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Malaysian Facebook Users Online Airline Tickets Purchase Intention: Antecedents and Outcome of eWOM

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the antecedents of eWOM in the context of online airline ticket purchase intention by Malaysian consumers. Additionally, this study also seeks to examine the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. The research model was examined by employing survey questionnaire method obtained from 530 Malaysian consumers through mall-intercept method and data was analyzed using PLS. The findings revealed that information usefulness, source credibility, information accuracy, and information timeliness have a positive and significant relationship with eWOM and involvement moderates the relationships between eWOM and purchase intention. Despite the fact that this study is limited to eWOM in the context of online airline tickets purchasing of Malaysian Facebook users, it is expected to be of value to airline and travel organizations in Malaysia. This study extends the applicability of S-O-R Model and ELM Model to the eWOM domain in the context of social media, with an approach to investigate consumer's purchase intention.

Keywords: eWOM, Social Media, Purchase Intention, Antecedents, S-O-R Model, ELM.

Introduction

Social media has undoubtedly becoming an integral part of most people's life, globally everywhere. The growth of social media trends shows no signs of stopping and hence, the understanding of social media is indeed important. Interestingly, social media are not only limited to social networks like Facebook, but include blogs, business networks, collaborative projects, enterprise social networks, forums, microblogs, photo sharing, products/services reviews, social bookmarking, social gaming, video sharing, and virtual worlds (Aichner & Jacob, 2015)

Globally, it was reported by Hootsuite that in 2019, there are 4.39 billion internet users worldwide, 3.48 billion social media users worldwide and 5.11 billion unique mobile users. Marketers should be aware that there are a total of 3.8 billion social media users as of January 2020 and this figure is rising by more than 9 per cent (321 million new users) since

January 2019. Nielsen Social, a global company that study consumers in more than 100 countries reported that “social media is one of the biggest opportunities that companies across industries have to connect directly to consumers” (Sean, 2017). eWOM is not new to nearly 20 million Malaysian social media users. With the increase in the number of internet users, the use of social media has expanded over the past decade from an individual level to the level of being a useful marketing tool in the world of business (Zainal et al., 2017).

Expedia (2019) reported in Global Flight and Hotel Etiquette Study that Malaysians is one of the most cost-conscious and technologically inclined avid travelers in Asia. With more than 600 Malaysian respondents surveyed online between 22 February to 29 March 2018, the study further highlighted that Malaysians are most likely to jump on a flight, landing them a top 5 global ranking with 5.5 average flights annually, with 83 percent of them checking into flights online or via mobile. Additionally, in April 2018, Malaysia Airlines Berhad allows travelers to make bookings on its Facebook page following its journey to digitization. MHfeedback apps is also now available for download, in which this mobile app allows customers to immediately share their feedback anonymously on their experience with Malaysia Airlines (The Star Online, 2018). In addition, Visa Malaysia country manager, KB Ng, reported in The Star Online that travel booking has also evolved from traditional methods of calling or sending an email to a travel agent. The research shows that Malaysians spend more than five hours a day on their mobile devices and based on the Global Travel Intentions study conducted by Visa, 72 per cent of Malaysians use their mobile devices to look up information in planning their trip. This depicts that a careful and thorough study on Malaysian travelers’ purchase intention is crucial to provide insights on what and how consumers use information in social media.

This study aims to identify the antecedents of eWOM in the context of online airline ticket purchase intention by Malaysian consumers. Additionally, this study also seeks to examine the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To determine whether information usefulness, source credibility, information accuracy, information value-added, and information timeliness influence eWOM.
- To examine the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention.
- To investigate the moderating effect of involvement between eWOM and purchase intention.

The study's focus is limited to Malaysian adult Facebook users, and it employs cross-sectional empirical analysis to define the relationship between the antecedents (i.e. information usefulness, source reliability, information accuracy, information value-added, and information timeliness) and eWOM, as well as to assess whether eWOM can contribute to purchase intention (outcome) and the moderating role of involvement between eWOM and purchase intention.

Literature Review

With the emergence of the Internet and web 2.0, the traditional word-of-mouth has now been expanded to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Goyette et al., (2010) Wang & Yu, (2017) also similarly defined eWOM as “any positive or negative statement made by potential,

actual, or former customers about a product or company which is made available to multitude of the people and institutes via the Internet” (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004,p. 39).

