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MASTER THESIS

THE IMPACT OF THE E-WOM ACTIVITIES ON CONSUMERS' PURCHASING DECISIONS: AN APPLIED RESEARCH ON FEMALE CONSUMERS IN TABRIZ
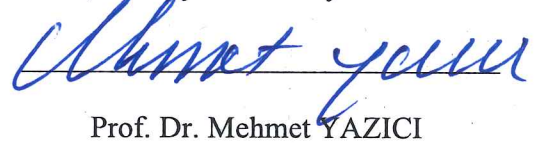
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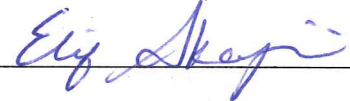
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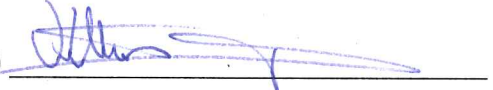
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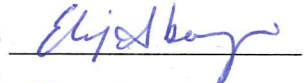**Examination Date: 28.12.2018**

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OZET

E-Wom Faaliyetlerinin Tüketici Satin Alma Kararlari Üzerindeki Etkisi: Tebriz'de Kadin Tüketiciler Uzerine Bir Araştirma

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Agizdan agiza pazarlama, tuketicilerin kullandiklari mal ve hizmetler hakkinda digger tuketicilere yaptiklari tavsiyelere dayanmaktadir. Tüketiciler arasında satın alma kararı alırken en önemli bilgi kaynaklarından biri olarak da gosterilmektedir (WOM). Internetin, özellikle de sosyal medyanın gelişmesiyle, tüketicilerin birbirleriyle elektronik yani online olarak iletişim sağlayabilmeleri, WOM'a yeni bir bakış açısı getirmistir. Çeşitli sosyal medya platformlarinda bireyler, bir ürün veya hizmetle ilgili bilgi toplamak veya satın almaya karar veren müşterileri bilgilendirmek hedefiyle aldikleri ürün veya hizmetler hakkında kendi yorum ve deneyimlerini paylaşabilmektedirler.

Bu arastirmanin amacı web 2.0 metnindeki elektronik agizdan agiza pazarlama

faaliyetinin etkisini (e-WOM) araştirmaktır. Temel olarak, bu araştırmada tuketicilerin sosyal medyada yazdikları yorumlarin diğer tuketicilerin satın alma kararlari uzerindeki etkilerin incelemek ve yorumlarin okuma sıklığı ile hedef kitlenin yaş ve eğitim düzeyi gibi demografik özellikleri arasındaki iliskiyi ortaya koymaktir.

Bu çalışmada, eWOM ölçeğinin kadın tüketicilerin satın alma kararlarına olan etkisini olcmek amaciyla, Iran'da Tebriz sehrinde yasayan 385 kadın tuketiciye anket calismasi uygulanmiştir. Elde edilen veriler SPSS kullanılarak analiz edilmistir. Bulgular, e-WOM'un etkisinin, tuketici yorumlarinin olumlu ve olumsuzluğuna, kaynak güvenilirliğine ve güncelliğine, yorumlarin kalitesine ve icerigine bağlı olduğunu göstermektedir. İlginç bir şekilde, yorumlarin olumlu olusu ve kalitesi ile kaynağin güncelliği, kadın tuketicilerin karar alma süreçlerinde yorumlarin hacmi ve kaynağin güvenilirliği ile kiyaslandiginda daha guclu algılanan bir etkiye sahiptir. Ayrıca, anketlerden alinan veriler, tüketicilerin yorumlari kontrol etme sıklığı ve tüketicilerin yaşi arasında hiçbir fark olmadığı halde, tüketicilerin yorumlarin inceleme sıklığı ve eğitim düzeylerini arasında bir fark olduğunu kanitlamaktadir.

Key words: Ağızdan ağıza pazarlama (WOM), elektornik ağızdan ağıza pazarlama (e-WOM), tuketicinin cevrimci yorumlari (OCR) , satin alma karari , sosyal medya.

ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF THE E-WOM ACTIVITIES ON CONSUMERS' PURCHASING DECISIONS: AN APPLIED RESEARCH ON FEMALE CONSUMERS IN TABRIZ

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Word-of-mouth (WOM) known as a one of the most essential information sources among consumers when they making a purchase decision. However, with the development of the Internet specially nascence of social media, a new perspective has been brought for WOM that enabling consumers to communicate with each other online by engaging in electronic word of mouth. In different social media platforms, people are able to post, share and exchange their view and experiences about the product or services to inform and up to date consumers who want to collect information and making decision in order to purchase service or a product or not.

This research discusses the electronic word of mouth within the context web 2.0.

Mainly, this dissertation studies the influence of online consumer reviews, one model of e-WOM, in social media on consumers` purchase decision. Also look at the differences between frequency of checking reviews and demographic characteristics of target group such as age and educational level. The study used a questionnaire to survey 385 females from the Tabriz, Iran to validate the impact of the eWOM scale on female consumers' purchase decision. The data was analyzed by using the SPSS.

Findings demonstrate that the influence of e-WOM depends on valance, source credibility, timeliness, quality and the volume of information obtained from e-WOM. More interestingly, valance, quality and timeliness of the OCR has a greater perceived influence than volume and trustworthiness on females' decision. We also find that there exists a differences between consumers' frequency of checking reviews and educational level of consumers while there are no differences between consumers' frequency of checking reviews and age of consumers. A suggestion for further study is enclosed.

Key words: Word-of-mouth, Electronic word-of-mouth, Online consumer reviews, purchase decision, Social media

DEDICATION

To my wonderful mother and to my coolest father for making me who I am and for their enduring love, support and encouragement during my journey to complete this dissertation.

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First and most of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my dearest supervisor, Assc. Prof. Dr. Elif AKAGUN ERGIN for her unconditional help, support, patience, guidance, advice and unsurpassed knowledge in order to complete this thesis.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

WOM – Word of Mouth

E-WOM – Electronic Word of Mouth

OCR – Online Consumer Reviews

PWOM – Positive Word of Mouth

NWOM – Negative Word of Mouth

CGC – Consumer-Generated Content

IDV –   Independent Variables

DV – Dependent Variable

SNS –Social Networking Sites

SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

VPN   –   Virtual Private Network

MENA – Middle East and North Africa

INTRODUCTION

"Marketing is a battle of perceptions, not products." — **Al Ries**,

Word of mouth is not fake online marketing, it is not a street teaming or advertising on TV. Word of mouth is true, actual, influential and powerful. Its something we all do every day – it is the way we communicate. WOM shares your honest view, opinion and attitude toward a product or service. (Balter, 2004). However, word of mouth has advanced into a totally different type of communication that exploits modern technology. This is labeled as electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) communication. In today's digital world, with the inventing of the Internet, the consumers live has been dramatically changed. The first and foremost altering is the type of shopping. Consumers usually prefer to purchase product or services online and day by day the number of these persons who buy products and services online is increased it is because Internet has created a medium which consumer can comfortably sit at their home, bought products online easily and then the products are delivered at their doorsteps. Thus, this new form of shopping from the internet totally varies from traditional shopping.

A study claims that one of the main differences is that in an online shopping consumers were not able to see, touch or try products like in traditional one so they are relying on the information which provided by others. (Kooijman, S. 2012). Hence, with the help of the world wide web, now consumers can easily share any information with other people who live all over the world and also customers can gain electronic word of mouth from other consumers. With the help of these indirect experiences of the services and products which provided by people will help buyers in making a purchase decision. Different studies show that the number of the users who select internet for their shopping besides read or write online reviews about the product or services in order to exchange the product information and communicate their opinion

about products and services, is growing impressively fast since there is accessibility of massive volume of information on the internet which can help consumers to make decision more simply when they are shopping in such way. While many potential shoppers commonly wait for the comment of other consumers before ordering. EWOM has transformed into the most significant communication channel after tangible decreasing relies upon advertising. Online consumer reviews present reliable wellspring of items goods and services information which consumer search about them and thus a potentially noteworthy sales asset.

STRUCTURE OF THESIS

This dissertation divided into four chapter. First of all, encompassed the overall introduction which provide brief background about the subject and the structure of the thesis. Chapter one, covered the theoretical framework that elaborates upon the literature review. The researcher explains the traditional word of mouth, electronic word of mouth in detail. This chapter also highlighted the pros and cons, communication channel and characteristics of both traditional and electronic word of mouth and mentioned the platforms in electronic word mouth by passing through social media genesis also explained the differences between them in order to provide better understanding of the entire concept. Moreover, the consumer decision making process was discussed.

The empirical part of this dissertation covered within second and third chapter. Research method, data collection and questionnaire design are discussed in chapter three and also explains the motivation behind the choosing this topic, the aim of the research, proposed hypotheses as well as declaring framework. The third Chapter purposes to illustrate to the research results, analyses and discussion. And the last chapter, plays a role as a conclusion that gives recommendation regarding to the results and suggestions for further research.
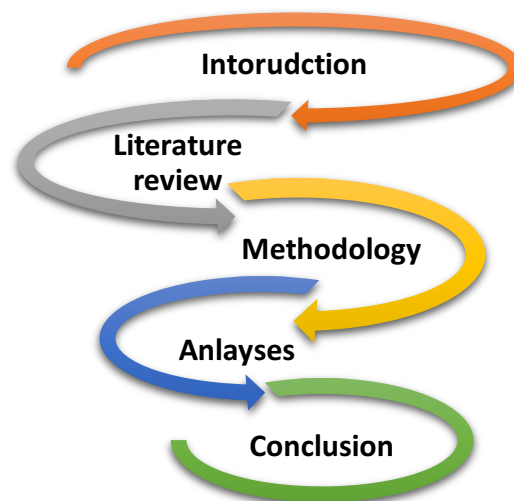
Figure 1. Structure

CHAPTER I
LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review focuses on theoretical framework. This chapter highlights the comprehensive definition of traditional word of mouth and electronic word of mouth. Then goes through the pros and cons, communication channel and characteristics of both traditional and electronic word of mouth and mentions the platforms in electronic word mouth by passing through social media genesis also explained the differences between them in order to provide better understanding of the entire concept. The consumer decision making process discussed. Moreover, the last part includes necessary explanations about Iran.

1.1. Traditional Word of Mouth

In the setting where rely on organizations, companies and advertisements have declined, Word-of-Mouth becomes one of the virtual methods to obtain the competitive advantage. (Ebrahimi, Jalilvand 1390). A survey done by Nail proved that consumer attitude toward advertising fell steeply between September 2002 and June 2004. He noted that less than 40% of people found advertisements as a way to discover about a new product, less than 59% agree that they trusted in advertising and purchase products because of the advertisement and 49% believed that advertisement is playing role as an entertainment. (Nil. J., 2005). Before internet age, consumers usually used two main channels for obtained information on experience products: from the mass media (seller-created information) such as newspaper, TV, radio and etc. or through free samples in stores and from discussions with others like friends, family, and relatives. (Bounie, D., Bourreau, M., Gensollen, M. and Waelbroeck, P. (2005). In the history of humankind, WOM has been recognized as one of the old and influential ways of communication and information transformation also became an essential tool

in marketing and has been growing through years. In fact, over the great number of advertisements, making decision in order to buy product or service are become hard for consumers. That is why WOM gain importance as an information source and playing important role in people live. And also became highly effective and very persuasive. (Bristor, 1990).

Indeed, the traditional form of Word of Mouth (WOM) is a style of communication that consumers are sharing and discussing their opinion through the product-related experiences. (Aslam, S., Jadoon, E., Zaman, K., and Gondal, S., 2011). The WOM consist of two side; the sender who provides and sends her/his information and opinions about the product and the receiver who obtaining this information. Arndt (1967) has been posited another definition to WOM as face to face (oral) and person to person conversation between the sender and receiver, who sends non-commercial messages about a product or services that experienced. (Fig 2.)

