

MAPPING THE EVOLUTION OF ELECTRONIC WORLD-OF-MOUTH RESEARCH: A BIBLIOMETRIC AND TOPIC MODELING ANALYSIS (2002-2023)

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(Received 15th December 2024; revised 16th February 2025; accepted 25th February 2025)

Abstract. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has emerged as a key factor influencing consumer behavior, brand perception, and business strategies in the digital age. This study conducts a comprehensive bibliometric analysis and topic modeling of eWOM research published between 2002 and 2023. Drawing on a dataset of 3,179 articles retrieved from the Scopus database, the study examines trends in publication output, citation metrics, and thematic developments within the field. The results reveal significant growth in eWOM research, particularly from 2010 onwards, reflecting the rise of social media platforms and online review systems. Key themes identified include trust and credibility, the role of social media in amplifying eWOM, and industry-specific applications in sectors such as hospitality, tourism, and healthcare. Topic modeling highlights the evolving nature of eWOM research, with a shift towards empirical studies using advanced analytical techniques. Despite the robust body of work, gaps remain, particularly in managing negative eWOM, understanding cross-cultural differences, and applying big data analytics. This study provides valuable insights into the state of eWOM research and offers directions for future academic inquiry, contributing to the growing body of knowledge on digital consumer behavior and marketing strategies.

Keywords: *electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), social media, online reviews, bibliometric analysis, topic modeling*

Introduction

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has emerged as a critical phenomenon in the digital era, shaping consumer behavior and influencing decision-making processes across various industries. eWOM refers to the dissemination of opinions, recommendations, and feedback through digital platforms, where consumers share their experiences with products and services in a manner that is accessible to a global audience. This form of communication has grown exponentially with the rise of social media, online review platforms, and other digital forums, offering consumers the ability to exchange information at unprecedented speeds and scales (Cremonezi and Souto, 2023; Pourfakhimi et al., 2020). Unlike traditional word-of-mouth, which is limited by geographical and social proximity, eWOM transcends these boundaries, allowing for the widespread dissemination of consumer experiences that can have significant impacts on business reputations, brand perceptions, and sales. The increasing reliance on digital communication has transformed eWOM into a key component of marketing strategies, as businesses seek to harness the power of online reviews and customer feedback. Positive eWOM has been shown to enhance brand image, increase consumer trust, and

drive purchase intentions, while negative eWOM can deter potential customers and damage brand credibility. Consequently, understanding the dynamics of eWOM is essential for businesses aiming to navigate the complexities of the digital marketplace (Sohaib et al., 2019; Gulumbe and Dahlan, 2017; Ismagilova et al., 2017). The ability to monitor, analyze, and respond to eWOM is crucial for maintaining competitive advantage and fostering customer loyalty in an environment where online feedback can make or break a company's reputation.

The academic interest in eWOM has mirrored its growing importance in the business world, leading to a substantial body of literature that spans multiple disciplines, including marketing, consumer behavior, information systems, and communication studies. Researchers have explored various dimensions of eWOM, such as its impact on consumer trust (Pyle et al., 2021), the role of social media platforms in spreading eWOM (Brinda and Shabu, 2016), and the psychological mechanisms that drive individuals to engage in online reviews (Kim et al., 2018). The interdisciplinary nature of eWOM research reflects its relevance across sectors, from hospitality and tourism to healthcare and retail (Sann et al., 2021), where online feedback plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer decisions (Reyes-Menendez et al., 2020). Despite the proliferation of research on eWOM, there remains a need for a comprehensive analysis that synthesizes the findings and identifies emerging trends in the field (Cremonezi and Souto, 2023; Reyes-Menendez et al., 2020). A bibliometric analysis of eWOM research offers the opportunity to map the evolution of the field, highlight key contributors, and identify the dominant themes that have shaped scholarly discourse. Such an analysis is particularly valuable in understanding how eWOM research has evolved over time and where future research efforts should be directed (Azmi and Saaid, 2023; Chhabra et al., 2023; Ismagilova et al., 2021). To address this gap, the present study conducted a bibliometric analysis and thematic mapping of eWOM research published between 2002 and 2023. By examining the trends, authorship patterns, and key themes in the literature, this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of eWOM research. The objectives are to identify the most influential authors and institutions, highlight the predominant research topics, and offer insights into the future directions of eWOM studies. This analysis will contribute to a deeper understanding of the scholarly landscape of eWOM and its implications for both academic researchers and practitioners.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a bibliometric analysis and topic modeling approach to analyze research on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) published between 2002 and 2023. The bibliometric analysis was conducted using data retrieved from the Scopus database, a widely recognized and comprehensive source of academic publications. The search query was designed to capture all relevant eWOM studies, using terms such as "electronic word of mouth," "ewom," and "e-word of mouth," restricted to titles, abstracts, and keywords. The search resulted in a dataset of 3,179 documents, which included journal articles, conference papers, and book chapters. The analysis consisted of several key steps. First, document types, publication trends, and open-access status were examined to provide a general overview of the research landscape. Next, citation metrics, including total citations, citations per year, and h-index, were calculated to assess the scholarly impact of the publications. Additionally, a network analysis of

author keywords was conducted to identify the most frequently studied topics within the eWOM field. To further explore the thematic structure of eWOM research, topic modeling was performed using the abstracts of the collected articles. This technique allowed for the identification of major research themes and trends, which were then labeled and interpreted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the core topics driving eWOM studies. The combined bibliometric and topic modeling approach offers a robust overview of the evolution and current state of eWOM research, highlighting key areas of focus and potential future directions.

Search strategy

Figure 1 provides a flow diagram of the search strategy employed to gather and refine data for the bibliometric analysis of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research. The figure illustrates the process by which relevant articles were identified, screened, and included in the final dataset for analysis, ensuring a rigorous and systematic approach to selecting relevant research. The search was conducted using the Scopus database, which is known for its comprehensive coverage of academic journals. The search query was designed to capture research on eWOM by using keywords such as "electronic word of mouth", "ewom", and "e-word of mouth", with the search fields restricted to article titles, abstracts, and keywords to ensure that only highly relevant studies were included. The query was further limited to publications between 2002 and 2023, ensuring a focused and contemporary examination of eWOM research over the past two decades. The flow diagram shows that a total of 3,179 articles were initially identified through the search process. After screening for relevance and applying inclusion criteria, all identified records were retained for bibliometric analysis. The diagram highlights that none of the records were excluded, suggesting that the search query was specific and comprehensive enough to only capture relevant studies, eliminating the need for extensive data refinement or exclusions. This systematic search strategy, as depicted in *Figure 1*, ensures that the dataset used in the analysis is both exhaustive and relevant, providing a solid foundation for the subsequent bibliometric analysis and topic modeling. The process detailed in the flow diagram reflects a methodological rigor that is critical for ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings in eWOM research.

