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## The Best Indicators for Handling Negative eWOM to Improve Online Shopping Intentions

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**Abstract:** *This study aims to develop a conceptual model of the best aspects of responding to negative eWOM to increase online shopping intentions. This study uses SLRs explored from indexed journals, (i.e. Elsevier, Taylor and Francis, SAGE, MDPI, and Emerald), which focus on negative eWOM and online shopping intentions. Literature was obtained through the Google Scholar search engine in electronic format to make it easier to find key words. The results of this study are (i.e. (1) responding to negative eWOM can increase online shopping intentions, (2) aspects of apologize immediately, explain immediately, compensate immediately, and promises to resolve negative reviews immediately, are recognized as the best aspects in responding to negative eWOM, and (3) aspects of feel happy, feel comfortable, consider, willing to shop, continue to use, and recommend make a strong contribution in measuring online shopping intentions.*

**Keyword:** *Indicators, Negative eWOM, Online Shopping Intention, Online Shopping Behavior*

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan model konseptual tentang indikator-indikator terbaik menangani eWOM negatif untuk meningkatkan niat belanja online. Menggunakan SLR dieksplorasi dari jurnal terindeks (misalnya Elsevier, Taylor dan Francis, SAGE, MDPI, dan Emerald), yang berfokus pada eWOM negatif dan niat belanja daring. Literatur diperoleh melalui mesin pencari Google Scholar dalam format elektronik untuk memudahkan pencarian kata kunci. Hasil penelitian ini adalah (1) merespon eWOM negatif dapat meningkatkan niat belanja online, (2) aspek meminta maaf segera, menjelaskan segera, memberikan kompensasi segera, dan berjanji menyelesaikan ulasan negatif segera, diakui sebagai aspek terbaik dalam merespon eWOM negatif, dan (3) aspek merasa senang, merasa nyaman, mempertimbangkan, bersedia berbelanja, terus menggunakan, dan merekomendasikan memberikan kontribusi yang kuat dalam mengukur niat belanja online.

**Kata Kunci:** *Indikator, eWOM Negatif, Niat Belanja Online, Perilaku Belanja Online*

## INTRODUCTION

Sharing a positive or negative experience when shopping online to find a product or service on an app or website, this is known as electronic word of mouth (eWOM). All information received through reviews, comments through videos, or ratings on applications or sites certainly influences consumer behavior when they want to shop. Experienced consumers tend to be seen as a relevant and reliable source in providing reviews, ratings or recommendations. However, (Xie et al., 2011) what motivates consumers more in online shopping activities is usually negative information and not positive information.

The information receiving center is a factor that makes consumers absorb the information contained in eWOM as a credible source. The credibility of a source is determined by the perceived competence of the source and the perceived quality of the argument (Anastasiu et al., 2021). Consumers who see product reviews from other consumers online are perceived as different from companies and have more credibility, empathy, and relevance. Therefore, reviews from experienced consumers are a stronger determinant of purchase intention (Golmohammadi et al., 2020), especially negative reviews (Sparks & Bradley, 2017).

Positive eWOM is a common discussion from previous research, but is still recognized as an effective strategy to increase sales (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016; Bulut & Karabulut, 2018; Kousheshi et al., 2019; Hanafiah dkk., 2020; Oraedu et al., 2020; Samudro & Hamdan, 2021). Adoption of eWOM in various types of online stores is an important part of implementing a marketing strategy to gain a competitive advantage. However, the dearth of research discussing how to manage negative eWOM to increase online shopping intentions is limited, due to the importance of managing, or reducing negative eWOM to promote online buying attitudes and behavior (Bhandari et al., 2021).

Many consumers tend to adapt to negative eWOM approaches rather than avoid them out of appreciation and empathy for their own experiences. Evidently, with a high number of posts resulting in eWOM messages being negatively related to switching intentions (Nadarajan et al., 2017). To reduce the impact of negative eWOM reviews, most companies are open about customer complaints (Bhandari & Rodgers, 2018). Because the impact of negative reviews from consumers results in negative reactions shown through consumer reluctance to intend to buy and eventually switch to other brands (Chang & Wu, 2014; Ullrich & Brunner, 2015).