Figure 1.2: WOM Communication

WOM divided in to two parts which can be marketer-generated (i.e. information given by marketers) or consumer-generated (i.e. between consumers). Arndt, claims that consumer generated WOM are more credible and trustworthy than marketer-generated WOM. Some researchers, found that the recommendation from other consumer had more impact on people than the impact of the market-generated information. (Alreck and Settle,1995)

1.1.1. WOM Classification

WOM also has been classified as Negative WOM (NWOM) and Positive WOM (PWOM). NWOM is usually occurring between consumers (friends and relative) when they are dissatisfying of the product they purchase (Blodgett J.G., Granbois, D.H. and Walters, R.G., 1994). In general, negative WOM describe as unpleasant thought toward a product which share between people. (Balaji et al., 2016). PWOM is occurring when consumer satisfies with the product, fulfills her/him needs and as a result he/she transfers a product related information. (Holmes and Lett, 1977). Some researchers found that NWOM had a great impact on consumers. (Chevalier, J.A. and Mayzlin, D. (2006); Mittal, V., Ross, W.T.J. and Baldasare, P.M., 1998) while some other researchers noted that PWOM were more influential than NWOM. (East, R., Hammond, K. and Lomax, W., 2008)

Thus, WOM communication becomes an effective way in finding the right type of information to each consumer. (Do-Hyung Park & Sara Kim, 2007). Balter and Butman highlighted that WOM is one of the valuable resources that buyers can using it during making their purchase decision with assuming the fact that WOM contains of real and actual information about products and services. Consumers in making purchase decision regularly trust in informal or personal communication rather than formal or organizational sources such advertisements. (Bansal, H. S., & Voyer, P. A.2000). According to the survey done by AC Nielson (2007) between 50 countries showed that 90% of these consumers' decisions to purchase a product or services mostly depends on their friends' recommendation and the trust on them (AC Nielson,2007).

1.1.2. Advantages and Disadvantages of Traditional WOM

Beside these, also WOM can has some advantages and disadvantages for marketers; Trusov, Bodapati and Bucklin highlighted that without any expenses, messages delivered between people. So it is inexpensive and reaches to numerous consumers particularly when the positive WOM spread it can have positive outcomes for marketers and sellers. On the other hand, if the consumers share negative WOM (NWOM), it can create disadvantageous for marketers. From Nyilasy point of view,

people listen to WOM because WOM is part of their routine conversations as mean to search for product information and has intrinsic structure so any unbiased or incorrect information can pass during these conversations because of that WOM cannot have managed easily. (Erkan., 2009) In addition, one of the pros that can be mentioned is the validity of the message that is created by consumers instead of marketers. So, a consumer most of the time prefer to gets information from more personal sources such as family, siblings, friends and etc. (Jansen et al., 2009)

1.1.3. Consumers' Motivation for Participating in WOM

There are four main categories which motivate people to participate in positive Word of Mouth communication includes; Product-involvement, Self-involvement, Other-involvement and Message-involvement (Dictcher 1966). Other authors have revised the study of Dichter and modifying some of the old ones in order to reach new reasons of motivations. However, from the point of view of Hennig- Thurau et al, Dichter's original is still seen as a noticeable study. In any case, product involvement refers to a consumer who feels powerfully attaches to the product or services and the need to do something about that, therefore, share with others. Secondly, self-involvement; a consumer could be motivated by the tendency to get identified by others and gain attention. He/she used product in order to achieve to this desire. In other words, the consumer satisfies some certain emotional needs. Other-involvement identified as third motivation which consumer needs to talk and share positive experiences to the other consumers as mean to help them. And the last motive, message-involvement refers to the discussion which is emerge by advertisement or commercials. (Henning- Thusaau et al, Ditcher 1966).

1.2. Electronic Word of Mouth

In present, with the growth of the Internet, a new way of WOM created, a way something different from the traditional type which is called "Electronic Word of Mouth" (eWOM). (Godes & Mayzlin., 2004). It is also known as "Online Word of mouth". Therefore, people can easily share their experiences about the product they purchased via Electronic or Online Word of Mouth (eWOM) activity which is given a completely new perspective to WOM. Like traditional WOM, eWOM can be

containing of two model, the consumer-generated eWOM and the market-generated eWOM.(Sijoria, Mukherjee, Datta, 2018).Internet creates an appropriate environment where consumers who have never met each other, can make their thoughts, opinion, and experiences easily reachable to the global community of Internet users. (Gruen et al., 2006 & Dellarocas, 2003). Because of convincing and informative essence of E-WOM, the consumers' decision process can have influenced by E-WOM.(Kumar,K., Purbey,S., 2018).

Some researchers noted that there were a lot of ways in internet medium for people in order to exchange and share their opinions, stories, notes, suggestions and experiences of their used products such as different webpages like www.tripadvisor.com, online forums, company websites, chat boards like Instagram or Facebook, blogs, email, online communities. According to the Lerrthaitrakul and Panjakajornsak(2014) , eWOM can occurred through three different channels which are categorized to; 1)One-to- one channel, 2) One-to-many channel, 3) Many-to-many channel.

-One to one channel for example when a person sends an email or short message (SMS) for another person it means that messages are sent from one person to another.

-In One-to-many channel, message is sent from one person to other people for instance when a person writes online comment about product in a website.

-At last, many-to-many channel, can be occurs when people send their opinions on blogs, online communities like google groups.

Consumer reviews are regarded as a new model of e-WOM which includes analyses and commentaries which developed and posted by the customers who took a risk, spent their money on the product, buy it and still used it. With the growth of the internet, people can now have reviewed, ranked, rated, evaluated product or services online; these could contain music, films, books, clothes, shoes and electronic devices, as well as health services, hotels, teachers, vacations, and lawyers. Indeed, consumers purchase the wide range of goods and services online. Many online shoppers wait for comments from other shoppers before taking up an offer and always undertake a review of other shoppers' comments and experiences before they buy goods online. Potential consumers can utilize these online reviews in a variety of ways according to

their goals. They can use to easily scan the retail practice of "window shopping or use them as an important factor in their purchase deciding of a product or service. (Torres, E. N., & Singh, D. 2016). Online reviews have convert to a major, powerful and effective source for customers 'decision making process, especially through eWOM. (Park, S.; Allen, J. 2013). So, Online customer reviews play an important role in consumers purchase decision and they also continue purchase product online. (Cheung., C. M. and Lee., M. K.). According to the latest Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey from 50 countries, 70% of online shoppers believe in the reviews which they read online (Nielsen 2009). Online consumer reviewers play two roles in influencing the decision-making process of other consumers. They can be acting as informant and recommender. As an Informant, OCRs give information about the product and it somehow similar to the information given by a seller with one differentiation, OCRs provide consumer-oriented report which means that they give information from user viewpoint while sellers provide product oriented report, for instance, technical specification and standards, product qualities, product performance and etc. (Lee, J., Park, D.H., & Han, I.,). Consequently, studies show that information which is presented by consumers may have greater credibility and trustworthiness than seller information. Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Wilson & Sherrell, 1993). Because when the seller gave product information, they try to highlight the good aspects of the product in order to hide low-grade features of a product. (Do-Hyung Park, Jumin Lee, and Ingoo Han) however OCRs represent honest and straightforward evaluations of the strengths and weaknesses of a product they purchase. And as recommender role reveals the feature of the products like negative or positive features. (Park, Lee, Han, 2007).

Researchers show that consumers pay attention to online reviews and online reviews could have a big influence on review attitude and purchase decision. According to the 2011 consumer survey, more consumers (90%) read online reviews before purchasing and 83% of them have been affected by reading online reviews in their purchase decision. (ChannelAdvisor, 2011).

1.2.1. Characteristics of the Online Consumer Reviews

1.2.1.1 Review Valence

One of the main characteristics of the online customer reviews (OCR) that may affect the consumers' information process during purchasing is the Valence. Valence refers to OCR which can be either positive, negative or sometimes neutral. (Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991). So, consumers can give a positive comment in support of the product they buy and emphasized on strength features of the product and encourage consumers to adopt the product or use the service. On the other side, the consumer may give negative comment against the product. Therefore, the consumer reveals the weaknesses and negative characteristics of the good or service and prevent other consumers to select them. Consumer behavior research has shown that consumers notice and care more about negative opinions than to positive opinions. (Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991; Sen and Lerman 2007)

1.2.1.2 Quality Argument and Volume

Another key to characteristics of OCR which affects the consumers' information process during purchasing is the quality and quantity (volume) of the online reviews. The quality concentrating and emphasizing on message content. There were many major factors that help a consumer to recognize the quality of information: these determinants including reliability, completeness, usefulness, understandability, comparability, consciousness, timeliness and correctness, of the message. The studies show that high quality and strong message, which are understandable, readable and objective, are more effective in changing decision process of consumers as compared to weak ones which are unclear, subjective and emotional. (Petty, R.E.; Cacioppo, J.T.; and Schumann, D. (1983); Petty, R.E., and Cacioppo, J.T. (1984). High-quality reviews were more logical and persuasive. (Park D.H., Lee J.M., and Han I.G.,).

There is no standard format for quality in reviews content. The following text is an example of a high-quality review:

"Portable will make your Echo Dot sound way better, has an aux input in the back if you want to use an iPhone/iPod for music instead of Alexa, and can serve as a power bank. Very nice material and the quality are twice better than the other similar. No EQ,

no Bluetooth though, and its a little plump. In all, a really nice quality upgrade for your dot".

In the following example of a low-quality review, the nature of the content is quite different:

"Oh my god this product is extremely perfect. I am proud of this product. I got this one for my daughter because she wanted one just like mine. We both lovelovelove it!!!"

The review with a high quality content, the content contains sentences such as "the quality is twice better than the other similar goods" or "product has an aux input. "or "serve as power bank", and "no EQ and Bluetooth" that are specific, rational, clear, logical, not emotional, informative relevant and also support their claims with details and specific reasons. (Do-Hyung Park, Jumin, Lee, and Ingoo Han). Whereas in low quality review example; sentences such as "oh my god, I'm proud of this product," or "I can't believe it, this product is extremely perfect" such reviews are subjective, emotional and do not make rational opinions. And the sender of the review dose not give clear and detailed reasons also it is hard to recognize why he/she recommends the product. (Lee, J., Park, D.H., & Han, I., 2007).

The quantity of online reviews refers to Number of online consumer review that represents the product popularity and shows the fame and significance of product or service. (Petty, R.E., and Cacioppo, J.T., 1984 ; Mayzlin, D., & Chevalier, J. A. (2006). The more reviews (high volume of reviews) there are, the more information about the product so this high volume of reviews helps more to consumers for making a judgment whether to buy a product or not.

In addition to quality, Volume and valence characteristic of the reviews, researchers also considered another characteristic of the online consumer reviews; recentness and source credibility(trustworthiness)

1.2.1.3   Review Recentness

Recentness of message concern the date of the online reviews was posted. Consumers pay attention to the date of the reviews whether it is new and up to date or not. Usually, the consumers don't rely on the reviews which are old and not recent because they believed that such kind of reviews is Invalid, too old to use in and unreliable for making the purchasing decision. Also, websites which are not up to date and the reviews are not recent cannot provide the significant amount of information and performance to the users.(Madu, C.N., & Madu, A.A. 2002).   A study revealed that 77% of consumers trust reviews which are posted older than 3 months are not impact their decision making because they believed that they were not relevant anymore.

1.2.1.4   Source Credibility

Source credibility refers to the trustworthiness, credibility, and reliability of the message source which sent by a sender. (Wu and Shaffer, 1987). Online reviews usually published by unknown persons. Within this digital world, every individual can share any kind of information they want. So, consumers usually published their opinion through personal blogs, shopping websites, consumers review platform, retail websites and etc. Accordingly, readers may have difficulty in recognizing the reliability and credibility source of the message (Park c., Lee, T.,). In addition, D.H.Park, J.Lee, I.Han mentioned that traditional WOM messages could have more credibility than Online reviews (e-WOM). Because "Traditional WOM primarily emanates from a sender (source) who is known to the receiver of the information thereby ensuring that the credibility of the communicator and the message is known to the "receiver" (Cheung, C. M. & Thadani, D. R., 2012). And also Jung Lee & Lee., 2009 approved this presenting that compare to the WOM, EWOM was not trusted in first sight because the in WOM people share their experiences and opinions face to face. To shed light better, they could be more believable and trustable for consumers when they met the real people to argue and talking about the ideas of products they experienced.