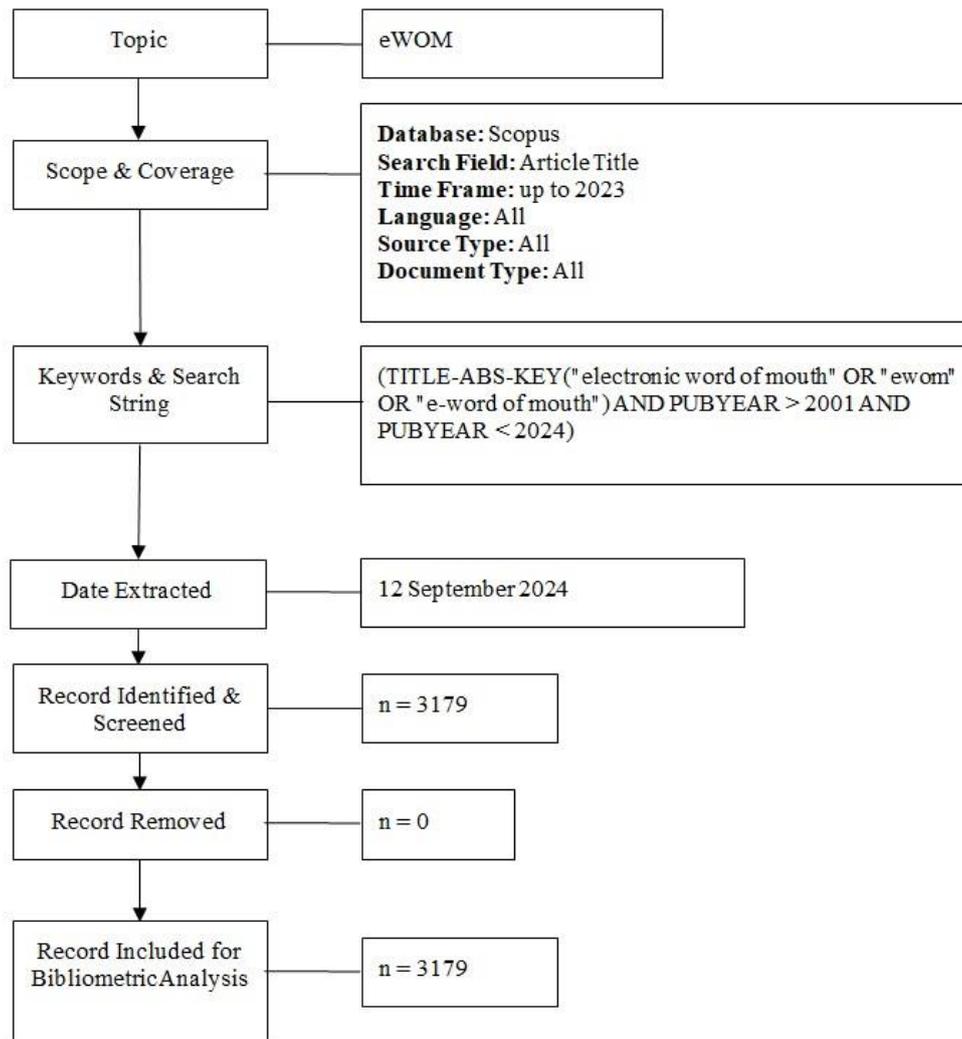


Figure 1. Flow diagram of the search strategy.

Results and Discussion

The results of the bibliometric analysis and topic modeling provide a comprehensive overview of the research landscape in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) from 2002 to 2023. The analysis reveals significant growth in eWOM-related publications over the years, with a notable increase in research output beginning in the late 2000s and continuing to rise steadily. The citation metrics demonstrate the growing academic influence of eWOM studies, with several highly cited works shaping the discourse in fields such as marketing, consumer behavior, and social media. In addition, the network analysis of author keywords and topic modeling uncovers the predominant themes and research areas within eWOM, offering insights into the evolving focus of the field (Ismagilova et al., 2021). These results provide a solid foundation for understanding the key contributors, trends, and thematic directions that have defined eWOM research over the past two decades (Kusawat and Teerakapibal, 2024; Ismagilova et al., 2021).

Documents profiles

Table 1 provides an insightful breakdown of the various document types in which electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research has been published, highlighting the diversity of publication formats. Among the 3,179 documents identified, the majority are journal articles, representing 73.15% (1,994 articles) of the total output. This indicates a strong preference for disseminating eWOM research through peer-reviewed journals, which are often considered the most credible and rigorous platforms for academic discourse. Following this, conference papers account for 15.77% (430 papers), emphasizing the relevance of eWOM discussions in academic conferences where emerging ideas are frequently shared. Book chapters contribute 6.68% (182 chapters), while review articles make up 2.75% (75 reviews), underscoring the growing need for synthesizing the existing body of knowledge on eWOM. Other document types, such as conference reviews, editorials, books, and errata, contribute smaller percentages, cumulatively making up less than 2% of the total. The diversity in publication types reflects the interdisciplinary nature of eWOM research, catering to various academic and practical audiences across different formats of scholarly communication (Chan and Yang, 2021). *Table 2* provides a detailed analysis of the open access status of publications related to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Out of the total 3,179 documents identified, 886 (27.88%) are available through open access, enabling broader dissemination and access to the research findings. This table further categorizes open access publications into different types: Gold, Hybrid Gold, Bronze, and Green access. Gold open access, which represents full and immediate access without subscription barriers, accounts for 446 publications, the largest portion of the open access group. Hybrid Gold access, which allows partial open access in subscription-based journals, covers 103 documents. Bronze access, which refers to free access provided temporarily by publishers, is represented by 114 publications. Green open access, which typically involves self-archiving by authors in repositories, includes 364 documents. The availability of open access in various forms highlights the increasing trend toward making academic research on eWOM more accessible to a global audience, ensuring that valuable insights and developments are not confined behind paywalls, thus facilitating a more inclusive academic dialogue on this important topic (Lv, 2021).

Table 1. Document type.

Document type	Number of publications
Article	2313
Conference Paper	503
Book Chapter	230
Review	80
Conference Review	25
Editorial	7
Book	5
Erratum	5
Note	3
Retracted	3
Data Paper	2
Short Survey	2
Letter	1

Table 2. Open access.