Early eWOM research only looked at the impact of positive reviews, although this indicates that consumers are specifically looking for negative reviews (Ho-Dac et al., 2013). Despite recent research trends on the impact of negative reviews, there is a large gap in the literature on the impact of negative reviews on consumer behavior (Zinko et al., 2021). Limited prior research on how to respond to negative eWOM is the best way to fill this gap. The focus of this research is to identify the best aspects of responding to negative eWOM to increase online shopping intentions, which are indicated by three propositions, i.e. (1) can responding to negative eWOM improve online shopping intentions? (2) what aspects make a key contribution to responding to negative eWOM? and (3) what aspects give a strong influence on online shopping intentions?

This research is certain to provide an important contribution to future knowledge, especially for e-commerce actors. Focusing on the best aspects of responding to negative eWOM is the best way to increase online shopping intent. The dearth of prior research studying the critical aspects of managing negative eWOM makes this research all the more meaningful. Previous research studies that are relevant as a reference in building research models and methods using the SLR approach are discussed in the next section.

Attribution theory is used as a basis in the context of this research. Attribution theory is defined as the perceived outcome of an effect on an individual's subsequent actions (Folkes, 1984; Weiner, 1985). Previous research examined the impact of causal relationships on consumer perceptions and behavior using attribution theory, negative eWOM communication is generally more effective than issues perceived by reviewers (Colliander et al., 2015; Kim &

Gupta, 2012; Quaschnig et al., 2015). Developing a model of how to respond to negative eWOM in increasing online shopping intentions is an adaptation and combination of research models (Ally et al., 2020; Jung & Seock, 2017; Zinko et al., 2021).

### ***Online Shopping Intention***

Departing from behavioral theory, namely: TRA and TPB (Ajzen, 1991; Ajzen & Fishbein, 2011) incorporate the attitude factor in the initial phase of individual intention, (Davis, 1985; Venkatesh & Davis, 1996, 2000) then develop it into TAM which has been confirmed as the most popular framework to explain consumer behavioral intention to shop online. A strong determinant of purchase intention, because consumers know the posted product or service reviews have high credibility (Sparks & Bradley, 2017). Many businesses try to respond to negative reviews when they appear on their apps or websites to reduce the impact of negative reviews on prospects' future purchase intentions (Bambauer-Sachse & Mangold, 2011).

### ***Negative eWOM***

WOM valence is defined as the level of positive and negative evaluation of someone who carries out WOM activities (Davidow, 2003). A negative opinion is defined as an uncomfortable feeling about a product or service that results in a negative online store rating leading to low purchase intention (Brunner et al., 2019; Chang et al., 2015; Ghosh, 2017). In particular, eWOM is a very important uncertainty reduction tool (Golmohammadi et al., 2020), and has a strong impact on various aspects of services (i.e. decision-making process, service satisfaction, and brand impression) (Hogreve et al., 2019). Consumer perception of the value of online store products or services as the main driver of consumer satisfaction. Meanwhile, consumer dissatisfaction with service providers has a significant impact on switching intentions. Negative eWOM is the result of dissatisfied consumers resulting in negative eWOM ratings, or reviews. Negative eWOM tends to be more influential than positive eWOM when consumers shop at the same online store, which is indicated by an increase in consumer dissatisfaction (Nadarajan et al., 2017).