1.2.2 The Advantages and Disadvantages of Electronic Word of Mouth

Like other phenomena e-WOM has benefits and shortcoming either for consumers or marketers.

1.2.2.1 Advantages

With development of technology and rise of the internet, WOM communication tactics were totally change in way that it becomes more simple and fast. (Trusov, M., Bodapati, A. V and Bucklin, R.E. 2010). Moreover, E-WOM became more convenient because people now can attain to the internet from everywhere and anytime with their mobile phones and tablets. So, the main advantage is that consumers are now mighty to reach to the further information of the product they decided to buy any they want. Further more, through internet, user have chance to communicate with each other or with marketers or companies themselves any time they need and vice versa. This communication is a bilateral profit both for customers and marketers because consumers can post their opinion, demands, complaints so both consumer and marketers can take advantage of it in way that other users can read them to make a suitable buying decision and marketers can receive their consumers requests or grievances in order to solve the shortage or released new products to market. It is cheap and cost-effective because it is somehow free advertising. Moreover, both consumer and marketer can send pictures and videos which is opportunity for marketers to announce their product and also users can take advantage of visual instruments in order to make proper decision toward their need. (Erkan, I.,2016) . Although, e-WOM able to reach to the millions of people in short period of time and on the other hand can be spread very quickly.

1.2.2.2 Disadvantages

E-WOM has some disadvantageous as well as its advantageous. E-wom because of its high speed of spread among people in short period of time, the effect of e-wom become uncontrollable and also marketers cannot control the content of e-wom

so its disadvantage for companies' image. Although marketers wish to have consumers who reveal their positive experiences with others consumers, however, it is perhaps not possible to think that everyone else will be happy client every time. People who have a negative experience with a certain product or service are far more probably to share their dissatisfying opinion than in cases where they are satisfied with that product. Hence, the negative comments can be spread as the fast as the positive comments among millions of consumers which can have lasting impact for the company. (Erkan, i., 2016) Besides, in an online platform we can found many e-WOM sources which are anonymous, spurious or manipulated.

1.2.3. Electronic Word of Mouth Platforms

With Advancements in web technology, the possible impact of others' opinions has noticeably increased. Online review platforms become an Interactive venue in order to posting information and express personal thoughts, suggestions, criticism and complaints about experiences on different products and goods and also have become a main informational source for consumers to help them in their purchase decisions. Consequently, E-WOM or the online reviews has become a powerful tool in influencing and shaping consumer purchase decision. Consumers believe that such articulations are useful because the reviews and information come from customers themselves and they are not market generated in order to have just selling intents. The goals of such websites are to help consumers make informed buying decisions by providing a platform to share their product experiences. These platforms which are simplify the development and exchange of user-generated content are also called social media includes blogs, review sites, social network sites and forums, retailer websites and etc. According to the Freedman's report (2008), 43% of those surveyed read customer reviews most of the time and 22% of them always reading reviews before making purchase decision and he also reported that 53% of shoppers use these reviews when they are deciding between two or three products. "The e-Marketer Report," which is done by Bizrate insight in 2018, revealed that 64.6% of US internet users believed that online reviews were mostly or very reliable. In addition, a survey by local Consumer Review Survey in 2017 was found that 85% percent of respondents trusted

online reviews as much as personal recommendations.

Web 1.0 is known as primary level of the internet. Users researched on different internet sites, got the information they wanted and then left the site. In Web 1.0, technology only made it possible for users to be a reader and be informed. There was no opportunity for them to interact users, comment, like, write a content or get feedback. In other words, the main concept of the web 1.0 was one-to-many which means that people just can made one-way conversation with other via internet and the communication was limited.

By increasing of the users of the internet, people felt the inadequacy of the presented content and they desired to intervene and write their own opinions, sharing them and need to see themselves belonging to a certain social class within internet, that is where the web 2.0 was born.

Web 2.0 has been around since 2004.Web 2.0 can be described as the web a technology which users not only reach the content through downloading but also generate and present new contents by uploading. (Darwish and LAkhtaria, 2011). Web 2.0 convert the web in to a participator platform, the read-write web, where users no longer use the web to be informed but instead can actively take part, interact with each other, create content, share them and let other users to view these content in fact, the concept was many-to many and moreover web 2.0 become an important tool of communication in society. As result, Web 2.0 make a new way for WOM which empowered consumer in order to simply exchange information experiences and knowledge with global communities and the number of the users who put this way to communicate their knowledge and share information about products is rising rapidly.(Olson, Trimi, & Lee, 2012).

Then Social media came to the arena. The people's way of communication with each other is completely altered with advent of Social media websites. (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Nambisan and Baron 2007). Social media match smartly under the total Web 2.0. Social media website has become important part of the millions of users' daily live. (Okazaki,2009). Because it is kind of easy to use platform that let individuals to create content. Such that, people started to share their eating places, cafes and even their foods on social networks, and they started to give ideas to those

who want to experience it. One of the definitions of Social media which defined by Kaplan and Haenlein was: "Social media is a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of the Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of Consumer-Generated Content or CGC" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). This means that social media is the web 2.0 innovations that through CGC, People now have chance to share their opinions, knowledge and discuss about the product, service or brands information with others and make large-scale word of mouth network and easily transferring their opinion to each other which can be impact the buying decision. Social media brings together words, pictures, sounds and videos and technology. Most users use social media to communicate with their friends, keep up-to-date, take advantage of people's thoughts and learn about products. Social media platforms are different with each other however have similar basic features and purposes (Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2003; Dellarocas, 2003) giving consumer a varied choice (Lee, 2013). These features are :

User Accounts and profiles: If a website allows internet users to create their own accounts, it also allows for social interaction and Profile pages in social media represent individuals' information and users' posts.

Friends, Followers, Groups, Hashtags: Used to let people interact with other social media users, create a title for people who think in the same topic and become a group member.

Communication: Social media is used by users to connect with other users and share information.

Personalization: Social media platforms allow users to make their own settings. Contacts can customize, edit, manage your friends or followers, view, comment, or share your posts.

Consequently, social media create a medium that let individuals to generate their own profiles and at same time reach to others individual profiles. (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). There are some consumers called review posters who write about experience based on product information, on the other hand there are reviewers who read this information that posted by posters. (lee & youn,2009). This way individual

can create their personal content related to their opinion, write what they know and other individuals have been able to analyze and verify them, deny them, rate them or add extra things and also empowered users to share their buying and experiences so they were being able to impact other consumer across different platforms to send the customer generated content (CGC) tool. (cheung Chang thadani 2012) & (Long-chuana lu, Wen-pin Chang and Hsiu-hua Chang) .It is free and easy to reach to such information and individuals can make their thoughts simply reachable to global society. That is why social media gain attention and becoming suitable platforms for eWOM. Due to the fast-growing attention and usage of social media, different types of the social media websites dramatically increased too. Table 1 shows the various platforms but not limited to.

Table 1.1: E-WOM platforms

Platforms	Example
Social Networks	Instagram , Facebook, Twitter
Blogs	Blogger.com , Tumblr.com
Online retail websites	Amazon, Hepsiburada. Digikala
Forums	Ukbusinessforums.co.uk,eksisozluk.com
Consumer review platforms	Tripadvisor , Foursquare , Eopinion
Media sharing platforms	YouTube , Aparat.com
Instant message	WhatsApp , Telegram

According to Nielsen Social media report (2016) the main social media users group that spends the most time there are Generation X (ages 35-49) and surprisingly

is not Millennial. Moreover, added that females spend 25% of their online time on social media. (26 hours 41 minutes' average overall weekly time). Latest statistic which is done by alexa.com shows that Google.com, Youtube.com and Facebook.com are among the top three most visits sites in the world also shows that the three social media websites that stand among the top ten most visited site in Iran, i.e. Aparat.com, Digikala.com and Instagram. Nonetheless, the reviews which are provided on websites are considered very important and these e-WOM can effect consumers buying decision and thus, they are studied by many researchers (Mayzlin, D., & Chevalier, J. A. 2006; Li and Zhan, 2011), as blogs (Hsu and Tsou, 2011; Kozinets et al., 2010), consumer review websites (Gauri et al., 2008; Purnawirawan et al., 2012) and discussion forums (Chiou and Cheng, 2003).

Although Hu, according to the social networking sites (cyberspace), categorized e-WOM platforms in four following groups which all have same goal but different in function:

- **Specialized platforms:** In this platform refers to consumer-generated reviews which contain information such as product reviews, product ratings, product/price comparison, recommendations and even linking consumers to different online retailers' websites like yelp.com, consumersearch.com, foursquare.com or tripadvisor.com. In these kinds of websites cannot purchase or sale product or services. The advantageous of these sites are that make it easy to find information because of the accurate product categorization. In a local consumer reviews survey in 2017, asked consumers to choose their top review platform from a selection of the most popular platforms and yelp become consumers most trusted review platforms (20%).

- **Affiliated platforms:** affiliated platforms refers to online consumer reviews depended on online retailer websites such as Amazon.com, digikala.com or hepsiburada.com which provide sale of product/service. In these kinds of platforms, reviews are more targeted and product specific. The content of the reviews can be in the form of numerical star ratings and open-ended customer-

authored comments about the product in the format of a written text. Some of other have voted features with form of annotation which shows the degree of review usefulness and consumers can answer with the yes or no alongside to leave comment and then provide information like x of y persons found the following review useful. The reviews are not only about detailed information about products but also includes comments such as delivery timing, shipping quality, customer service, information usefulness and so on. For example, amazon.com (one of the pioneers of site reviews), at the end of each review ask is this review helpful for you?(Chua and Banerjee,2015) (burtona &khammash, 2010). So, the buyers can find huge number of negative and positive reviews for each product that posted by other customers. Salsify survey revealed that 51% of US digital buyers (more than half) found Amazon reviews as the most useful product information platform.

- **Social platforms:** As it is known from his name, it refers to social networking sites that information about products (reviews) swap through social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and so on. The information can be consumer-generated or market generated. The reviews are distributing and sharing by consumer themselves. Individuals are haphazardly exposed to reviews which means that they are passively getting e-WOM every time they are surfing in these websites even if they didn't actively search for the e-WOM they need. moreover, some platform allowed users to upload photos, videos, music, link, hashtags, likes and other content. The advantageous of the social platform to first two type is that the information was swapping through people whom commonly do know each other.

- **Miscellaneous platforms:** it refers to other kind of social media websites like blogs, mini blogs, forums, email, instant message and discussion boards. The functions and features of these platforms are different from the other platforms. For example, in blogs (blogger.com), people can be writing their opinions and

experiences like diaries directly in their blogs and give recommendation to others. (ismail erkan,2016).

1.3. Consumer Motives for Reading Online Reviews

Four main motives found for consumers who pursue online product reviews. These different motives classified as Informational behavior, Risk reduction, Quality seeking and Social belonging. (Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Burtona and Khammash, 2010; Henning-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Klein and Ford, 2003; Schmidt and Spreng, 1996; Zhu and Zhang, 2010).

Firstly, information search which is identified as one of the motives is the primary level of the process of pre-purchase decision making in which consumer in this level seek, collect, evaluate and mix obtain information from loads of sources (Schmidt and spreng, 1996).