Open access	Total publication
All Open Access	886
Gold	446
Hybrid Gold	103
Bronze	114
Green	364

Based on the corrected figure provided in *Table 3* of the manuscript, the data analysis reveals that journal publications represent 76.47% (2,430 publications) of the total 3,179 documents related to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Conference proceedings account for 13.15% (418 publications), reflecting the role of academic conferences in discussing cutting-edge topics in the field. Book series contribute 6.39% (203 publications), demonstrating the presence of thematic collections of research. Additionally, books account for 3.93% (125 publications), indicating a notable amount of research compiled in book format. Lastly, trade journals, though less prominent, contribute a minimal 0.06% (2 publications). This distribution suggests a strong academic focus on journals and conferences, while also acknowledging the role of more structured and specialized forms of publication like book series. *Table 4* provides an analysis of the languages in which electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research has been published. The vast majority of publications are in English, comprising 98.24% (3,123 publications) of the total 3,179 documents. This overwhelming dominance of English reflects the global trend in academic publishing, where English is the lingua franca, particularly in internationally indexed databases such as Scopus. Other languages make up a very small fraction of the total publications. Spanish follows with 0.94% (30 publications), and Portuguese represents 0.50% (16 publications). Chinese, French, and Korean each have 0.35% (11 publications and 4 publications respectively), showing minimal contributions in non-English languages. Several other languages, including Bosnian, German, Hungarian, and Italian, each represent only 1-2 publications. This distribution highlights the importance of English in global research dissemination while also indicating minor but notable contributions in other languages, likely reflecting regional or culturally specific studies on eWOM.

Table 3. *Source type.*

Source type	Number of publications
Journal	2430
Conference Proceeding	418
Book Series	203
Book	125
Trade Journal	2

Table 4. *Languages.*

Language	Number of publications
English	3123
Spanish	30
Portuguese	16
Chinese	11
French	4
Korean	4
Italian	2
Bosnian	1
German	1
Hungarian	1

Table 5 presents a breakdown of the top 15 subject areas where electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research has been published. The dominant field is Business, Management, and Accounting, which accounts for 60.45% (1,922 publications) of the total 3,179 documents. This reflects the strong relevance of eWOM to marketing, consumer behavior, and related business practices. Following this, Computer Science contributes 35.01% (1,113 publications), emphasizing the role of technology, online platforms, and data analysis in the study of eWOM. Social Sciences represent 25.14%

(799 publications), indicating that eWOM research also explores social interactions, communication, and societal impacts. Other subject areas with significant contributions include Economics, Econometrics, and Finance (14.63%, 465 publications), Decision Sciences (8.84%, 281 publications), and Engineering (8.77%, 279 publications). These fields reflect the interdisciplinary nature of eWOM research, where economic models, decision-making processes, and technological systems are frequently analyzed. The remaining subject areas, such as Psychology (6.42%, 204 publications), Arts and Humanities (4.97%, 158 publications), Environmental Science (4.84%, 154 publications), and Mathematics (4.56%, 145 publications), also demonstrate diverse academic interest in eWOM, albeit at lower percentages. The presence of eWOM research in fields such as Medicine (53 publications), Energy (107 publications), and Physics and Astronomy (27 publications) highlights the broad application of eWOM principles across various scientific disciplines.

Table 5. Top 15 subject area.

Subject	Number of publications
Business, Management and Accounting	1922
Computer Science	1113
Social Sciences	799
Economics, Econometrics and Finance	465
Decision Sciences	281
Engineering	279
Psychology	204
Arts and Humanities	158
Environmental Science	154
Mathematics	145
Energy	107
Medicine	53
Physics and Astronomy	27
Agricultural and Biological Sciences	27
Earth and Planetary Sciences	22

Publication trends

Table 6 and Figure 2 provide a visual and numerical summary of the publication trends in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research from 2002 to 2023. Table 6 lists the total number of publications per year, while Figure 2 illustrates both the total publications and citations across the same period, offering a comparative view of the research output and impact. The data reveals a slow start in eWOM research, with only 1 publication each in 2002 and 2003, and 2 publications in 2004. This indicates that eWOM was a relatively new or emerging research topic during the early 2000s. However, starting in 2008, there is a noticeable rise in publications, with 14 that year, reflecting growing academic interest in the topic. The number of publications continues to increase year by year, reaching 63 in 2011, 123 in 2014, and 204 in 2016. A significant surge is observed from 2020 onwards, with 375 publications in 2020, likely fueled by the global shift towards digital communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. This increase continues through 2021 (344 publications), 2022 (418 publications), and peaks in 2023 with 466 publications. Figure 2 complements this by showing not only the total number of publications per year but also the total number of citations those publications received. While the number of publications rises steadily, the total citations per year show substantial spikes, particularly in years like 2010, 2012, 2016, and 2020, indicating key contributions in those years that were widely cited. This pattern suggests that, although the volume of publications has steadily grown, certain years yielded especially influential works that significantly impacted the academic

discourse on eWOM. Together, *Table 6* and *Figure 2* depict both the growing academic output in eWOM research and the corresponding rise in the influence and reach of these studies, especially in recent years where digital platforms and online consumer behavior have become more integral to marketing strategies and consumer interactions.

Table 6. Publication by year.

Year	Total publication
2023	466
2022	401
2021	342
2020	375
2019	301
2018	251
2017	221
2016	207
2015	158
2014	124
2013	90
2012	70
2011	63
2010	41
2009	29
2008	14
2007	15
2006	6
2005	1
2004	2
2003	1
2002	1

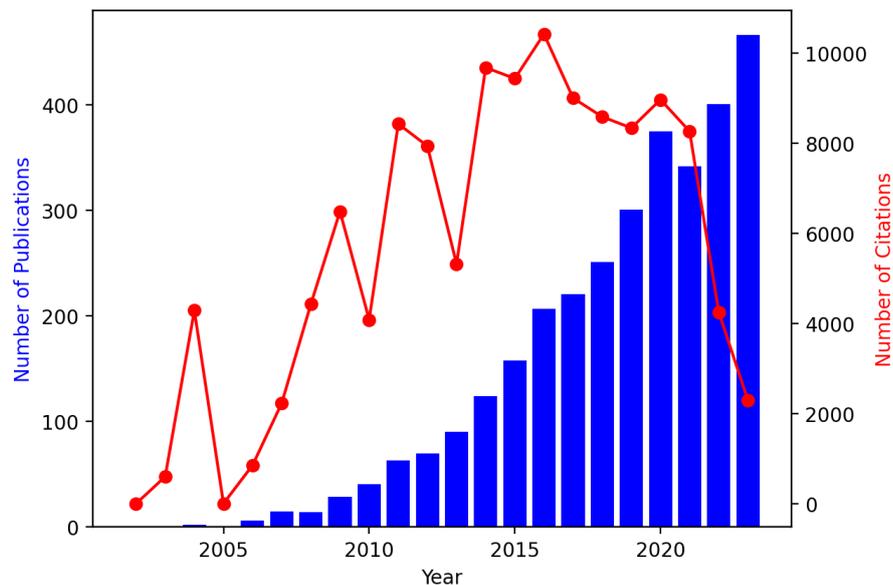


Figure 2. Total publications and citations by year.