When eWOM news posts about customer service tend to generate negative situations (Bhandari et al., 2021; Kim & Gupta, 2012). Consumers fail to associate product performance feedback with positive attitudes, consumers may assume the company's motives behind negative product reviews, which can damage consumer attitudes (Bhandari & Rodgers, 2018). The series of emotional expressions in negative and positive eWOM refers to the concept of pleasure-arousal-dominance (PAD) (Mehrabian, 1996), and follows research (Nadarajan et al., 2017), i.e. (1) pleasure (i.e. expressions "happy/unhappy", "glad/annoyed", "satisfied/dissatisfied", "cheerful/depressed", "optimistic/pessimistic", and "relaxed/bored"), (2) arousal (i.e. expressions "tense/calm", "anxious/convinced", "aggressive/passive", "quiet/restless", "enthusiasm/heartbroken", and "heedless/alert"), and (3) dominant (i.e. expressions "controlling/controlled" "in control/ be managed", "influenced/influential", and "obedient/dominant). This is closely related to how to respond to negative eWOM in increasing purchase intention using indicators (Zinko et al., 2021), i.e. (1) no response, (2) neutral response, (3) apology response, (4) response provide reasons, (5 ) apologies and excuse responses, (6) responses provide reasons to fix the problem, and (7) apologies, reasons, negative reviews, and action will be taken to fix the problem.

## **METHOD**

This study uses the SLR approach from various indexed journals. The literature used must be consistent and relevant and must be inductive. This research stage begins with the collection of relevant previous research sourced from indexed journals (i.e. Elsevier, Taylor and Francis, SAGE, MDPI, and Emerald). All literature obtained through the Google Scholar search engine in electronic format aims to make it easier to find key words.

Literature review to obtain negative eWOM indicators that are confirmed to have reliable capabilities. The following are the results of previous studies that are relevant in the context of negative eWOM as the main reference in building an internationally indexed model with reputation Q1 and Q2.

**Table 1. Relevant and Indexed Prior Research**

NO.	Author	Results	Journal Name and Rank	Publishers
1	Bhandari et al., (2021)	Consumers usually pay attention to negative information conveyed in eWOM to reduce or avoid purchasing risks	Telematics and Informatics, Q1	
2	Torres & Augusto, (2019)	Resistance to negative information and purchase intention tend to reinforce each other	Journal of Business Research, Q1	
3	Israeli et al., (2019)	Apologies are preferred by consumers if the company makes a mistake in the product or service provided	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Q1	
4	Jung & Seock, (2017)	Apologies and real compensation affect interactional justice and ultimately increase WOM intentions and customer satisfaction	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, Q1	
5	Nadarajan et al., (2017)	Negative eWOM has a stronger impact on consumer intentions and behavior	Procedia Computer Science, not yet assigned quartile	
6	Elbedweihy et al., (2016)	Rejection of negative information has a strong influence on purchase intention	Journal of Business Research, Q1	Elsevier
7	Kim & Gupta, (2012)	Characteristics of online reviews about not knowing how to use a product/service are the cause of negative situations.		
8	Chang & Wu, (2014)	The effect of negative reviews can reduce purchase intentions which have an impact on switching behavior	Decision Support Systems, Q1	
9	Xie et al., (2011)	Negative reviews are more likely to have a greater impact on consumer outcomes	International Journal of Hospitality Management, Q1	
10	Bhandari & Rodgers, (2018)	Negative reviews as a mechanism to influence consumer behavior		
11	Moon et al., (2017)	A negative brand or product experience communicated in a negative online review will have a negative impact on potential customers	International Journal of Advertising, Q1	Taylor and Francis
12	Colliander et al., (2015)	Negative eWOM tends to be more persuasive in the reviewer's position		
13	Sparks & Bradley, (2017)	Brands need to respond to negative eWOM by using a strong response strategy	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research, Q1	
14	Litvin & Hoffman, (2012)	Responding to negative reviews can increase reading intent to book a hotel by 15%	Journal of Vacation Marketing, Q1	SAGE
15	Halim et al., (2022)	The way to reduce the impact of negative eWOM is to take preventive actions, namely making product sustainability claims	Sustainability, Q1	
16	Zinko et al., (2021)	Responding to negative eWOM through apologies, excuses, and promises to fix the problem significantly increases purchase intent over all other responses)	Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research, Q2	MDPI
17	Zinko et al., (2020)	Responding to negative eWOM has proven to impact many industries		
18	Brunner et al., (2018)	Negative valence directs consumer purchase intentions to be lower	Internet Research, Q1	Emerald