Secondly, Sheth and Venkatesan (1968) underlined on three methods to reduce the uncertainty of the result which is trusting in brand image, pre-purchase advice on the following available information and information seeking from the customer oriented, personal references (Sheth, J.N., & Venkatesan, M. 1968). Burtona and Khammash claim that Most of the time consumers unsure about the result of purchasing decision so, they did not just rely on the brand image or own purchase decision, and seeking information from older consumers for reducing untimed outcomes of their action. Therefore, customers in order to reduce the risk of their purchase, they may seek information from other consumers. (Burtona, J., and Khammash, M. 2010). Also, Bickart and Schindler mentioned that" the information on Internet forums (OCRs) may have greater credibility than seller-generated information." (Bickart, B., and Schindler, R. M., 2001)

Thirdly, Consumers take online reviews into consideration to find out and gain information about the product quality before their purchasing. For example, studies have shown that product popularity is the sign of high quality (Zhu, F., and Zhang, X. (2010). In addition, consumer opinion platforms(COPs) allow consumers to search for what is the new trend or learn how the product operates. So this kind of information seeking quality helps the consumer to reassurances that they made a good decision. (Burtona and Khammash, 2010) Thus, Quality seeking can classified as a third motive

for reading online opinions. and the final motive is social belonging. Belonging to a virtual community and have relationship within a community play an important role to certain consumers. (Henning-Thurau and Walsh, 2003; Bickart and Schindler, 2001). Consumers who read reviews on consumer online platforms (COPs) find users with same interests and make contact with them with the help of reviews. Personal blogs are one of the obvious examples of bonding within community on reviews. In these platforms users pay attention on certain products, share their interest and attract peer groups with same product interests. (Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2003).

1.4.   Electronic WOM Vs. Traditional WOM

As explained above, it has been revealed that what is the definition of WOM and eWOM the characteristic and also what motive people to use these kinds of communication to gain information about products or services they want to purchase. Both have a same goal which contains information sharing between consumers and both models have similarities in many ways (Christiansen, 2014). Pursuant to Rathore & Panwar highlighted there is plenty of differences between two methods (Rathore & Panwar, 2015).   However, there are main and clear differing characteristics between WOM and EWOM which might have high or low impact on consumers' purchase decision-making. First and foremost, the explicit difference between WOM and EWOM is WOM naturally happen face to face (one-to-one) and it is synchronous communication and personal, in contrast eWOM occur through internet (one to many or many to many) and often its asynchronous communication as displayed in Figure (3.) (López & Sicilia, 2013). and(Jeong E. and Jang S.,S 2010) and impersonal . Furthermore, sometimes WOM communication(oral) does not permit consumers to picturing the experiences being transmitted while in e-WOM, multitude of people can see the statement of others (senders of the message) via internet because messages can remain on the internet over long period, in case of WOM communication, the conversation faded as soon as it occurred for its oral feature. (López & Sicilia, 2013).
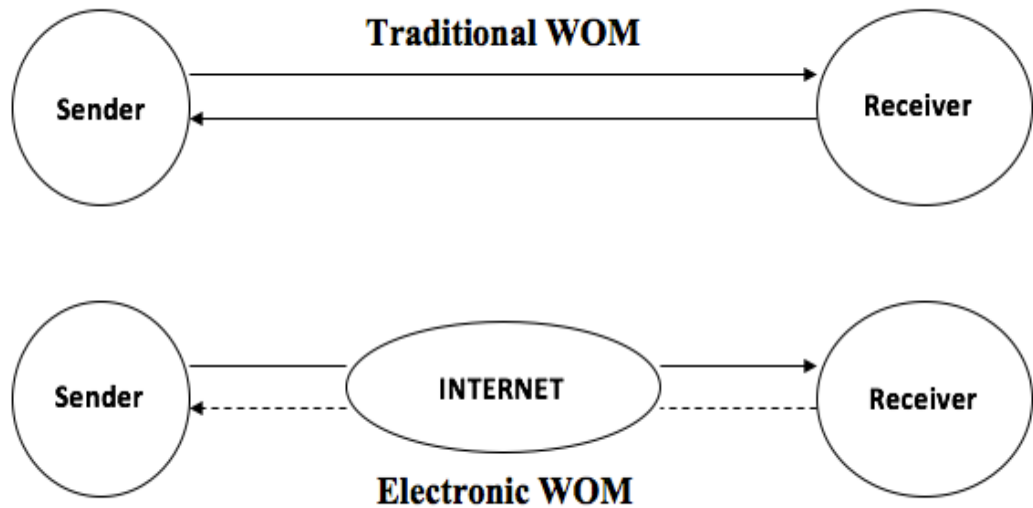
Figure 1.3: Traditional WOM VS. e-WOM. Source: (López & Sicilia, 2013)

Thus, WOM it is oral while EWOM transferred via written words or can use voices, images, videos while exchanging and sharing their information about product or services. Moreover, the researcher highlighted another difference between WOM and EWOM in terms of accessibility. EWOM because of the written form provides chances to be accessed by lots of people whenever they want without time and geographical limitation whereas WOM because of the spoken form and normally happen between two people so it makes it impossible for other people to reach these discussions. Besides, WOM discussion is limited in terms of time and geographically(yildirim,2011). Unlike EWOM which can be contain both unknown and known sources, WOM occur between persons who are familiar with each other (Lehman W. 2015) At last but not least, according to the Lau and Ng, WOM should be passed through a chain of the informant in order to attain and impact the high number of receivers. In contrast, EWOM can spread between millions of people very quickly and fast. (Jeong E. and Jang S.,S 2010). The following table (1.2) has illustrate the summarized differentiation of two concepts.

Table 1.2: Electronic WOM Vs. Traditional WOM

	Traditional WOM	Electronic WOM
Audience	Person-to-person	Person-to-people
Spread speed	Slow	Fast
Type of communication	Oral (Personal)	Written, images, voices, videos (Impersonal)
Accessibility	Not always	Always
Communication	Synchronous (simultaneous)	Both asynchronous and synchronous
scope	Limited in time and location	Not limited in time and location
Communication channel	Face to face	Through Internet
correspondents	Known	Both known and unknown
Stability of message	Temporary	Long-lasting

Source: Lehmann, 2015; yildirim 2010; Jeong E. and Jang S.,S 2010; Christiansen, 2014

1.5.   The Consumer Decision Making Process

Court in their article "the consumer decision journey" highlighted that by developing the internet and new technology, the method of the searching and purchasing are completely changed in consumer. (Court et al., 2009). Buyers eager to search useful information about products from external sources like internet, consumer

reviews, online advertisement, website and so on and they don't prefer to stay inactive and waiting advertising coming at them. Jepson discovered that internet user before making purchase decision firstly they searched for information online and moreover added that the number of the internet users who search on the internet for getting information about product they want to purchase is expressively higher than consumer searching on the internet in general for getting some information. Zettelmeyer, Morton and Silvarosso in their study stated that consumer, with the internet, can do numerous things which including; seeking product features and reach lots of valuable information and recommendation, make better comparison between products especially price comparison, linking to the seller and also can get know the range of prices and can negotiating better from recommendation which written on the internet by others.

What consumer makes to take a different decision is their "needs" which have in their lives. No matter what they purchase, a breakfast butter or a house all go through a basic stage known as decision making process. Decision process is a complex procedure which consumer goes through to o determine what products or services will best appropriate to their needs. This decision making process model primarily presented by Cox et Al in 1983 (Fig 1.4.) which broken into 5 steps.
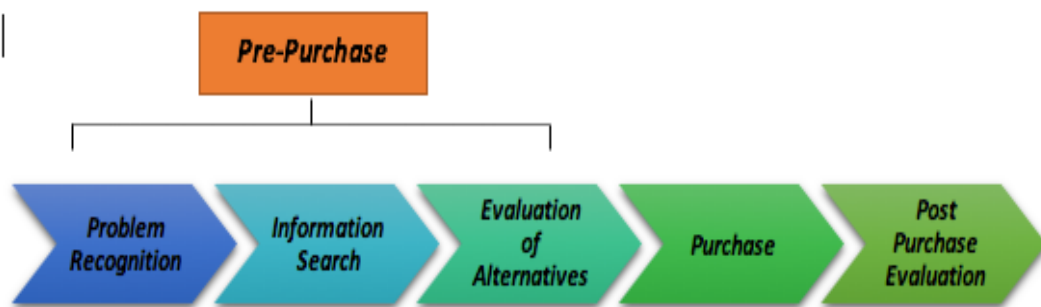
Figure 1.4. The buying decision process

These steps are: Problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, post-purchase evaluation. Moreover, Frambach, Roest, & Krishnan stated that buyers passed through three stages in his/her purchasing process, namely, pre-purchase (Problem recognition information search and evaluation),

purchase, and post-purchase. Peter and Donnelly clarified that when consumer feel and understand the need to purchase product or services, that is where the consumer making decision process start.

1.4.1. Problem Recognition

The first step problem recognition known as first and most important stage in this process which occurs when a consumer understands missing of something. Here, consumer recognize what exactly needs. So consumers cannot purchase before distinguishing of the need. Kotler and strong declare that "need" can be elicit both by internal or external stimuli. Internal stimuli can be hunger, thirst, pain and etc. For instance, consumer who goes to restaurant and ordering a sandwich identifies his/her need as hunger. External stimuli can cause need by recognizing such as; an advertisement an individual see on Instagram may get her/his thinking that need a new car. (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008).

1.4.2. Information Searching

After recognizing of what they need, next step is Information searching. Here consumer start to gather information to understand how they can fulfill the need (Mucuk, 2002). This information can be gathered from people via recommendation, internet, individual own experience, family, friends, co workers, advertisement or word of mouth, online searching such as blogs, Facebook, twitter, forums. For example, googled restaurants or reading reviews on foursquare, and searches such as "what is the best restaurant around x area?".

1.4.3. Evaluation of Alternatives

After gathering information, next step is evaluation of alternatives. This stage starts when an information search has elucidated different number of options and alternatives. Zikmund& d'Amico,1999). The consumer here has all required

information. An individual tries to select the best option through his/her taste, need, quality, availability, style and pocket and satisfy their want or need.

1.4.4. Selection Stage

After going through all the above stages, now consumer decided to purchase based on the information gathered what to eat, where to eat and what can satisfy her/his. According to the Kotler and Keller, there are two factors that can affect the purchase. First factor is attitudes of others and the second one is unanticipated situational factors (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

1.4.5. Post Purchase Evaluation

The last step, post purchase evaluation refers to consumer evaluation, an analysis the product will be either satisfied or dissatisfied and also fulfilled her/his need or not. If the product meet his needs and expectations he/she turn to a a Satisfied consumer (Kotler & Armstrong,2008) and also is satisfied with purchase decision and feel like she gave proper decision after sale. (Zikmund& d'Amico,1999). On the other hand, if the product or service dose not meet his/her expectation the consumer disappointed. And maybe return or abandon the product. (Kotler & Keller,2012).

Kotler and Armstrong claims that consumers in their every purchase, go through all these five stages. Whilst, consumers in their routine purchases may often omit some stages (information seeking and information evaluation) because they would identify the need and go direct to the purchase decision. Moreover, Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel clarifying on this, indicated that consumer also can be affected, motivated and encouraged by their environment or the situation near them during their decision process and directing their decision.

These environments may include personal motives, social status, culture, family, friends and other element. Senecal & Nante revealed that many buyers tend to reading recommendation that written by experienced consumers before purchase certain types of products or services merely reading product information in general because the suggestion that given by experienced consumer are greatly impact new consumers' purchase decision.

1.5. Iran's History

Iran is the 17th largest country in the world and with 80 million diverse citizens is the second populous country after Egypt in MENA (Middle East and North Africa). About 60% of the citizens are below 30 years of age and most of the populations are well-educated which holding at least bachelor degree yet the unemployment rising which estimated 40%. Each year, numerous educated and talented Iranian (almost 150.000 people) emigrate form Iran and this brain-drain undermines economic development. According to the Iranian Minister of Science, Research and Technology, tantamount to a yearly loss of 150 UDS billion for the country.

Iran is rich in natural resources includes natural gas, crude oil, copper and iron. Beside this, Iran is one of the oldest in history and culture in the world. This country which is known as Muslim republic has own cultural characteristics. Religiosity of Iran population is a major cultural characteristic and pervades many characteristics of their life. So, they own complex and unique kind of markets and consumers and suggests a very exciting consumer market.