Antecedents of eWOM

Goyette et al., (2010) and Wang & Yu, (2017) defined the term electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) as the user-generated content carrying positive or negative information about companies and product/services in which the content is frequently spoken and discussed in social media sites such as Facebook. Gupta & Harris (2010) claimed that the development of internet technology has led to eWOM. Since the golden period of the modern media era, many consumers have increasingly sent and received messages through the internet. eWOM has, therefore, become one channel people use to share their opinions about products and services they bought such as restaurant services (See & Goh, 2020). Since the era of Web 2.0, chat board, review websites, web blogs and many social network websites have been used by consumers to present and exchange ideas and information about items for consumption and services. It can be ascertained therefore that the advance of internet technology has widely turned traditional WOM to eWOM.

With the emergence of the Internet and web 2.0, the traditional word-of-mouth has now been expanded to electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Besides Goyette et al., (2010) and Wang & Yu, (2017) definition on eWOM discussed earlier, eWOM is also similarly defined as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company which is made available to multitude of the people and institutes via the Internet” (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004,p. 39). On the other hand, Goldsmith & Horowitz (2006) defined eWOM as social communication on the internet, where web surfers either transmitting or receiving product-related information online. Similarly, Lee and Youn, (2009) defined eWOM as person-to-person, oral communication between a receiver and a sender.

Information Usefulness

This study adopted the definition of information usefulness based on a study by Luo et al. (2018) which found that information usefulness and eWOM do have a significant relationship. The research paper scientifically demonstrates that both consumer and expert eWOM information can play an important role in determining the usefulness of information users' perceptions. Similarly, Liu and Zhang (2010) found that information usefulness has a direct positive impact on eWOM. Based on their findings, it was suggested that for online customer feedback to have an impact on consumers' purchase decision making, it has to be perceived as useful by the consumers. Other research findings (Cheung et al., 2008; Hussain et al., 2018; Tien, Rivas, & Liao, 2018) also agreed that information usefulness had a strong and significant impact on consumer decision to adopt information within online communities (eWOM). Another study by Tien, Rivas, & Liao (2018) also found that information usefulness does have a positive influence on eWOM adoption in the context of the purchase of skin care products by consumers in Taiwan. The study affirmed that to increase the probability of adopting an eWOM message with information usefulness, eWOM adoption plays a major role in affecting eWOM reputation and usefulness for consumers buying products on social networking (SNS) sites. On top of that, a study in the context of online travel community by Hajli (2016) revealed that social media to have an impact on information usefulness and thereafter towards social word-of-mouth which were developed based on the understanding of eWOM in the context of travel. The context of the study is very much similar to the present study and it contributes to the body of knowledge in better understanding of online travel

communities in light of the current trend of travelling. Therefore, the following hypothesis is constructed:

H1: Information usefulness has a positive and significant relationship with eWOM.

Source Credibility

A study by Zha et al. (2018) which adopts ELM as the referent theory explores source credibility as the peripheral route affirmed that individuals who authored online posts (source credibility) in the context of social media and see it as a credible will have an impact on eWOM in which they will use social media to obtain information with regards to topics related to work or studies. Cheung et al. (2009) found that there is a strong relationship between credibility and eWOM. This particular study agreed that a high level of credibility will enhance the user's communication desire regarding online recommendations and will also attract repeat visits to other consumer recommendations. This finding is supported by Muda & Khan (2020), Hussain et al. (2018), Lee, Lee, & Hansen (2017) and Wu & Lin (2017) in which their findings showed that source credibility have an effect on eWOM.

Conversely, it is less likely that people accept the eWOM messages if the source is not perceived as credible. Thus, Yusuf et al. (2018) proved that information credibility has positive impact on eWOM. (Kim, Kandampully, & Bilgihan, 2018) found that the relationship between source credibility and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) information were positive and significant. The study results indicated that the homophile and strength between a website and a consumer are important factors that influence the credibility of the website and reviews. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Source credibility has a positive and significant relationship with eWOM.

Information Accuracy

Filieri & McLeay (2014) affirmed that information accuracy is one of the strong predictors of eWOM. These authors conducted their study in the context of online reviews (eWOM) on travel accommodation and the results of the study showed that information accuracy possessed a significant impact on the decision-making process for travellers. The study proposed that external platforms for consumer input should thus develop and refine their approaches to ensure the accuracy of online reviews so that viral marketing activities which spread fake or false reviews are avoided. Additionally, another study in online customer support community by Dancer, Filieri and Grundy (2014) found that information accuracy is related to eWOM. The study was conducted and focused on the context of Dell's online customer support community. The relationship between information accuracy and eWOM is found to significant in that study even though it scored the lowest significance compared to other variables.