Source: Journal ranking taken from scimagojr.com for 2023

Reputable previous research is still limited in discussing negative eWOM, resulting in limited research references obtained. However, it has been considered and believed that sourced from these references which have been indexed and most of them have Q1 and Q2 ratings based on the rating from scimagojr.com, it is certain that the model built is relevant and can be confirmed.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Bagian ini memuat data (dalam bentuk ringkas), analisis data dan interpretasi terhadap hasil. Based on a review of relevant previous research to provide information and understanding in answering the research propositions that have been built (i.e. 1) can responding to negative eWOM improve online shopping intentions? 2) what aspects make a key contribution to responding to negative eWOM? and 3) what aspects give a strong influence on online shopping intentions? The results and discussion of this study are described and explained as follows.

### **Can Responding to Negative eWOM Improve Online Shopping Intentions?**

Negative reviews are more likely to have a greater impact on consumer outcomes (Xie et al., 2011). Online review platforms often provide businesses with the ability to respond to reviews and act as a way to reduce negative publicity caused by negative eWOM (Zinko et al., 2021). Responding to negative online reviews and finding the best way to solve them indirectly increases consumer purchase intentions (Bhandari & Rodgers, 2018). Product or service brands must respond to negative eWOM through a strong response (Sparks & Bradley, 2017), which in turn increases purchase intention (Brunner et al., 2019). Losses will increase when eWOM spreads negative information about a product or service and consumers express dissatisfaction with the appearance of the product (Bhandari & Rodgers, 2018; Moon et al., 2017). Consumer attention to negative reviews as a response mechanism has the potential to increase consumer purchase intention in the future when the response includes an apology, an explanation, and a promise to fix the problems identified in the review (Bhandari & Rodgers, 2018; Zinko et al., 2021). Responses that included all components (explanation, apology, and commitment to fix the problem) were found to influence purchase intention. However, (Halim et al., 2022) provides an effective way to prevent negative eWOM from occurring, namely product sustainability claims. Finally, this discussion provides a strong allegation that responding to negative eWOM can increase consumer intentions to shop online on a particular application or site.

### **What Aspects Make a Key Contribution to Responding to Negative eWOM?**

When a company makes a mistake, an apology is usually preferred, because an apology is seen as a commitment to influence satisfaction (Israeli et al., 2019). This action is the company's response as an effort to improve the performance of products or services to reduce consumer anxiety and increase their purchase intentions. Consumer purchase intentions increase due to apologies, explanations, and promises to fix problems identified in negative reviews (Zinko et al., 2021). In a study (Litvin & Hoffman, 2012), when a hotel manager responded to a negative review by admitting his mistake, and immediately apologizing, resulted in a 15 percent increase in the reader's intention to book the hotel compared to no response from management. These results are confirmed in research (Jung & Seock, 2017), that when customers feel more interactional justice it results in increased WOM intentions and satisfaction, because customers receive real apologies and compensation for online shopping events on one particular site.

In addition, the method of recovery in repairing disaster damage is to provide compensation to the injured party, while functional recovery is often carried out by apologizing

(Ally et al., 2020). Apology is a feeling of empathy for customers and signifies a willingness to consider customer needs in order to provide better service which will increase their purchase intentions (Zinko et al., 2021). Unlike the indicators used by (Torres & Augusto, 2019) in measuring negative information (i.e. giving another chance, ignoring negative information, and forgiving if you make a mistake. This measurement is an adaptation of research (Elbedweihy et al., 2016). However, may offer more effective compensation than apologies, explanations, and promises to resolve negative reviews (Zinko et al., 2021). Their research results reveal that rejection of negative information has a strong influence on purchase intention. Therefore, confirming those aspects aspects of negative eWOM that have actually resulted in an acceptable level of validity and reliability according to the decision criteria. Thus giving strong consideration of negative eWOM aspects (i.e. immediately apologize, immediately explain, immediately provide compensation, and promise to immediately resolve negative reviews, was able to make an important contribution in responding to eWOM negative.