Although for many years, Iran has to face with many economic sanctions by international community and most of the People's purchase power decreased by increasing dollar prices but still they interest are growing for foreign products and they believe that the foreign products have high quality. A survey by Roland Berger shows that 66% respondents choose imported product because of their high quality especially brands that imported from Germany.

In this country, social media usage is prevalent especially with easily accessible to 3G network. The penetration of smartphones is very high with 40 million mobile phone users. Some messaging applications and some social media platform including Facebook, telegram, twitter, amazon, YouTube and etc. are blocked (filtered) in order to offering safe market for local companies. Moreover, government claims that internet is effective and useful device in arranging protest against government. This controlled version of the internet called "halal net". But still people can access to these blocked platforms by using VPN (virtual private network).

Although political sanction may have receded the economic of Iran and imported products and chocked the presence of global companies such as Apple, Amazon, eBay but this has at the same time made vacancy in which pioneering Iranians have moved in and advanced their own shopping style ecosystem. E-commence market is still a small market but has considerable potential in growth of this market. Currently, 25000 online shop obtained eNAMAD (trust certificate) to work legally. On of the big e-commerce upstarts like Digikala is the top online store with a 75% share in Iran's online retailing.

Nowadays, the desire to shop online dramatically increases and online shopping become usual among Iranian, remarkably among young people. Online shopping has become the main source of Iranian Internet users with a population of 45 million. The online shopping has jumped. The most desired category is clothing (23%) followed by cosmetics, tickets, insurance, electronics and etc. Thanks to e-commerce upstarts in which no longer consumers hesitate whether the digital channel is safe is reliable and can provide the same quality experience as in store shopping.

Iranian people enjoy talking. They are so socialized people in which they love to share the information by face to face communication or through social network. They like to pass their thoughts, ideas, experience and their stories with others. Thus, they will consider the others opinions in their early purchasing decision or make buying decision by reading it on internet.

Today, no longer Persian females do not feel restricted by traditional gender roles and they seeking to be more active in society in which day by day the number of the educated Persian women are increased. Just because they do not want to allocate themselves just to motherhood, they are more involved in the public world and the role of them is mounting in different area such as shopping and decision making. Also, rising in Age of marriage and remain single into their late 30s are becoming socially acceptable. One of the favorite leisure activities in Iran are dress up and women apply make up and go out. Coffee shops are major gathering places for them, having lunch or dinner in restaurants, going to shopping center even if they're not shopping, they're at least window-shopping. They like to see and be seen and they like to show off.

Iranian women require covering their hair with scarves, wear knee-length

overcoats known as a manteau, with trousers worn underneath which is called hijab. Fortunately, many Persian women have found ways to change the rules of dressing. However, the face became central to a woman's value because of covering the rest of their bodies and they use an oddly large amount of their incomes on makeup. According to the Jahan News, Iran is highest consumer cosmetic which get seventh place in the world. Generally, Persian women have definite sense of style and they pay great attention to their appearance. Some western media state that colorful and different hijab and wearing heavy make up on are manifesto against government. Behind the close doors, Iran is a land of contrast, where there are different cultures together.

CHAPTER II
METHODOLOGY

This chapter covers the research methodology of this dissertation in a more comprehensive way. The researcher first of all discusses about the objective, why doing this dissertation and highlights the hypothesis and the aims. Then, discusses about the methodology, the primary and secondary data. Next discusses about the methods that used and why they were used. Moreover, indicates how the sample selected and data were collected. Last but not least, the questionnaire was designed.

2.1. Purpose of the Research

The main objective of this research is to discover the influence of the electronic word of mouth on female consumers in Tabriz. According to the Leigh Cuen(2017), Persian females gently succeeded in reshaping online shopping and they become the Queen of the shopping in Iran and from where that the researcher is a Persian female consumer from Tabriz is eager to understand if females from Tabriz notice to online consumer reviews before their online purchasing or not and if so which kind of OCR types has an effect on their purchase decision and what kind of social media they choose most in order to read OCR.

Moreover, a search was done to declare the impact of the demographic factors like age and educational level of females' consumers on the frequency of checking online consumer reviews.

A lot of research has been done on electronic Word of mouth in a business perspective; Why do people read reviews posted on consumer-opinion portals? (Burton & Khammash, 2010), Online reviews- Do consumers use them? (Chatterjee, 2001), The impact of electronic word-of-mouth: the adoption of online opinions in

online customer communities (Cheung & Lee & Rabjohn, 2008), the impact of online consumer reviews on sales (Zhu & Zhang, 2010) and the impact of the WOM communication (Chueng & Thadani, 2012). However, over the past few years, there has been considerable development in Electronic Word of Mouth communities, however, there is a lack of research on the phenomenon in Iran. There are limited publications as regards to the subject and most studies have been conducted in USA and Europe countries and there is a lack of research as regards to the subject in Iran as one major developing country in the Middle East. Up until a few years ago Iranians were foreign to online shopping but with the fast growth of internet and 4G coverage, the number of the people who purchase online increase rapidly even elderly citizens prefer online shopping. So, Iran become a country that shopping online more than ever through few years. The number of the online buyers in 2016 rise by 34% compared to the 2015 (Abedinpour, A., H., 2017). Also according to the latest TechCrunch research which is done a survey, revealed that 39% of Iranian purchase online at least once a month with around 5% shopping online a day. (Bozorgzadeh A., E., 2016).

2.2. Data collection

The aim of this study is to determine how the Iranian female consumers affected and react to the online word of mouth and when they are purchasing a product online. The dissertation planned in two major parts in order to achieve mentioned hypothesis: the theoretical framework and empirical results.

For the theoretical model, different reliable related documents such as scientific journals, books, web-based publication and articles used for secondary data in purpose of improving reliability and validity of the study and providing foundation for the perusal subject in order to present better understanding of influence of WOM and e-WOM on consumer purchase.

For the empirical part of this study, the quantitative method is used. As Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhil (2000) highlighted, quantitative method is faster whereas qualitative method can take long duration. So, for collecting the primary data the survey method was used to find out the impact of the electronic word of mouth on

female consumers' purchase decisions from Tabriz. The proposed hypotheses were tested through the data collected by survey.

Tabriz City which is known as sixth large and most populated city in Iran is selected for research data collection.(Central intelligence agency). The data collection for the study was carried out during June 2018.

The survey was distributed face to face between 385 women aged between 18-50+ years with different level of education in universities, libraries, private sectors companies, cafés, gyms, restaurants and beauty shops (coiffeur) which is located in Iran, Tabriz by researcher herself. Questionnaires are only divided to respondents who are purchasing online.

The survey is the main method to execute the empirical study in order to collect the require data for the research. It consists of 3 parts with total 30 question. Since the the targeted respondents are Iranian and the base questionnaire is in English, the translation into the Persian had done. Moreover, the questionnaire edited several times for accuracy and prevents any error. First part contains 9 preparation questions such as daily usage of internet, monthly amount of their online shopping, the products of online purchase, amount of checking reviews the social media which they select for reading reviews and what kind of reviews consider more. Second part contain 19 five-point Likert scale question asked respondents to indicate how much they agree or disagree with the statements. Response option included strongly disagree, disagree, neutral agree and strongly agree (1: Strongly disagree, 5: Strongly agree). Third part are demographic question that was intended to recognize the respondents age, marital statues, education level and income. The questionnaire was translated from English to Persian very carefully. The questionnaires in English and Farsi are attached at the appendix of the thesis.

After getting the raw data the next move was to entered the data in software to get the frequencies. The data thus collected coded and analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 21.0 (SPSS) for drawing proper conclusion. Simple random method used while sampling the surveys. Regression analysis and One-way ANOVA analysis was applied to test hypotheses.

2.3. Sample of the research

The population of the research is making up of females from Tabriz over 18 years of age. Based on the 2016 (1395 persian calendar) data statistical center of Iran, population of the dissertation is 1,773,033 million individuals. The 897,175 are men and 875,876 are women. The research selects the Cochran's formula, one of the most accurate method, to calculate the sample size with consideration of 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level. As before mentioned, in this study the researcher targeted only females. So, with consideration of error of margin and confidence level the research sample size should be 385. (N=385). The simple random sampling was applied to select females.

The first reason of selecting this sample is that social media is clearly a growing medium of social interaction and social media relatively is a new concept in Iran. Secondly, the researcher is an Iranian female consumer who eager to recognize what influence females buying decision through online consumer reviews because Iranian women seen as the home manager and the shopping duties were in the women domain and there is few research on gender especially on females.

2.4. Limitation

One of the main limitation in this study is the communication. This research focuses on female consumers of Tabriz only. Not surprisingly, women always eager to participate in such surveys but only those who were interested in this subject participate in this survey and those who wanted to help to researcher, volunteer to fill the questionnaire. And also because of some political reasons they refused to participate. So, some non-response surveys return which brought limitation for this study.

2.5. Hypotheses of the Research

Purpose of the study is to examine the effect of the electronic word of mouth activities on female consumes' purchasing decisions. Five hypotheses were developed to explore the effect of online reviews on female consumers' purchasing decisions in Iran, Tabriz city.

Generally, it focuses on the impact that online reviews have on female consumer purchasing decisions taking into consideration the main characteristics of the online customer reviews (OCR) that may affect the consumers' information process as a reliable source of information during purchasing.

Also, this dissertation also going to search about the factors influencing consumers' demand for OCR and realize the major differences between age of the consumers, consumers' education level and the frequency of checking reviews before making purchase decision. The following studies focuses on the hypothesis:

H1: Positive online consumer reviews have significant effect on female consumers' purchase decisions.

H2: Quality, volume, timeliness and trustworthiness of online consumer reviews have significant effect on female consumers' purchase decisions.

H3: Reading online consumer reviews have significant effect on female consumers' purchase decisions.

H4: There is significant difference between the frequency of checking reviews before purchasing a product and consumers' age.

H5: There is significant difference between the frequency of checking reviews before purchasing a product and consumers' education.

2.6. Reliability of the Analysis

The reliability analysis is which refers to evaluation the consistency between multiple measurement scales of a variable. In order to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, this study adopted Cronbach's Coefficient Alphas (Lee Cronbach in 1951). . (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011, 53) Cronbach's purpose is to measure the reliability or internal consistency of a set of scale or test items. According to the Guielford if the Cronbach's alpha value is high, internal consistency will also be as high as its.

Alpha should be 0.70 or greater to retain an item in a scale. If a value is under the 0.70 reveals low reliability of the item. So, if the value become greater than 0.70, then it revealed that the research reliability of measurement is high.

The alpha coefficient for the nineteen items is .856. (α = .855). As a consequence, based on the degree gained, the scale has relatively high internal consistency which shows the high reliability. So, the researcher has demonstrated that the questionnaire is valid and reliable.

2.7. Theoretical Frameworks

This part will display the theoretical framework of research based on the integrative framework of electronic word mouth (fig 2.1). The model depicts the independent variables (IDV) influencing dependent variable (DV) and also shows the differences between IDV and DV. Characteristics of online consumers' reviews (Valence, Volume, Quality, Timeliness, credibility), reading OCR and demographic characteristics of consumer (age and education) are perceived as independent variables whereas purchase decision and frequency of checking reviews are dependent variable. It assumed that first four factor have an effect on female consumers' buying decision and also assume there are the differences between frequency of checking reviews and last two factors. This framework developed by the researcher will serve as a basis for this dissertation and it will help in analyzing and interpreting the empirical results.

