draw inspiration from the study.

The scarcity of research regarding eWoM reviewers urge for further empirical studies that can add depth to this particular topic. Furthermore, as acknowledged previously in this study, the limitations of this study are feasible for future studies to perhaps overcome as well as to validate the findings in this study. Thereby, the intention of this section is to offer the reader suggestions for further research that can be inspired by the findings and the contribution as well as the limitations of this study.

In regards to the method of this study, a quantitative approach was chosen and utilized in combination with positivism. While the quantitative approach enabled the authors to gather a sizeable amount of responses, a qualitative approach would have given the authors a more comprehensive insight of the respondents’ perception. Perhaps, a combination of the two previously mentioned approaches could be utilized by future researchers, which could potentially generate further evidence for the results found in this study.

The authors also recognize another suggestion for future research, which is to focus on respondents of a specific demographic. Perhaps, researching Millennials’ attitude from a culture where eWoM on social media platforms is perceived differently from the Western world could generate some interesting findings. Furthermore, a comparison of how male and female Millennials react and perceive eWoM reviewers’ social currency could contribute further to the topic of eWoM.

Additionally, the market that this study is conducted within is clothing and personal care products. A suggestion for future research would be to analyze the influence of eWoM reviewers on consumers of a different market. The authors realize the prevalence of clothing and personal care product reviews, but eWoM reviews regarding electronic products or pharmaceutical related ones could be an intriguing topic for future research to examine.
References


Appendix I: Self-Completion Questionnaire

The Influence of Reviewers on Social Media on Millennials' Purchasing Behaviors

This questionnaire is designed to investigate how influenced Millennials’ purchasing behaviors are by online reviewers on social media. This is a survey for our bachelor thesis at Jönköping International Business School and by answering this questionnaire you contribute significantly to our study.

The questionnaire will only take about 10 minutes to complete.

Thank you in advance!

Definitions that will help you complete the questionnaire:

Online reviewers: anyone who shares their opinions online about products that they have purchased (it can be friends, or popular users on social media that you might not know in real life or celebrities)

Social media: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat

Clothing and personal care products: skincare and cosmetics items, and clothing and wearable accessories such as jewelry, shoes, bags and headwear.

Respondent’s information:
1. Age:
2. Gender: male, female
3. Level of education: compulsory school, high school, undergraduate, postgraduate
4. Current main profession: unemployed, employed, student
5. Which of the following social media platforms do you use?

YouTube
a. Once a day b. A couple of times a day c. Constantly active d. I do not use this site

Instagram
a. Once a day b. A couple of times a day c. Constantly active d. I do not use this site

Twitter
a. Once a day b. A couple of times a day c. Constantly active d. I do not use this site

Facebook
a. Once a day b. A couple of times a day c. Constantly active d. I do not use this site

Snapchat
a. Once a day b. A couple of times a day c. Constantly active d. I do not use this site

Pinterest
a. Once a day b. A couple of times a day c. Constantly active d. I do not use this site

Tumblr
a. Once a day b. A couple of times a day c. Constantly active d. I do not use this site
Others (please specify) (for example: site name; Weibo)

a. Once a day b. A couple of times a day c. Constantly active d. I do not use this site

Social Media Reviewers’ Medium of Influence:

6. How often do you seek/come across electronic word-of-mouth reviews about clothing and personal care products on the social media sites you use?

YouTube

a. Once a day b. A couple of times a day c. Constantly active d. I do not use this site

Instagram

a. Once a day b. A couple of times a day c. Constantly active d. I do not use this site

Twitter

b. Once a day b. A couple of times a day c. Constantly active d. I do not use this site

Facebook

a. Once a day b. A couple of times a day c. Constantly active d. I do not use this site

Snapchat

a. Once a day b. A couple of times a day c. Constantly active d. I do not use this site
Pinterest

a. Once a day  
b. A couple of times a day  
c. Constantly active  
d. I do not use this site

Tumblr

a. Once a day  
b. A couple of times a day  
c. Constantly active  
d. I do not use this site

Others (Please specify) (example: site name; Weibo)

a. Once a day  
b. A couple of times a day  
c. Constantly active  
d. I do not use this site

7. What format of electronic across electronic word-of-mouth reviews do you find more useful?

a. Video
   1= most useful  2= useful  3=neutral  4= less useful  5= least useful

b. Text
   1= most useful  2= useful  3=neutral  4= less useful  5= least useful

c. Photos
   1= most useful  2= useful  3=neutral  4= less useful  5= least useful

d. Text and photos incorporated
   1= most useful  2= useful  3=neutral  4= less useful  5= least useful

8. How trustworthy are the following social media sites when it comes to reviews on clothing and personal care products.

YouTube
1= most trustworthy 2=trustworthy 3= neutral 4= less trustworthy 5=least trustworthy
Instagram
1 = most trustworthy 2 = trustworthy 3 = neutral 4 = less trustworthy 5 = least trustworthy
Twitter
1 = most trustworthy 2 = trustworthy 3 = neutral 4 = less trustworthy 5 = least trustworthy
Facebook
1 = most trustworthy 2 = trustworthy 3 = neutral 4 = less trustworthy 5 = least trustworthy
Snapchat
1 = most trustworthy 2 = trustworthy 3 = neutral 4 = less trustworthy 5 = least trustworthy
Pinterest
1 = most trustworthy 2 = trustworthy 3 = neutral 4 = less trustworthy 5 = least trustworthy
Tumblr
1 = most trustworthy 2 = trustworthy 3 = neutral 4 = less trustworthy 5 = least trustworthy

Social Media Reviewers’ Level of Influence:

How do you feel about these statements?