### **What Aspects Give a Strong Influence on Online Shopping Intentions?**

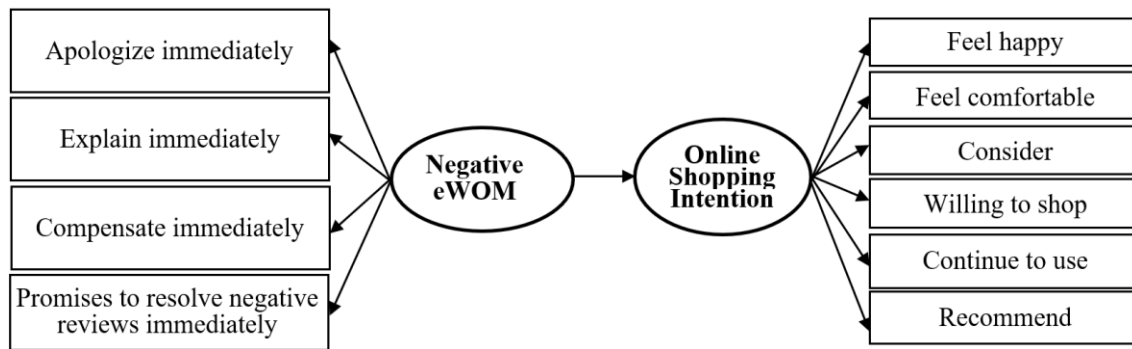
Research developed by (Halim et al., 2022) uses several indicators in measuring purchase intentions that result in invalidity that can be confirmed (ie seeking information, planning to buy in the near future, safety, and wanting to buy with family). In line with research (Cui et al., 2019), however, it only uses 3 indicators to measure confirmed purchase intentions (i.e. willingness to buy, willingness to buy next time, and willingness to recommend). However research (Athapaththu & Kulathunga, 2018) is more relevant, as it analyzes the same context of online purchase intention, where six indicators are used (i.e. consider first, feel comfortable, recommend, continue using, buy other products/services, and buy other products/services new).

In addition, research (Dharmesti et al., 2021) uses aspects that contribute highly to online shopping intentions (namely likes, purchase intentions, future purchases, and considering buying). As research from (Chang & Chen, 2008) uses 3 aspects in measuring purchase intention on a website (ie intending to use, hoping to buy in the future, and likely to transact in the near future). This study has confirmed that aspects of online shopping intentions have resulted in high validity and reliability values, so they can be adapted in this study. Adapted aspects include: feel happy, feel comfortable, consider, willing to shop, continue to use, and recommend) are the main considerations in measuring consumer intentions to shop through a particular application or site.

### **Model for Responding to Negative eWOM**

On the basis of the discussion of previous research in the context of relevant research as the main reference in building a conceptual framework. This research considers that online platforms are important for responding to negative eWOM in order to increase online shopping intentions (Bhandari & Rodgers, 2018; Brunner et al., 2019; Moon et al., 2017; Zinko et al., 2021). The negative aspects of eWOM that have a strong influence on increasing consumer purchase intentions on applications or sites are adapted from previous research and developed in this study (i.e. apologize immediately, explain immediately, provide compensation immediately, and promise to immediately resolve negative reviews).

In addition, the important aspects of purchase intention were adapted into this study (i.e. feel happy, feel comfortable, consider, willing to shop, continue to use, and recommend). Based on negative eWOM indicators and purchase intentions were developed in this study. Results of discussion this provides a proposed model as the implementation of an effective and appropriate marketing strategy in achieving competitive advantage. Following research (Becker et al., 2012) using a reflective construct approach, where when one aspect of a particular construct does not function or changes, it will not change the structure or meaning of the construct.



**Figure 1. Model for Responding to Negative eWOM**

**Statement Novelty Model**

We admit that this model is the result of development from research developed by (Ally et al., 2020; Jung & Seock, 2017; Zinko et al., 2021). However, we are very confident that this model offers novelty from a more effective and efficient improvisational side. Not only that, we also offer some important statements from related models that we have developed and combined according to relevant aspects from previous research to produce a negative eWOM model and how to measure purchase intention in order to produce a good model. This will greatly contribute to future knowledge, especially the managerial implications discussed in the next section.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the built model produces a confirmed understanding based on the answers to the three research propositions, i.e.