Independent variables

• **Valance**
• **Volume**
• **Quality**
• **Timeliness**
• **Credibility**
• **Reading OCR**

Dependent variables

Effect →

Purchase decision

• **Age**
• **Education**

Differences →

Frequency of checking reviews
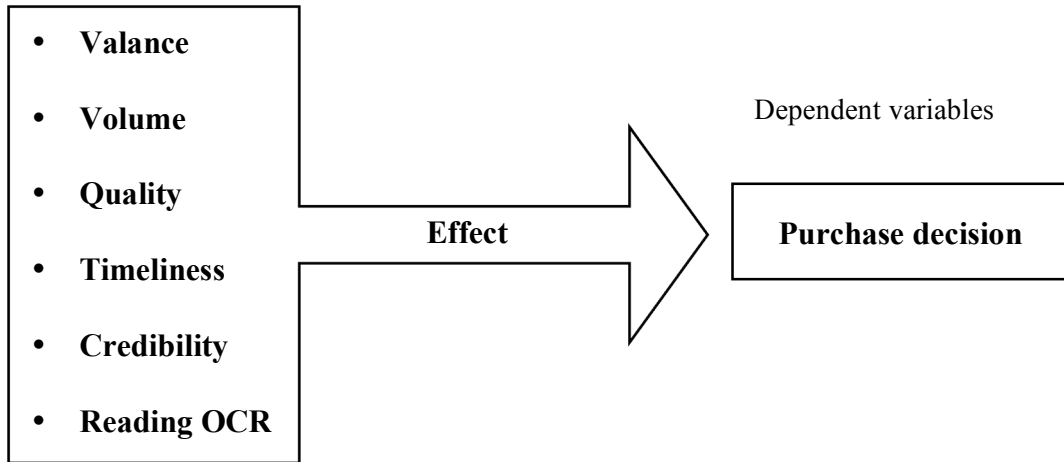
Figure 2.1 Framework

CHAPTER III
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter three includes the results of the survey. This chapter covers results considering profile of the respondents and analyzing the data regarding to hypothesis. First of all, the chapter contains results of the questionnaire regarding background of our sample then go to the analyses of the results of effect of reading online consumer on female consumers and other related analysis. At the end, we check whether presented hypotheses accepted or rejected.

3.1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The first part of the questionnaire consists of the general descriptive data for the study that provides some valuable information about the sample. The research has a total sample of 385 respondents that 213 of females are single and 169 of the are married and 3 of them didn't answer this question. The majority of respondents age are between18-25 and 26-33 years old (66,93%). The synopsis of age group distribution is reports in below (fig 3.1.)
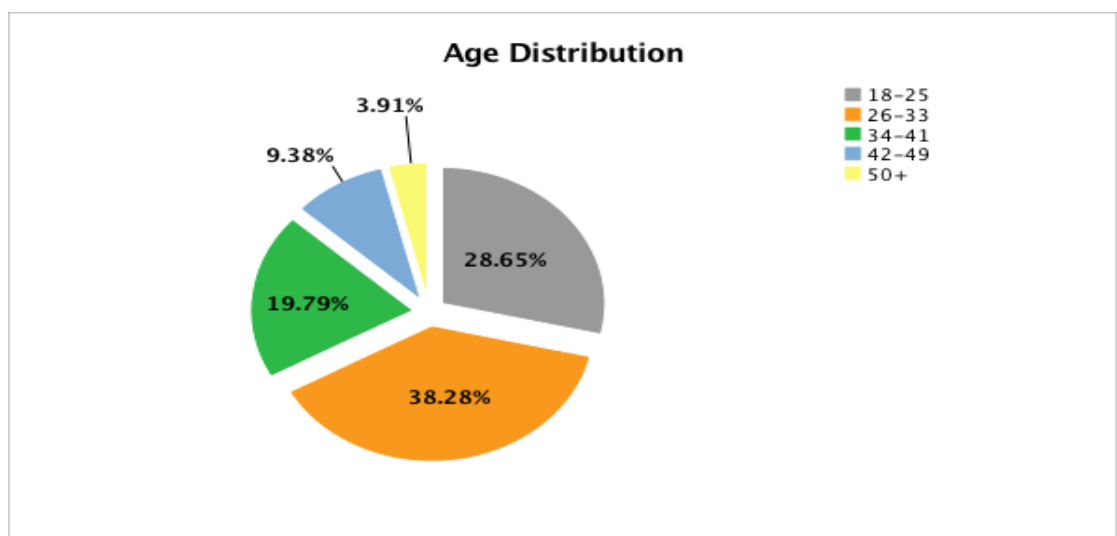
Figure 3.1: Age distribution of target group

Taking into account the respondents current educational level, the category "Bachelor degree" dominate the result with percentage of 47.14% respectively, which can be seen in the Figure 3.2.
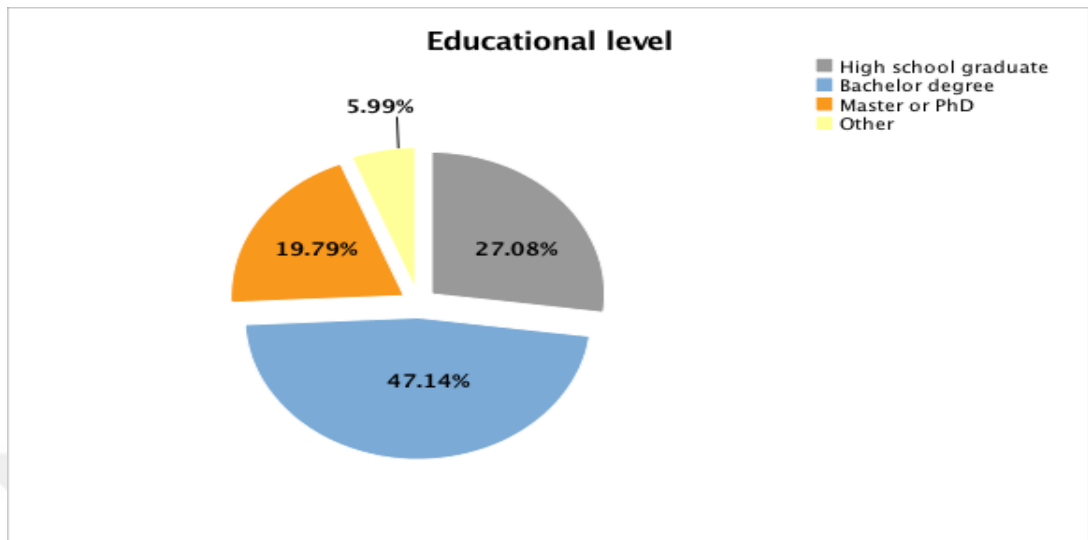
Figure 3.2: Educational Level of target group

Considering the monthly average income, the 103 female earn between 500.000-900.000 and 102 female earn 1.000.000-1.499.000 which dominate the result with the percentage of 26.8% and 26.5% respectively (total 53.4%). 78 females over 2.000.000. The rest of the scales were divided with no considerable differences as you see in below figure 3.3
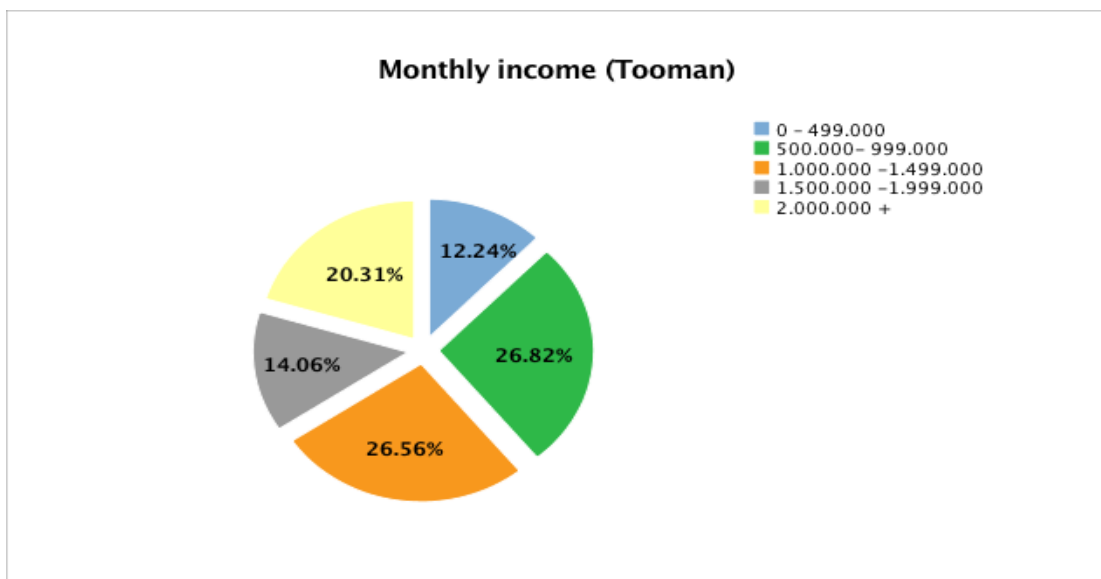
Figure 3.3: Monthly income of target group

When analyzing the frequency of using internet, 28.98% of females spent less than three hours a day online, 40.21% of females spent between three and six hours and 30.81% females spent more than six hours online. The figure 3.4 shows the percentages of the answers. Also the statistics show that the 39.7% of females who use internet between three and six hours are from ages between 26-33.

Frequency of daily internet usage
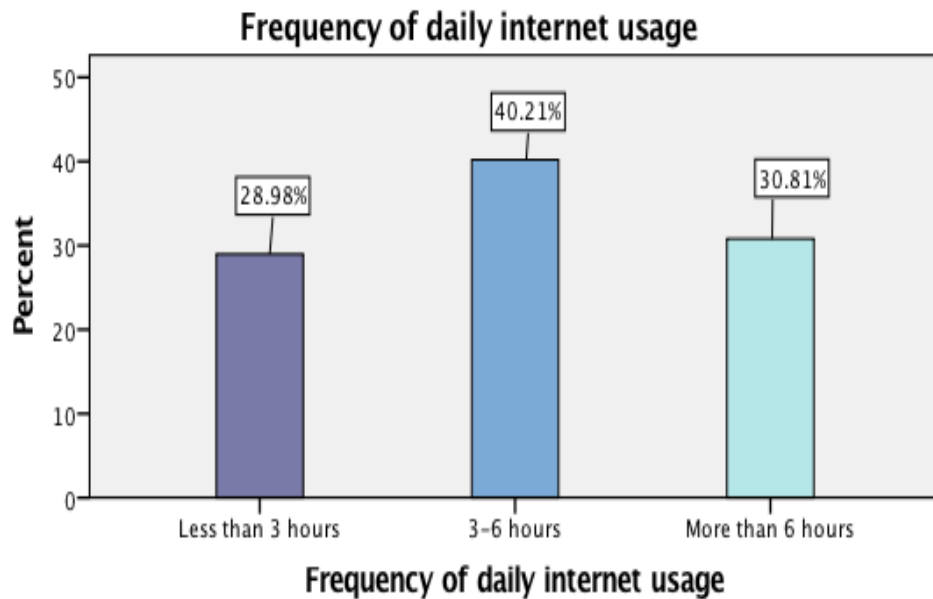
Figure 3.4: Daily internet usage

Question number two ("Ranked the following social media in order of using 1 the most, 9 the least used?") is also a qualifier to ensure that our target group definitely knew what SNS are. Based on the statistics, 288 Iranian women using the Instagram. In fact, the result is more than 70% of the sample of our questionnaire. Thus with 74.8 % general view, Instagram is the most common social networking among Iranian women. On the other hand, LinkedIn is the least used among SNS that 53.8% of respondents gives number 9 (the least used) to LinkedIn.