Table 7 in the manuscript provides the detailed publication metrics for electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research over the years, which includes Total Publications (TP), Total Citations (TC), Number of Cited Publications (NCP), Citations per Publication (C/P), Citations per Cited Publication (C/CP), the h-index, and the g-index for each year. These metrics are essential for evaluating the academic impact and productivity of eWOM-related research. From 2023, we see 466 publications and 2,294 total citations, resulting in 4.92 citations per publication and an h-index of 22, indicating

a strong output but relatively recent research, which explains the moderate citation count. In comparison, 2022 had 401 publications with 4,252 total citations and a higher average of 10.6 citations per publication, reflecting the sustained impact of research from that year. Similarly, 2021 recorded 342 publications but a remarkable 8,265 total citations, with 24.17 citations per publication and an h-index of 46, suggesting that publications from 2021 have been influential in subsequent years. The earlier years, such as 2010 and 2011, show lower publication counts (41 and 63, respectively), but with substantial citations per publication (99.61 and 133.84, respectively). This reflects that despite fewer publications, the research from these years had a lasting impact on the field, as evident from the high h-index values (21 and 28, respectively). The g-index, which emphasizes the depth of citation activity across publications, consistently rises over the years, reaching 100 by 2016, reflecting an increasing breadth of highly cited eWOM research. Together, *Table 7* showcases the growing academic focus on eWOM, where both the quantity and the impact of publications have escalated, particularly from 2016 onwards. This aligns with the global digital transformation, and the subsequent rise in digital marketing practices, of which eWOM has become a critical component.

Table 7. *Publication metrics by year.*

Year	TP	TC	NCP	C/P	C/CP	%	h-index	g-index
2023	466	2294	316	4.92	7.26	14.66	22	30
2022	401	4252	339	10.6	12.54	12.61	30	47
2021	342	8265	308	24.17	26.83	10.76	46	77
2020	375	8970	337	23.92	26.62	11.8	50	75
2019	301	8340	264	27.71	31.59	9.47	51	78
2018	251	8589	221	34.22	38.86	7.9	52	85
2017	221	9004	190	40.74	47.39	6.95	46	91
2016	207	10424	178	50.36	58.56	6.51	49	100
2015	158	9438	133	59.73	70.96	4.97	48	96
2014	124	9681	105	78.07	92.2	3.9	42	98
2013	90	5321	84	59.12	63.35	2.83	36	72
2012	70	7938	65	113.4	122.12	2.2	37	70
2011	63	8432	54	133.84	156.15	1.98	28	63
2010	41	4084	36	99.61	113.44	1.29	21	41
2009	29	6489	26	223.76	249.58	0.91	18	29
2008	14	4430	13	316.43	340.77	0.44	11	14
2007	15	2230	12	148.67	185.83	0.47	9	15
2006	6	853	6	142.17	142.17	0.19	6	6
2005	1	3	1	3	3	0.03	1	1
2004	2	4290	2	2145	2145	0.06	2	2
2003	1	600	1	600	600	0.03	1	1
2002	1	0	0	0	0	0.03	0	0

Note: TP=Total Articles; TC=Total Citations; NCP=Number of Cited Articles; C/P=Avg Citations per Publication; C/CP=Avg Citations per Cited Publication; %=Percentage.

Publications by authors

Table 8 lists the top 10 most productive authors in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research, ranked by the total number of publications. Raffaele Filieri leads the table with 20 publications, reflecting his significant contribution to the field. Yogesh Kumar Dwivedi and Christy Ming Kuen Cheung both follow with 16 publications each, but Cheung's higher citation count suggests a greater impact per publication. Umair Akram and Meghna Rana each have 12 publications, indicating their prominent roles in the eWOM research landscape. Other notable contributors include Rob Law, Matthew Kwok On Lee and Xun Xu, each with 11 publications, while Anu Gupta Aggarwal and Matteo Borghi have 10 publications. This table highlights the concentration of research activity among a relatively small group of highly productive scholars. Furthermore,

their work continues to shape the trajectory of eWOM research, as evidenced by their high citation counts and contributions to foundational studies in the field. This analysis underscores that while some authors may have fewer publications, their research often garners substantial academic attention, which can be seen in the disparity between publication quantity and overall citation metrics.

Table 8. *Top 10 most productive authors.*

Author's name	Number of publications
Raffaele Filieri	20
Yogesh Kumar Dwivedi	16
Christy Ming Kuen Cheung	16
Umair Akram	12
Meghna Rana	12
Rob Law	11
Matthew Kwok On Lee	11
Xun Xu	11
Anu Gupta Aggarwal	10
Matteo Borghi	10

Publications by institutions

Table 9 provides an analysis of the top 15 sources of publications related to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research. The "Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science" and "Sustainability (Switzerland)" are the two most prolific sources, each contributing 79 publications. These sources reflect a strong focus on marketing and sustainability in the context of eWOM research, emphasizing the interdisciplinary nature of this field, which intersects marketing strategies and sustainable business practices. Following these, the "Journal of Business Research" ranks third with 71 publications, highlighting the significant role of business and consumer research in understanding eWOM dynamics. Other notable sources include "Computers in Human Behavior" with 43 publications, "Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services" with 42 publications, and "Lecture Notes in Computer Science" with 37 publications. These sources suggest that eWOM research is also heavily focused on human-computer interaction and consumer services, where the impact of eWOM on consumer decision-making and online behavior is critically analyzed. Additionally, journals such as the "International Journal of Advertising", "International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management", "Internet Research", and "International Journal of Hospitality Management" all contribute around 35 publications each. This further reflects the relevance of eWOM in the advertising and hospitality sectors, industries where online reviews and customer feedback play an essential role in shaping consumer perceptions. Lastly, specialized journals such as "Decision Support Systems" and "Frontiers in Psychology" with 29 and 28 publications, respectively, suggest that eWOM research also involves sophisticated decision-making models and psychological insights, offering a comprehensive understanding of how electronic word-of-mouth influences consumer behavior. Overall, Table 9 underscores the diversity of sources that contribute to eWOM research, reflecting its multidisciplinary nature, with significant contributions from marketing, business, consumer psychology, hospitality, and human-computer interaction fields.