9. “I currently (and will in the future) follow social media users that post information about products that they have purchased.”
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

10. “I get information from social media sites about clothing and personal care products.”
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

11. “I have made unplanned purchases of clothing and personal care products after having seen the products reviewed on social media sites.”
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
Social Media Reviewers’ Nature of Influence

How do you feel about these statements?

12. “Electronic word-of-mouth reviewers acquaint me with new clothing and personal care products”
   1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

13. "Electronic word-of-mouth reviewers educate me about clothing and personal care products"
   1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

14. "Electronic word-of-mouth reviewers persuade me to either buy or not buy clothing or personal care products”
   1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

15. "Electronic word-of-mouth reviewers’ posts about clothing and personal care products entertain me”
   1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

Social Media Reviewers’ Social Currency

Reviewers’ Identity

How do you feel about these statements?

16. “I would value the reviews of electronic word-of-mouth reviewers even if I do not know their personal details such as name, age, occupation, interests, how they look, etc? ”
   1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
17. “I prefer electronic word-of-mouth reviewers who share similar interests with me.”
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

18. “I prefer electronic word-of-mouth reviewers who have a large amount of followers.”
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

19. “I prefer electronic word-of-mouth reviewers whose appearance is appealing to me.”
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

20. "The lifestyle that electronic word-of-mouth reviewers portray on social media influence my opinions of their reviews.”
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

21. “I prefer electronic word-of-mouth reviewers on social media who are ordinary consumers like myself and are not paid by manufacturers to promote products.”
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

22. "I prefer electronic word-of-mouth reviewers who are of the same gender as myself.”
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

Reviewers’ Affiliation

How do you feel about these statements?
23. "I like to feel and share a sense of community with my preferred electronic word-of-mouth reviewers on social media.”
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
24. "I am more likely to believe an electronic word-of-mouth reviewer on social media if they are followed by a community that shares my particular interests."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

25. "I will most likely purchase a product reviewed by electronic word-of-mouth reviewers on social media who I have a strong connection with."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

26. "I am more likely to believe electronic word-of-mouth reviewers on social media if I have a strong personal connection with them."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

Reviewers’ Conversation

How do you feel about these statements?

27. "I engage in conversation with electronic word-of-mouth reviewers who review clothing and personal care products on social media."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

28. "I keep up with trends regarding clothing and personal care products that I see on my social media feeds."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

29. "I will most likely believe in electronic word-of-mouth reviewers who actively engage in conversations with their followers and respond to their comments on social media."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
30. "If the conversations between the electronic word-of-mouth reviewers and their followers are positive about a clothing and personal care product, I will keep that particular product in my mind."

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

31. "If I constantly see a clothing and personal care product being reviewed on social media, I am more likely to (spontaneously) purchase it, because I hear about it so much."

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

Reviewers’ Utility

**How do you feel about these statements?**

32. "I believe purchasing the clothing and personal care products reviewed by electronic word-of-mouth reviewers will give me the same status the reviewer has. Especially when the electronic word-of-mouth reviewers portray a certain image/lifestyle that I am interested in."

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

33. "I believe purchasing the clothing and personal care products reviewed by electronic word-of-mouth reviewers on social media will positively enhance my personal image."

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

34. "Purchasing the clothing and personal care products reviewed by electronic word-of-mouth reviewers will make me feel socially relevant and confident."

1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
35. "Owning the clothing and personal care products reviewed by electronic word-of-mouth reviewers establishes a common ground between me and the social groups I am interested in."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

Reviewers’ Advocacy

How do you feel about these statements?

36. "I am more interested in electronic word-of-mouth reviewers who connect me with their followers to share useful information and promote my preferred brands."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

37. "The online buzz created by other followers of electronic word-of-mouth reviewers on social media convince me that a clothing and personal care product is socially relevant."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

38. "An electronic word-of-mouth reviewer displaying a clearly biased attitude towards a clothing and personal care product (e.g. not mentioning any cons) will stray me away from the product they review."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

39. "I am more influenced by electronic word-of-mouth reviewers on social media who do not display any loyalty to any brands."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree
Reviewers’ Information

How do you feel about these statements?

40. "I get to learn something new by following electronic word-of-mouth reviewers."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

41. "I am more interested in an electronic word-of-mouth review on social media about clothing and personal care products if the reviewer is an expert in that product category."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

42. "I favor electronic word-of-mouth reviewers who focus on expressing their opinions rather than facts about the clothing and personal care items they review."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

43. "The way in which electronic word-of-mouth reviewers on social media mention the information (facts, opinions, enthusiasm, tone) in a review affects how I process the information provided."
1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = neutral 4 = agree 5 = strongly agree

Thank you for taking your time completing the questionnaire!