The question number three referred to the amount of checking reviews before purchasing. With one missing respondent, the results for this question is summarized in below figure 3.5;
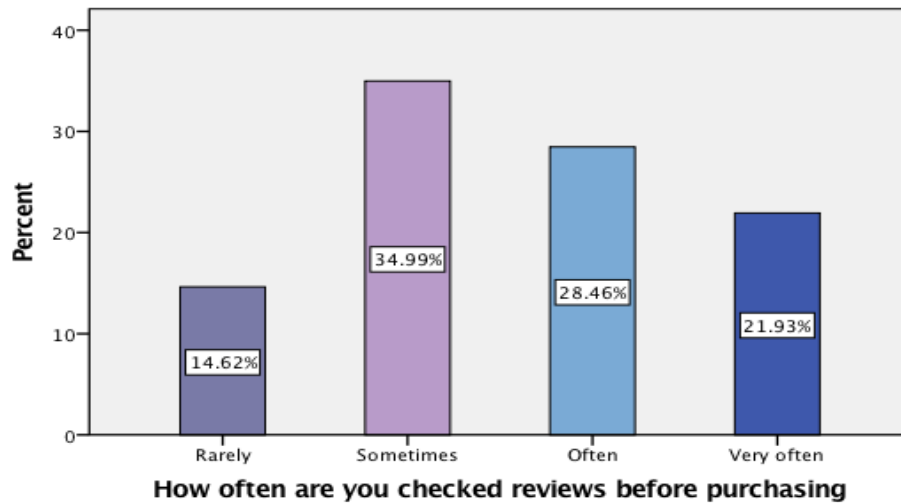
Figure 3.5: Frequency of checking reviews

The statement four in questionnaire referred to sort of purchasing in order of their desire to read online consumer reviews before purchasing product. Statistics prove that they have the highest preference to read reviews when they want to buy cloths and shoes. The second most popular product are electronic, computer and mobiles and the third most preferred product that read comment about them are cosmetics and foods that most of the women can not give up.

Table 3.1: Sort of purchasing

Descriptive Statistics

	Number of people	Percentage
Clothes, shoes	256	66.5
Electronics	232	60.3
Computer, mobile	231	60.0
Cosmetics	201	52.2
Food	201	52.2

Regarding to monthly amount of purchasing item online, statistics demonstrate that 234 females buying between 1-4 item online. Actually result is consistent for more than 60% of our questionnaire sample.

234 female respondents buying 1-4 item online within a month

101 female respondents buying 5-8 item online within a month

28 female respondents buying 9-12 item online within a month

11 female respondents buying >13 item online within a month

Considering the respondent preference, statistics shows that 194 of them mostly prefer to seek information and read reviews from social networking sites like Instagram and Facebook. In the fact that this result is consistent for more than 50% of our questionnaire sample. The second most preferred platform is Retail websites like Dijikala (the Iranian Amazon) which encompass the 142 respondents. The summary of respondents' preferred platforms is presented in the Figure 3.6.
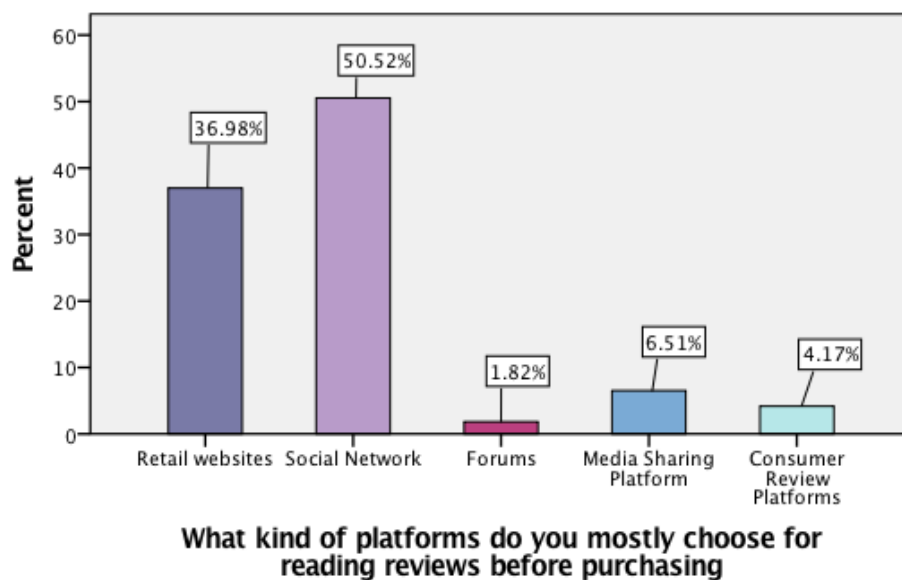
Figure 3.6: Platform preference of target group

The statements seven and eight in the questionnaire referred to quality of reviews in order to understand which one is consider more and credible for

respondents. The majority of the respondents in our target group choose Qualitative reviews. 82.9% of the respondents consider qualitative reviews more and and 82.6% of them found qualitative reviews more credible when they are searching for information about a product.

Table 3.2: Quality of reviews

What kind of review do you consider as more

	Frequency	Percent
Qualitative (Written description, video or pictures)	317	82.3
Quantitative (Star rating or scale)	65	16.9
Total	382	99.2
Total	385	100.0

Table 3.3: Credibility of reviews

What kind of review do you consider as more credible

	Frequency	Percent
Written description	317	82.3
Star rating	65	16.9
Total	382	99.2
Total	385	100.0

The last question of this part referred to item that impact consumers' purchase decision in buying products or services. Statistics show females purchase decision affected by internet has the highest rate of 38%. On the other hand, the 'Others' option had the least influence among other options including recommendation, sales promotion and TV ads. Its take 59% value that respondents gives number 5 to it. (the least used number).

3.2. Testing Research Hypotheses

H1: Positive online consumer reviews have significant effect on female consumers' purchase decisions.

The effect of positive online consumer reviews which is one of the main hypotheses of the research, on the female consumers' purchase decisions is measured by multiple regression analysis.

H1 hypothesis of this research was accepted because its significant level is .000 which was smaller than 0.05. As a result, the positive online consumer reviews have impact on females' consumers purchase decisions.

When it comes to testing relationship between variables, it can be said that there is positive and low correlation between variable R=0.28.

The coefficient of determination is 0.082 (R^2 = .082). In this case, about 8% of the purchasing decision changes are explained by the Positive online consumer reviews variable. In other words, the positive consumer reviews have just 8% effect on female consumers' purchase decisions.

Table 3.4 Regression analysis for H1

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.711	.288		5.947	.000
PO	.436	.075	.286	5.829	.000

R=0.286 R^2 = 0.082   F=3.976   Sig=0.000

H2: Quality, volume, timeliness and trustworthiness of online consumer reviews have significant effect on female consumers' purchase decisions.

A multiple regression was selected to predict the effect of the quality, volume, timeliness and trustworthiness on female purchase decision which was determined by H2 hypothesis. H2 was accepted because of the significant level (Sig=0.000) which was smaller than 0.05. (0.000<0.05). It was concluded that the four factors have impact on female consumers' purchase decisions.

According to the R value (R=0.502), it can be seen that there is a positive and moderate correlation between variables. As you can see from the determination coefficient, R^2 = 0.252, were concluded that these 4 factors (Quality, Volume, Timeliness, Trustworthiness) have 25% impact on female consumer purchase decision.

In following table 3.5, according to the Beta coefficients, quality is the most effective one. (ß = 0.329). Second effective factor is the timeliness with Beta coefficient of 0.242 (ß =0.242). After that trustworthiness (ß =0.027) and volume (ß= 0.012) have less effect on purchasing decision.

Table 3.5: H2 Hypothesis of Regression Model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients
	B	Std. Error	Beta
Quality	,615	,098	,329
Volume	,016	,069	,012
Timeliness	,306	,067	,242
Trustworthiness	,036	,065	,027

R=0.502 R^2 = 0.252   F=31.829   Sig=0.00

H3: Reading online consumer reviews have significant effect on female consumers' purchase decisions.

The influence of the reading online consumer reviews on making purchase decision was specified by H3. Regression analysis was used in order to test this hypothesis. As a result, H3 was accepted. The significant level is 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05. This result clarified that the reading online consumer reviews have positive effect on making the purchase decision on women.

As a result of analysis R=0.616, it is seen that there is a positive and strong correlation between variables. And also as you can see from the value of 0.380, ($R^2 =$ 0.380) which means that the reading online consumer reviews have impact on making purchase decision positively by 38%.

Table 3.6: H3 Hypothesis of Linear Regression Model

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-,540	,259		-2,082	,038
RO	,997	,065	,616	15,260	,000

R=0.616 $R^2 = 0.380$ F=232.870   Sig=0.000

H4: There is a significant difference between the frequency of checking reviews before purchasing and consumers' age.

To test last hypothesis of this research in order to see whether frequency of checking reviews differs according to age or not, ANOVA analysis was used.
From the results of analysis, the H4 was rejected because its significant level(Sig=0.097) was higher than 0.05.

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Consequently, the frequency of reading reviews before buying something did not differ from age groups.

H5: There is a significant difference between the frequency of checking reviews before purchasing and female consumers' education.

The fifth hypothesis test to check if the regularity of checking online reviews before buying a product differs according to the education or not. To test this hypothesis, ANOVA analysis was used.

Due to the ANOVA which is done on the hypothesis, it can realize that variances were equal by looking at the Levene's test values. (Sig = 0.000) also, H5 was accepted for reason that its significant level which equal to 0.000 was smaller than 0.05 (i.e., 0.000<0.05). As a result of values achieved it can derive that frequency of checking reviews before purchasing a product or service differs to education.

Tukey's test was used to find the differences between the educational levels. According to the homogeneity of variance test (Sig= 0.097), the variances are equal.

By looking at the mean values; the other group (consisting of Foghe diplom) with mean value of 2.96 check reviews before purchasing. The second group is the Master and PhD with mean value of 2.84. The third one is bachelor with mean value of 2.64 and at the end high school graduates are less checking reviews before their purchasing than other level of educations with value of 2.18.

3.3.Summary of Research Results

The main purpose of this dissertation is to study the effect of eWOM on female consumers' purchase decision. Specifically, four online consumer reviews characteristic valance, quality, volume, timeliness and trustworthiness have been chosen to investigate and also we have been studied the differences between frequency of checking reviews before purchasing, age and education.

The research included an online questionnaire with 385 respondents. The results from data collection were analyzed by SPSS 21.0 that regression and ANOVA analyses were selected to test the proposed hypotheses.

Based on the results from the analyses, only four hypotheses are accepted and one hypothesis is rejected. The summary of the results is presented in the table 3.7.

Table 3.7: Summary of hypothesis results

	Hypotheses	Results
H1	Positive online consumer reviews have a significant effect on female consumer's purchase decision.	Accepted
H2	Quality, Volume, Timeliness and Trustworthiness of online consumer reviews has a significant effect on female consumers purchase decision.	Accepted
H3	Reading online consumer reviews have an effect on making the purchase decision.	Accepted
H4	There is a significant difference between the frequency of checking reviews before purchasing and age.	Rejected
H5	There is a significant difference between the frequency of checking reviews before purchasing and education.	Accepted

Online Consumers review plays the role on female consumers purchase decision. The results have proved that Positive OCR, volume, OCR timeliness, trustworthiness and quality all have strong influence on female consumers' purchase decision but with different amount of influence. Positive reviews and high quality and timeliness of online reviews positively enhance the female consumers' purchase decision.

The volume and trustworthiness of online reviews of consumers does not have any influence on female consumers' purchase decisions from Tabriz.

Considering the fourth hypothesis, average frequency of checking reviews before purchasing base on different age groups is not significant. Therefore, the H4 was rejected.

The last hypothesis, the consumers' educational level strongly correlated with the frequency of reading online consumer before purchasing except high school gradates that significantly lower than other levels of education. So, H5 was accepted.

CHAPTER IV
CONCLUSION

The last chapter of this dissertation consist of conclusion which conclude the research. Moreover, there is recommendation according to the results and suggestions for further research.

4.1. Conclusion

Today, shopping is recognized as one of the popular hobbies among people specially females. Expressly, with the increasing in the usage of internet, females start using this phenomenon to explore and discover products whether they want to buy a product online or in-store. On the other hand, Web 2.0 also has created an environment where consumers can easily share their opinions and experiences about the product they know or maybe they use with owing to the fact that this information would exist and is accessible to everyone for an unlimited duration of time. In online medium the communication flow is fast and allows reaching to much larger audience. In nutshell, the facilities that offered by the Internet, have enormous impression on the electronic word of mouth and between purchasers. Consumers pay more credit to the consumers' opinion than sellers and marketers attitude (e.g. Advertising) and its directly influence consumers.