Table 9. *Top 15 sources of publications.*

Source of publications	Number of publications
Developments In Marketing Science Proceedings of The Academy of Marketing Science	79
Sustainability Switzerland	79
Journal Of Business Research	71

Computers In Human Behavior	43
Journal Of Retailing and Consumer Services	42
Lecture Notes in Computer Science Including Subseries Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence and Lecture Notes In Bioinformatics	37
International Journal of Advertising	35
International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	35
International Journal of Hospitality Management	35
Internet Research	35
International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising	34
Decision Support Systems	29
Frontiers In Psychology	28
Tourism Management	27
ACM International Conference Proceeding Series	26

Table 10 provides a breakdown of the most productive institutions in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research, listing the top institutions by the total number of publications. Bina Nusantara University leads with 51 publications, reflecting its strong focus on eWOM-related studies, particularly within the context of digital marketing and consumer behavior. Following closely, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University ranks second with 45 publications, showcasing its significant contributions, likely emphasizing tourism and hospitality, sectors where eWOM plays a critical role. Universitat de València with 40 publications and City University of Hong Kong with 38 publications are other key contributors, indicating the importance of eWOM research in European and Asian academic contexts. The high publication counts from these institutions demonstrate their sustained engagement in this evolving field. Other notable institutions include Hong Kong Baptist University and Sejong University, each with 24 and 21 publications respectively, alongside Universiti Sains Malaysia and Peking University, both contributing 20 publications. This data reflects the global distribution of eWOM research, with significant contributions from Asia, particularly in regions with growing digital economies. Institutions such as Peking University, Universidad de Zaragoza, and Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications each contribute 20 publications, indicating strong participation from Chinese and Spanish institutions, where eWOM research is gaining traction, especially with the rise of e-commerce and social media in these regions. Lastly, institutions such as Symbiosis International Deemed University, University of Reading, and Harbin Institute of Technology show notable engagement, each contributing around 19-20 publications. The presence of universities from diverse countries, including Malaysia, Spain, and China, reinforces the global relevance and interdisciplinary nature of eWOM research.

Table 10. *Most productive institution.*

Affiliation	Number of publications
Bina Nusantara University	51
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	45
Universitat de València	40
City University of Hong Kong	38
Hong Kong Baptist University	24
Sejong University	21
Universitas Indonesia	21
Universiti Sains Malaysia	20
Peking University	20
Universidad de Zaragoza	20
Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications	20
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	20
Universidad de Sevilla	20
Symbiosis International Deemed University	20
School of Management	20
University of Reading	19
The University of Jordan	19
Henley Business School	19

Table 11 presents the top 20 funding organizations that have supported electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research, highlighting the institutions and agencies that have played a key role in advancing the field. Leading the list is the National Natural Science Foundation of China with 127 funded publications, reflecting China's substantial investment in research related to digital communication, social media, and consumer behavior. This dominance suggests that China views eWOM as a critical area of study, likely due to its importance in the rapidly growing Chinese digital economy. The Ministry of Science and Technology of Taiwan and Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (Portugal) each funded 25 and 22 publications, respectively. These agencies represent governmental support for research that spans technological advancements and their impact on consumer interactions in digital markets. Other key contributors include the National Office for Philosophy and Social Sciences and the Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China, each with 22 funded publications, indicating broad support for interdisciplinary research in social sciences and technology. The Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities (China) and the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China have also supported 19 and 16 publications, respectively, further demonstrating the Chinese government's commitment to fostering academic research on eWOM, likely tied to the importance of digital platforms in their economy.

Table 11. Top 20 funding organization.

Funding organization	Number of publications
National Natural Science Foundation of China	127
Ministry of Science and Technology, Taiwan	25
Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia	22
Ministry of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China	22
National Office for Philosophy and Social Sciences	22
Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities	19
Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China	16
China Postdoctoral Science Foundation	15
National Science Council	15
Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad	14
National Research Foundation of Korea	14
European Commission	13
European Regional Development Fund	12
Ministry of Education	12
Ministério da Educação e Ciência	12
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	11
Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades	9
Deanship of Scientific Research, King Saud University	9
Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia	8
Binus University	7

Additionally, funding organizations such as the European Commission and the National Research Foundation of Korea have each contributed to 13-14 publications, showing significant support from European and Korean research bodies, underscoring the global reach of eWOM research and its importance across different economic contexts. The table also includes smaller but notable contributions from institutions such as the China Postdoctoral Science Foundation (15 publications), Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (Spain, 14 publications), and the Deanship of Scientific Research at King Saud University (Saudi Arabia, 9 publications). These contributions reflect the growing interest in eWOM research from a variety of national and regional organizations around the world. In overall, *Table 11* highlights how a diverse range of

funding organizations from different countries and regions have contributed to the advancement of eWOM research, emphasizing its global importance and interdisciplinary nature, supported by both governmental and academic institutions.

Publications by countries

Table 12 provides an overview of the top 10 countries contributing to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research based on the affiliation of authors. This table offers a geographic snapshot of the research output in this field, highlighting global academic interest. At the top of the list is the United States, contributing 647 publications, representing about 20% of the total output in eWOM research. The dominance of the U.S. in this field reflects its robust academic infrastructure and the importance of digital marketing and consumer behavior research within the American context. Following closely is China, with 360 publications (12.7%), underscoring the country's growing prominence in digital platforms, e-commerce, and social media, all of which are critical areas where eWOM plays a vital role. This is likely a result of China's rapid digital transformation and the government's significant investment in research. India ranks third with 280 publications (8.3%), demonstrating its increasing academic interest in the impact of digital communication, particularly in light of the country's growing e-commerce and social media usage. The United Kingdom follows with 251 publications (7.9%), indicating strong contributions from European researchers, especially in business, marketing, and consumer studies. Other significant contributors include Spain (223 publications), Taiwan (220 publications), and South Korea (188 publications). These countries have strong research traditions in digital technologies and consumer behavior, reflecting their academic interest in understanding the dynamics of eWOM. Indonesia and Malaysia each contribute 165 and 160 publications, respectively, reflecting growing research output from Southeast Asia. These contributions are likely tied to the region's increasing internet penetration and the rise of social media as a critical space for consumer interactions. Country like Australia (116 publications) also feature prominently in the list. The inclusion reflects the importance of eWOM research in diverse contexts, including developed economies where digital consumer behavior is well-established. Overall, *Table 12* underscores the global nature of eWOM research, with leading contributions from both developed and emerging economies. This diverse geographic representation highlights the interdisciplinary and cross-cultural relevance of eWOM as a research area, spanning topics such as digital communication, marketing, and consumer psychology.

Table 12. Top 10 countries contributed to the publications.