1. Responding to negative eWOM can increase online shopping intentions.
2. Aspects of apologize immediately, explain immediately, compensate immediately, and promises to resolve negative reviews immediately, are recognized as the best aspects in responding to negative eWOM, and
3. Aspects of feel happy, feel comfortable, consider, willing to shop, continue to use, and recommend make a strong contribution in measuring online shopping intentions.

From these aspects, several statements can be described that provide the best contribution on how to respond to negative eWOM in increasing online shopping intentions, which consist of four statements, i.e.

1. If negative reviews are found in the form of images, emoticons, videos, or ratings on this application or site regarding goods/services and the seller apologizes immediately, I will forgive him.
2. If negative reviews are found in the form of images, emoticons, videos, or ratings on this application or site regarding goods/services and the seller immediately provides an explanation, I will feel calm.
3. If negative reviews are found in the form of images, emoticons, videos, or ratings on this application or site related to transaction fees and the seller immediately provides appropriate compensation, I will feel comfortable.
4. If a negative review is found in the form of images, emoticons, videos, or ratings on this application or site regarding goods/services and the seller promises to immediately resolve the negative review, I will feel calm.

Meanwhile, to measure online shopping intentions on an application or site, which has been considered as the main contribution, it will be measured through six statements, i.e.

1. I feel happy shopping on this app or site.
2. I feel comfortable shopping on this app or site.
3. I would consider this app or site first when I want to shop.

4. I am willing to shop on this app or site in the near future.
5. I will continue to use this app or site as an online shopping activity in the future.
6. I will recommend this app or site to a relative, friend or other person.

These statements should use a 7-point Likert scale according to the measurements used (Zinko et al., 2021). This reason was chosen to obtain good measurement and structural model results for future quantitative research.

### **Practical Implication**

The results of this study offer an important contribution to e-marketing management as a strategy in compiling and managing consumer responses to negative eWOM reviews (i.e. apologize immediately, explain immediately, compensate immediately, and promises to resolve negative reviews immediately). The tendency of consumers in conducting online shopping activities is to trust negative information (both reviews in the form of descriptions or videos, comments, or ratings) rather than positive information, because negative eWOM has a higher credibility power than positive eWOM. Therefore, for business actors it is a must and the main consideration is the application of negative eWOM aspects in increasing shopping intentions, so that negative eWOM news does not create an intention to divert online shopping activities to other applications or sites.

Actually, what e-commerce actors need to know and understand in managing negative eWOM is to consider complaints from consumers as a reciprocal that generates opportunities and is very profitable for the company as an evaluation material for company performance deficiencies, (Jung & Seock, 2017) because Negative WOM is closely related to the intention of online shopping behavior which results in company profits. Consumer complaints are very meaningful for e-commerce performance so they don't think their business is better than their competitors. This is the key to continue to be adaptive and maintain existence in achieving competitive advantage in the future.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

It is important to reveal the implications and limitations of this research in complementing future knowledge. First, eWOM has been shown to have a negative impact on various types of industries (Lievonen et al., 2018; Zinko et al., 2021), but this research only focuses on online buying behavior through an application or shopping site, so further research is needed to increase generalization research results in certain industries. Second, it is necessary to develop mediation models such as brand personality or brand attitude (Bhandari et al., 2021), and e-trust (Hamdan et al., 2021; Hamdan & Yuliantini, 2021). Finally, previous research used as a reference is still limited in the context of online shopping behavior, because most of the research only reviews positive eWOM and ignores negative eWOM, as a result there is an opportunity for further research to cover research gaps. Although previous research has confirmed that negative eWOM has proven to have a stronger impact on influencing consumer behavior (Bhandari & Rodgers, 2018; Nadarajan et al., 2017; Xie et al., 2011; Zinko et al., 2020). However, never forget the four important aspects of negative eWOM (i.e. apologize immediately, explain immediately, compensate immediately, and promises to resolve negative reviews immediately).

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