Iranian people enjoy talking and passing their information, ideas and experiences via oral communication, but with fast growing of the internet everything has been changed in Iran too. Also, penetration of mobile phones has hastened widespread accessible to the internet and make it easy to access to the Internet. In middle east, Iran has one of the highest rates in the mobile phone penetration. Before that, Iranians generally travel to Turkey in order to shop, but now with the easily access to internet they seat at their home and purchase online e from different Instagram-store pages or different retailer

sites from their mobile phones. So, with rising the desire to shop online, the desire to search about products is increasing too. They are seeking about product information, paying attention what other people think about that product and what kind of information they are sharing via social media networks. Their purchasing decisions are influenced by reading opinions of others. Therefore, beside the Word of mouth, electronic word of mouth communication becomes a strong mechanism among Iranian people.

The main purpose of this thesis was to investigate the impact of the electronic word of mouth on Female consumers' purchase decision in Tabriz. In order to investigate this purpose, the research was divided into hypotheses. The literature reviews of this dissertation completely discussed the five major factors of online consumers' reviews in details that might have impact on consumer purchasing decision and the five stages of decision process. Based on this, firstly, this research was discovered the influence of these five factors on female consumers' buying decision in Tabriz. Secondly, we studied if the reading online consumer reviews have an effect on female consumers from Tabriz or not.

In addition to this, demographic factors of female consumers in Tabriz was tested to see alterations between these demography factors such as age and educational level and frequency of checking online consumer reviews; this would also give an insight to researcher to see the factors influencing consumer demand for OCR and realize the major differences between them. Further, several other conclusions can be obtained from this analysis too. Therefore, these characteristics have been tested with a questionnaire.

The literature reviews mentioned that there were some characteristics on online consumer reviews that could have role in customers purchase decision. Based on this, major characteristics of online consumer reviews are determined as valance, quality, volume, trustworthiness, timeliness that influence the shopping decision of consumers. These characteristics have been tested with a survey including of 30 questions on the 385 Tabriz females. The impact of these characteristics on buying decision of female consumers from Tabriz were determined numerically. The results shows that in this research, all these characteristics have impact on female consumers from Tabriz but with different amount of influence. The factor that has the highest and the most impact was the quality of reviews , i.e., contents which are logical, rational and

understandable is more influential in changing decision than subjective ones. Second influential factor was valance third was timeliness while surprisingly the credibility and volume of reviews had the lowest impact on the consumer buying decision.

While analyzing this questionnaire, considering the purchasing, it was realized that reading reviews are common between females: 35% of the respondents sometimes check reviews before their purchasing and 28% often do this and 22 % very often check reviews. This study shows that e-WOM through online consumer reviews have influenced female consumers' decisions to shop online.

Also, negative reviews of online users are impacting their intention to buy something online. Marketers should continuously manage consumer opinions and feedbacks; no matter these feedbacks are positive or negative.

The second part of the analysis is done on demographic factors (educational level and age). Considering the analysis results confirms that there are differences between educational level of consumers and their frequency of checking reviews i.e. finding shows that participants who are still students or take some university courses (called Foghe Diplom in Iran) are more eager to read online consumer reviews whereas consumers with high school levels are less keen to check reviews than other levels of education. This will help retailers or marketers to create tactics according to different educational level brackets. The testing is also done on age to see the differences between the consumers' frequency of checking reviews and age, the result interestingly proves that average frequency of checking reviews before purchasing based on different age groups is not significant.

It is very easy for consumers to share opinions, thoughts and recommendations through social media tools so it becomes a best way for spreading online word of mouth messages. The companies or the marketers should pay to these social media tools and utilize them depending on their objectives and where the clients and influencers prefer to meet and share ideas. For example, Facebook is officially filtered in Iran so Instagram is quickly become a prominent platform for Iranian especially among women and nearly 24 million users who are active on Instagram that about 45% of them are women. (Financial Tribune,Latest data on Iran) The platforms classifications found in literature. Along with the analyses of these platforms, as we

assumed, it could be confirmed that the usage of Instagram came in first row and social media networks were selected and preferred the most for reading consumer reviews

Nonetheless it is essential not to forget that electronic word-of-mouth, first and foremost, is about people, and not just about the use of social media tools. It's important to know that as social media is changing continuously but its consumers will remain. They will still search for traditional trustworthiness in the online environment.

Consumers are open to e-WOM and they enthusiastically search for proper information online. Because of the recommendations and reviews emanated by consumers who do not want to manipulate the audiences judged as being reliable. As a result, it is important to give that level of trust and reliability among consumers and create credibility in online medium by using different techniques. In order to promote trust, it is better for marketers to put and effort showing affection and respect to their clients through social media by being open and friendly through consumers. Also, recommended developing circumstances in which problems can be evaluated and removed timely.

At last but not least, marketers should pay attention to social media tools and select them reliant to their goals and look where their consumer wants to read and share ideas. Also they should in a contact with their audience and pay attention them by creating pages on their websites or different platforms and let them to share their ideas in order to identify the needs of the clients and creating feedback timely and satisfied them. In this way, marketers can increase customer satisfaction. Therefore, if the consumer satisfied with the product she bought, she will share her positive feelings and thoughts about the product with other consumers by word of mouth-to-mouth. Marketers should encourage consumers to transfer their experiences online when they satisfy with the products. Marketers may take advantages of these findings to expand strategic plans for future programs. Moreover, companies should focus on consumers' opinions and thoughts through online word of mouth in order to improve the competitiveness of the brand. It is imperative to try to identify the needs of the clients, be aware of their wants, understand them and listen to their wants and wishes. To this end, they must put an effort and react to these demands according to these requirements

and put an effort to boost efficiency and effectiveness in their areas. Because word of mouth is the most real reflection of the consumers' product evaluation.

4.2.   Limitation and Scope for Further Research

This research has few limitations that can be resolved and improved in future research in this research domain. First of all, the characteristic of the online consumer reviews is only relying on the finding of the literature reviews and there are only taken into consideration characteristics of OCR and not tested consumer characteristics or reviewer characteristics which could be effective in the purchasing decision process such as brand attitude, life style, beliefs, social level and etc. Moreover, other characteristics of OCR have not been test that could influence consumer decision such as the level of the review helpfulness, the review sidedness, ratio of positive or negative of the message.

Secondly, while our questionnaire was limited to determine the effect of characteristics of OCR on female consumers' purchase decisions, it did not test what motive and push consumers to read these online consumers reviews before their purchase and exactly which stage of the purchasing effected the most.

Thirdly, the questionnaire covers only respondent who read online reviews before their purchase decision and without any notice to consumer who does not use online and why does not prefer electronic word of mouth. Additionally, this research only tested effects of electronic word of mouth and the traditional WOM which is still very common and influential among consumers who are excluded to be tested. Further research might compare the effect of both eWOM and WOM on consumer purchase decision. Result of this research shows that the negative reviews have great effect on purchase decision than positive reviews. Next study can study the effect of the negative word of mouth on consumers.

Fourth, the research scope of this thesis is limited only to females from Iran, Tabriz city and it is not studied on males whereas nowadays males are becoming browser about what they want to buy and they appear to be more browsers, rather than mono-focused.

Another limitation is the chosen methodology that limited the accuracy of the results. Next study could choose in-depth interviews (quantitative) to get more obvious results regarding the effect of eWOM on consumer purchase decision.

Another interesting issue could be cross-cultural research for instance between Turkey and Iran. These two countries share important similarities about culture. Architecture, art, loanwords, lifestyle, taste, thoughts, you can find a small Iran in Turkey. Beside these similarities, some dissimilarities are seen that provide altered perceptions about consumer innovativeness in culture.

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APPENDIX

1. Frequency of daily internet usage

    a) Less than 3 hours   b) 3-6 hours   c) More than 6 hours

2. Ranked the following social media in order of using, 1 being the most used and 8 the least.

    a) Facebook
    b) Diji kala
    c) Aparat
    d) Foursquare
    e) YouTube
    f) Twitter
    g) Linkdelin
    h) Instagram
    i) Divar

3. How often are you checked reviews before purchasing?

    a) Rarely   b) Sometimes   c) Often   d) Very often

4. Sort the following product from the 1 in order of your desire to read online consumer reviews before your product purchasing (don't sort the product which you don't buy)

Clothes, shoes( )	Food ( )	Computer, mobile( )	drugs, medical ( )
Flowers( )	Tickets ( )	Electronics ( )	stationary ( )
Books( )	Cosmetics ( )	Sports equipment ( )	Toys ( )
Furnitur ( )	vacation ( )	Jewelries , watch( )	Music,game,film( )

5. Monthly amount of buy an item online

   a) 1-4 item   b) 5-8 item   c) 9-12 item   d) 13+ item

6. What kind of platforms do you mostly choose for reading reviews before purchasing?

   a) Retail websites (e.g. digikala , amazon)
   b) Social Network (e.g. Facebook, Instagram)
   c) Forums (e.g. eksisozluk)
   d) Media Sharing Platform (e.g. Aparat, YouTube)
   e) Consumer Review Platforms (e.g. foursquare, tripadvisor)

7. What kind of review do you consider as more?

   a) Qualitative (Written description, video or pictures)
   b) Quantitative (Star rating or scale)

8. What kind of review do you consider as more credible?

   a) Written description
   b) Star rating

9. Which of the following affects your purchase decision of a product or service?

   a) TV ads   b) Internet

   c) Sales Promotions   d) Recommendation

   e) Others

10. Please fill in the following table according to your personal opinion.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I always consider online consumer reviews before I purchase a product.					
When I buy a product, the positive reviews impact my purchase decision.					
When I buy a product, I worry about my purchase decision if I don't read reviews.					
I believe that online consumer reviews are influence my purchase decision if they are not subjective and emotional					
If i have no experience about the product, I often read online consumer reviews.					
I believe that online consumer reviews are trustable when the identity of the person clear (use the real name)					
When I buy a product, the online reviews which posted are helpful for my decision making.					
If the website that present reviews are reliable for me can influence my buying decision.					
I choose a product which the high number of the reviews posted about that product.					
When I searching consumer reviews, spelling and grammar mistakes in reviews affect my purchase decision.					
The effect of the negative reviews is greater than positive reviews in my decision making.					
The high rating products make me confident in purchasing a product.					
Up to date reviews have more impact on my decision than older ones.					
I always read online consumer reviews before shopping.					
Popularity and validity of the website that present reviews influence my buying decision.					
Strong reviews which are specific, rational, clear and informative are more effective in changing my purchase decision.					
The frequency of reviews about product influence my decision.					
I always pay attention to reviews which are written recently before I buy a product.					
After I reading online the desire to purchase a product arise.					

11. Age

      a) 18-25

      b) 26-33

      c) 34-41

      d) 42-49

      e) 50+

12. Material status

      a) Single

      b) Married

13. Educational level

      a) High school graduate

      b) Bachelor degree

      c) Master or PhD

      d) Other (foghe Diplom)

14. Monthly income (Tooman)

      a) 0 – 499.000

      b) 500.000- 999.000

      c) 1.000.000 -1.499.000

      d) 1.500.000 -1.999.000

      e) 2.000.000 +

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EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
MS	Çankaya Univ. of Ankara Business Administration	2018
BS	Islamic Azad Univ. of Tabriz English language teaching (ELT)	2012
Pre-University	Atharan High school, Tabriz, Iran	2009
High School	Atharan High School, Tabriz, Iran	2008

WORK EXPERIENCE

Year	Place	Enrollment
2010-2011	Rahimi's Co	Translator
2013-2015	Tutor	Teaching English for nursery children

FOREIGN LANGUAGES
Advanced Turkish, Persian, Azari, English

HOBBIES
Reading, Sport, Music, Dancing, Running