Country	Number of publications
United States	647
China	360
India	280
United Kingdom	251
Spain	223
Taiwan	220
South Korea	188
Indonesia	165
Malaysia	160
Australia	116

Citation metrics

Table 13 presents a comprehensive set of citation metrics that reflect the scholarly impact and output of research on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). The total number of articles published in this field is 3,179, which collectively have accumulated 123,927 citations over the years. This large citation count highlights the significant academic attention eWOM research has received. On average, eWOM research yields 5,633.05 citations per year, indicating that the field has maintained a steady and substantial impact across time. Each article, on average, garners approximately 38.98 citations, demonstrating the consistent academic influence of individual publications within the field. Similarly, the metric for citations per author is 38.84, indicating a relatively even distribution of scholarly impact among researchers who have contributed to this body of work. Interestingly, the field maintains an average of one article per author, suggesting that many researchers have made contributions, rather than the field being concentrated among a small group of prolific authors. The h-index for eWOM research stands at 162, signifying that at least 162 papers have received 162 or more citations, which underscores the depth of influence within the field. Complementing this, the g-index is 282, revealing that the highest-cited papers have received a large number of citations, highlighting the substantial academic reach of these top articles. Overall, *Table 13* encapsulates the extensive scholarly engagement and significant academic contributions made to eWOM research, reflecting its growing importance and relevance in contemporary studies on digital communication, consumer behavior, and marketing.

Table 13. Citations metrics.

Metric	Data
Articles	3179
Citations	123927
Years	22
Cites per year	5633.05
Cites per article	38.98
Cites per author	38.84
Articles per author	1.00
Authors per article	1.00
h-index	162
g-index	282

Highly cited documents

Table 14 lists the top 10 most influential publications related to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), based on total citations (TC), citations per year (CPY), and citations per article (CPA). At the top of the list is the paper by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) titled "Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet?" published in the *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, with 3,691 total citations and an impressive 194.26 citations per year. This work has set a foundational precedent in the eWOM literature by exploring the motivations behind consumers' online reviews and feedback. Following closely is the highly cited study by Litvin et al. (2008) on "Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management," published in *Tourism Management*, which has garnered 1,895 citations, with 126.33 citations per year. This paper demonstrates the critical role of eWOM in tourism, a sector where customer reviews and online feedback directly influence consumer decision-making. Another notable work is by Jansen et al. (2009), titled "Twitter power: Tweets as electronic word of mouth," which has accumulated 1,592 citations, with 113.71 citations per year. Published in the *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, this article underscores the

importance of social media platforms, particularly Twitter, in shaping modern eWOM dynamics. Park et al. (2007) also features prominently with their work "The effect of online consumer reviews on consumer purchasing intention: The moderating role of involvement," published in the *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, accumulating 1,511 citations and 94.44 citations per year. Their research on the effect of consumer reviews on purchasing behavior continues to be a critical reference point in eWOM studies. Other influential publications in the top 10 include Cheung and Thadani (2012), Chu and Kim (2011) as well as Sparks and Browning (2011), all of which have explored various facets of eWOM, from consumer engagement on social media platforms to the impact of online reviews on trust and booking intentions. These papers, as listed in *Table 14*, have significantly shaped the discourse on eWOM, laying the groundwork for ongoing research. The high citation metrics of these articles reflect their substantial contribution to understanding consumer behavior in digital environments, providing valuable insights that continue to influence studies in marketing, psychology, and digital communication.

Table 14. Top 10 influential publication.

Author (year)	Title	Source	TC	CPY	CPA
Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004)	Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet?	Journal of Interactive Marketing	3691	194.26	3691
Litvin et al. (2008)	Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management	Tourism Management	1895	126.33	1895
Jansen et al. (2009)	Twitter power: Tweets as electronic word of mouth	Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology	1592	113.71	1592
Park et al. (2007)	The effect of on-line consumer reviews on consumer purchasing intention: The moderating role of involvement	International Journal of Electronic Commerce	1511	94.44	1511
Chu and Kim (2011)	Determinants of consumer engagement in electronic Word-Of-Mouth (eWOM) in social networking sites	International Journal of Advertising	1396	116.33	1396
Sparks and Browning (2011)	The impact of online reviews on hotel booking intentions and perception of trust	Tourism Management	1129	94.08	1129
Cheung and Thadani (2012)	The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: A literature analysis and integrative model	Decision Support Systems	1071	97.36	1071
Ravi and Ravi (2015)	A survey on opinion mining and sentiment analysis: Tasks, approaches and applications	Knowledge-Based Systems	1029	128.63	1029
Cheung et al. (2008)	The impact of electronic word-of-mouth: The adoption of online opinions in online customer communities	Internet Research	1006	67.07	1006
Ert et al. (2016)	Trust and reputation in the sharing economy: The role of personal photos in Airbnb	Tourism Management	989	141.29	989

Note: TC=Total Citations; CPY=Citations Per Year; CPA=Citations Per Author.

Table 15 provides a summary of the top 20 author keywords used in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research, offering insight into the central themes and focal points of studies within the field. The most frequently used keyword is "EWOM", which appears in 707 publications, indicating its role as the core term driving the research in this area. Closely following are related terms such as "Social Media" with 509 occurrences and "Electronic Word of Mouth", appearing in 403 publications. These keywords underscore the intersection of eWOM with social media platforms, which serve as the primary channels for consumer feedback and online reviews. The term "Electronic Word-of-Mouth" (with a hyphen) is also prominently featured with 397 occurrences,

reflecting slight variations in terminology used by authors, though the focus remains consistent. Another variant, "Electronic Word Of Mouths", appears in 275 publications, showing that this subject is explored across different lexical forms but with similar research objectives. Other frequently used keywords include "Sales" and "Social Networking (online)", each appearing 260 times, highlighting the direct connection between eWOM and its influence on online sales and networking behaviors. The concept of "Online Reviews" is also significant, with 259 occurrences, further emphasizing the importance of customer feedback and review systems in eWOM studies. Keywords such as "Electronic Commerce" (238 publications) and "Purchase Intention" (222 publications) reveal the focus on how eWOM impacts consumer decision-making and online purchasing behaviors. These keywords reflect the importance of eWOM in driving consumer trust and influencing purchase intentions within e-commerce settings. Additional terms like "Marketing" (179 occurrences), "Word of Mouth" (156 occurrences), and "E-WOM" (154 occurrences) further solidify the centrality of marketing and consumer communication in eWOM research. Keywords like "Consumer Behavior", "Information Systems", and "Trust" also appear frequently, pointing to the interdisciplinary nature of the research, bridging fields such as marketing, psychology, and information systems. In summary, *Table 15* highlights the most common themes in eWOM research, centering on social media, consumer reviews, and the impact of eWOM on purchasing decisions and digital commerce. These keywords not only reflect the primary areas of study but also demonstrate the evolving nature of eWOM as it adapts to new digital platforms and consumer behaviors (Reyes-Menendez et al., 2020).

Table 15. Top 20 author's keywords.

Metric	Data
EWOM	707
Social Media	509
Electronic Word of Mouth	403
Electronic Word-of-mouth	397
Electronic Word of Mouths	275
Sales	260
Social Networking (online)	260
Online Reviews	259
Electronic Commerce	238
Purchase Intention	222
Marketing	179
Word Of Mouth	156
E-WOM	154
Electronic Word of Mouths (eWOM)	146
Consumer Behavior	134
Information Systems	134
Trust	133
Internet	130
Purchasing	125
Decision Making	124

Figure 4 displays a word cloud based on the abstracts of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research publications. Like the title-based word cloud in *Figure 3*, this visual representation highlights the most frequently used words in the abstracts, providing insight into the deeper themes and research focuses on the field. The largest and most prominent words in the cloud include "eWOM", "online", "consumer", and "social", reflecting the dominant focus of eWOM studies on online platforms, consumer interactions, and social media. These terms emphasize the central role of digital environments in shaping word-of-mouth communication and the behaviors associated

information systems. The visualization also highlights smaller clusters of keywords like "marketing", "brand", and "influence", which are connected to studies focusing on how eWOM impacts brand perceptions and marketing strategies. Additionally, terms such as "decision-making" and "credibility" reflect the growing academic interest in understanding the cognitive processes behind how consumers evaluate eWOM information and make purchasing decisions based on it. Overall, *Figure 5* reveals a complex, interconnected web of research themes, with eWOM at the center and various branches extending into areas like social media, trust, consumer behavior, and digital marketing. The network structure underscores the interdisciplinary nature of eWOM research, integrating insights from marketing, psychology, information systems, and communication studies. This visualization provides a clear view of how different concepts within eWOM research are related, offering valuable insights into the key areas of scholarly focus and their connections within the field.

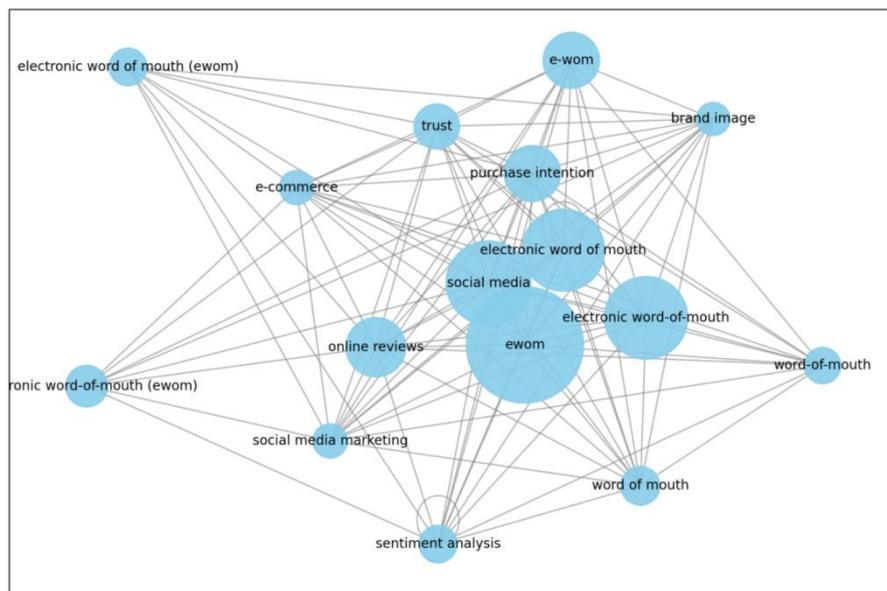


Figure 4. Network visualization of the author keywords with a minimum of 60 occurrences.

Figure 5 visualizes the evolution of eWOM research topics over time, based on the abstracts of the articles, offering insights into how different themes have emerged and developed throughout the years. The figure shows trends in research topics, indicating the periods when certain areas gained prominence and when others began to decline. This temporal analysis helps in understanding the shifting focus of eWOM research, illustrating the dynamic nature of academic inquiry in this field. Early on, topics such as "Customer Satisfaction in Hospitality" and "Tourism and Destination Image" were prevalent. These themes, which focus on the impact of online reviews in the hospitality and tourism sectors, highlight the early recognition of eWOM's importance in industries where customer feedback directly influences service perception and business success. This aligns with the increasing reliance on platforms like TripAdvisor and Yelp during the late 2000s, which helped shape eWOM's role in tourism and hospitality. As the field evolved, newer topics like "Service Recovery and Complaint Management" and "Product Reviews and Consumer Decisions" gained traction. These themes reflect a growing interest in understanding how businesses manage negative feedback and how consumer behavior is influenced by online reviews. The rising importance of managing

reputation through eWOM is evident here, as companies increasingly focused on strategies for mitigating the effects of poor online reviews and enhancing their service recovery processes (Chen et al., 2022). In more recent years, topics such as "Social Media and Brand Engagement" and "eWOM, Consumer Intentions, and Purchasing Decisions" have become more prominent. This shift likely corresponds with the widespread adoption of social media platforms as key marketing tools. Researchers have increasingly focused on how brands interact with consumers through social media and how eWOM on these platforms drives purchase intentions and brand loyalty. The rise of influencers and user-generated content on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter is also reflected in this trend, emphasizing the role of social networks in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors.

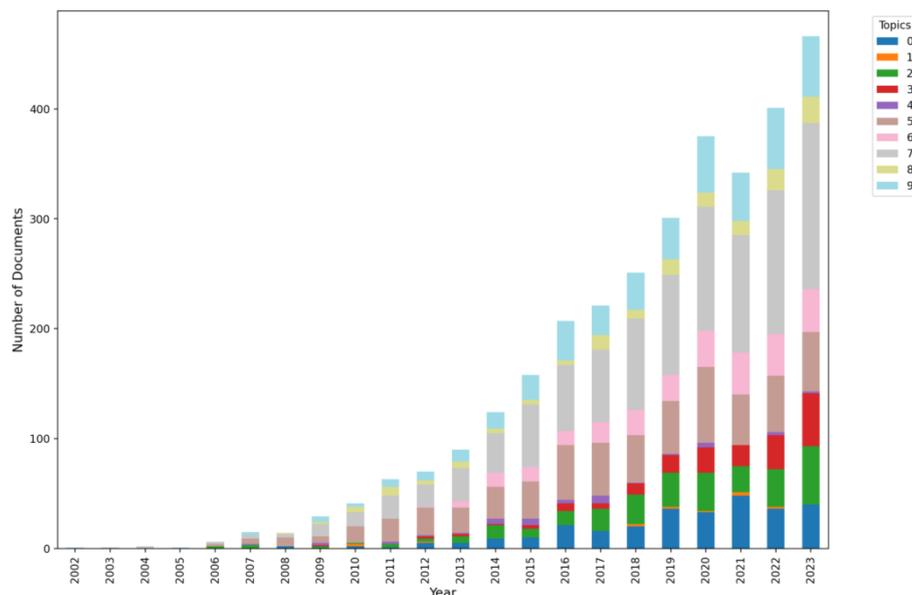


Figure 5. Visualization of topics by year based on the abstracts.

Meanwhile, topics like "Healthcare and Patient Reviews" have also started to appear, indicating a growing recognition of eWOM's impact in the healthcare sector. This trend is particularly relevant in recent years, where online platforms for reviewing healthcare providers and services have become important sources of information for patients, influencing their trust in and decisions about healthcare options (Baudier et al., 2023; Habr et al., 2023; Pasaribu et al., 2022; Priescu and Oncioiu, 2022). Lastly, the ongoing significance of "Marketing, Networks, and Business Strategy" demonstrates that businesses continue to leverage eWOM as a tool for developing marketing strategies and managing consumer relationships through social networks. This topic's sustained prominence underscores the continued importance of understanding how eWOM fits into broader business models and digital marketing strategies. Overall, *Figure 9* captures the temporal dynamics of eWOM research, showing how certain topics have risen in importance as industries and technologies have evolved. The figure highlights the versatility of eWOM research and its application across multiple sectors, from hospitality and healthcare to social media marketing and consumer behavior. The visualization provides a clear overview of how the field has developed, with more recent trends focusing on social media engagement, consumer decision-making, and brand management in the digital age.

The findings of this bibliometric analysis and topic modeling of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research from 2002 to 2023 reveal important trends, thematic concentrations, and scholarly contributions that have shaped the field over the past two decades. The growing number of publications, particularly after 2010, reflects the increasing importance of eWOM in digital marketing, consumer behavior, and business strategies. This trend correlates with the rise of social media platforms and online review sites, which have fundamentally altered how consumers engage with brands and share their experiences (Johnson Jorgensen and Ha, 2019). The significant increase in citations in recent years further highlights the impact of eWOM research, both academically and in practice, as businesses and researchers seek to understand the mechanisms driving consumer influence in digital environments. One of the key insights from this study is the central role of trust and credibility in eWOM research, as evidenced by the frequent occurrence of terms such as "trust," "credibility," and "consumer behavior" in both the keyword network and topic modeling analyses. These concepts are critical in understanding how eWOM shapes consumer decisions. Consumers increasingly rely on online reviews and feedback as substitutes for direct experience, making trust in the source of information a determining factor in their decision-making processes. This finding aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the role of trust in eWOM and highlights its importance in shaping purchasing intentions, brand loyalty, and consumer satisfaction (Pyle et al., 2021; Hasan et al., 2020; Ismagilova et al., 2020; Kajtazi and Zeqiri, 2020; Khwaja et al., 2020; Wandoko et al., 2020). Another important theme identified in the analysis is the role of social media platforms in amplifying eWOM. Keywords such as "social media," "online reviews," and "consumer engagement" appeared frequently in the analysis, indicating the widespread influence of platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. These platforms serve as hubs for eWOM interactions, allowing consumers to share their opinions, reviews, and recommendations with a global audience. The shift from traditional word-of-mouth to digital platforms has expanded the reach and speed of eWOM, making it a powerful tool for both consumers and businesses. The role of social media in eWOM is a growing area of research, as brands increasingly seek to leverage these platforms to manage their reputations and engage with consumers (Alghamdi and Bogari, 2022; Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020; Seifert and Kwon, 2020).

The analysis also reveals a strong focus on industry-specific applications of eWOM, particularly in sectors such as hospitality, tourism, and healthcare. These industries rely heavily on customer feedback, and online reviews have become critical to business success. For instance, research on hotel reviews and destination image in the tourism industry underscores the influence of eWOM on consumer perceptions and travel decisions. Similarly, the healthcare sector has seen a rise in patient reviews and physician ratings, which play a key role in shaping trust and decision-making in healthcare services. This highlights the importance of understanding eWOM in specific contexts, as the dynamics of consumer feedback may vary across industries (Khwaja and Zaman, 2020). The topic modeling results also shed light on the evolution of research methodologies in the field of eWOM. Early studies primarily focused on conceptual frameworks and theoretical discussions, but as the field has matured, there has been a notable increase in empirical studies that use advanced data analytics, sentiment analysis, and machine learning to analyze large volumes of online reviews and social media interactions (Ireland and Liu, 2018; Ragini and Anand, 2016). This shift reflects the growing availability of big data and the need for more sophisticated

tools to capture and analyze the complexities of eWOM in real time. These advancements in methodology have allowed researchers to provide deeper insights into how eWOM operates in various digital ecosystems and how businesses can strategically respond to consumer feedback. Despite the extensive body of work on eWOM, there are still several areas that warrant further exploration. For instance, the role of negative eWOM and how businesses can effectively manage and mitigate its impact remains an area of interest (Chen et al., 2022; Sohaib et al., 2020; Boo and Kim, 2013; Samson, 2006). While much of the research has focused on the positive aspects of eWOM, understanding how to address and recover from negative reviews is equally important for businesses. Additionally, cross-cultural differences in eWOM behavior present a valuable avenue for future research (Kusawat and Teerakapibal, 2024; Hernández-Maestro, 2020; Christodoulides et al., 2012). As eWOM spreads across global platforms, cultural variations in how consumers perceive and respond to online feedback may significantly influence its effectiveness.

Ultimately, this study provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of eWOM research, highlighting its key themes, trends, and influential contributors. The results underscore the central role of trust, social media, and industry-specific applications in shaping the discourse on eWOM. As the field continues to evolve, future research should focus on exploring the nuanced aspects of eWOM, including its cultural dimensions, the management of negative feedback, and the development of advanced methodologies for analyzing online consumer behavior. Understanding these factors will be crucial for both academics and practitioners seeking to navigate the complexities of digital word-of-mouth in a rapidly changing technological landscape.

Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis and topic modeling study offers a comprehensive overview of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) research published between 2002 and 2023, highlighting the field's growth, key themes, and influential contributors. The findings underscore the critical role of eWOM in shaping consumer behavior, marketing strategies, and business outcomes in the digital age. As eWOM continues to evolve with the expansion of social media platforms, online review systems, and consumer feedback mechanisms, it has become an integral part of how brands manage their reputations and how consumers make purchasing decisions. The analysis reveals that trust and credibility are central to the study of eWOM, as these elements significantly influence how consumers engage with and interpret online feedback. The increasing prominence of social media platforms in amplifying eWOM further highlights the transformative impact of digital communication technologies on consumer interactions. Additionally, the study shows a strong focus on industry-specific applications, particularly in sectors such as hospitality, tourism, and healthcare, where consumer feedback has a direct effect on business success. Despite the extensive research conducted on eWOM, opportunities for further exploration remain. The management of negative eWOM, cross-cultural variations in eWOM behavior, and the application of advanced analytical techniques in the study of online reviews present valuable avenues for future inquiry. As digital communication continues to advance, the role of eWOM in shaping business strategies and consumer relationships will only become more significant.

Acknowledgement

The authors express their gratitude to all reviewers for dedicating their time and thoughtful comments.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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