On top of that, another study also agreed that information accuracy is one of the factors influencing eWOM (Rahman & Mannan, 2018). The findings from the study affirmed that information accuracy has a significant relationship with eWOM (information adoption) which then impacts consumer purchase behaviour in the context of Bangladesh local fashion clothing brands. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Information accuracy has a positive and significant relationship with eWOM.

Information Value-Added

Studies that employ a direct and strong relationship between information value and eWOM are found to be scarce in which lack of studies examining the relationship between these variables. Based on an earlier review on information value added studies Filieri and McLeay (2014), not much emphasis has been put on examining the role of information value-added as the antecedent of eWOM, The authors found that information value added is a dimension of information quality which is more critical to determine the eWOM by travelers than the others. On the other hand, Kim, Lee, Shin and Yang (2017) considered information value-added as one of the influencing factors on user's destination image formation (eWOM) in social media. The authors found that information value-added such as geographical information posted in social media pages of a travel destination will add as a valuable information prior to the travel dates. Kim et al. (2017) found that information value-added in the context of tourism is positively associated with affective image creation in social media, which suggests that the detailed information improves consumers to develop a more cognitive part of the travel image, for instance what to do, where to find and how to do something.

Through sharing information that is usually not easy to access through traditional marketing communications, eWOM may allow travellers to take informed decisions. In general, marketing campaigns tend to show a product or service's bright side when trying to hide or obscure its downsides (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). This vital construct should be further tested in a different context. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Information value-added has a positive and significant relationship with eWOM.

Information Timeliness

Studies by Cheung et al. (2008), Filieri & McLeay (2014) and Cheung (2014) discussed about information timeliness in a different context and tested it with different variables. Filieri & McLeay (2014) affirmed that information timeliness possessed a moderate impact on eWOM. This discovery may have been attributable to tourists not only taking updated information from online reviews, but also taking past reviews into consideration when making decisions (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). On the other hand, Cheung (2014) found that the information timeliness in the eWOM groups showed significant and positive impact. The study affirmed that consumers consider the timeliness of knowledge as one of the factors deciding what is considered to be the value for buying decisions in a web-based setting. As users search the Internet for details, they typically choose Facebook messages that are more current and up to date. In addition, the preference of discovery and utilization of messages is based on the integrity that consumers choose those messages which give full information. Based on this argument, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Information timeliness has a positive and significant relationship with eWOM.

Purchase Intention

Among studies that have shown significant relationship between eWOM and purchase intention have been suggested in a study by Jalilvand & Samiei (2012), in the context of automobile industry and Erkan & Evans (2016). Similarly, other studies also found that eWOM has a relationship with purchase intention (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Bhandari & Rodgers, 2018; Wang, Wang, & Wang, 2018; Farzin & Fattahi, 2018; Yusuf, Che Hussin, & Busalim,

2018). In addition, Wang, Wang, & Wang (2018) found that eWOM directly and indirectly enhanced consumer purchase intention through perceived value. Similarly, Farzin & Fattahi (2018) eWOM played a significant role in shaping brand image in the mind of consumers and their purchase intention. These result is further supported by another study by Yusuf, Che Hussin, & Busalim (2018) that eWOM (engagement) has a significant positive influence on consumer purchase intention in the context of social commerce.

Kudeshia & Kumar (2017) found there is a significant relationship between eWOM and purchase intention in the context of smart phone fan pages in Facebook whilst Bhandari & Rodgers (2018) revealed that eWOM does have an impact on purchase intention in the context of brand feedback (both positive and negative). Research by Kudeshia & Kumar (2017) has shown that Facebook has considerable influence on the purchase intention of buying consumer electronics and created positive eWOM on social networking sites. The study provides valuable knowledge into the association between eWOM and consumer electronics, which is widely unknown. The authors recommended that the research can also be repeated for future research products or services (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017). On the other hand, Bhandari & Rodgers (2018) revealed that eWOM does have an impact on purchase intention in the context of brand feedback (both positive and negative). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed for this study:

H6: eWOM has a positive and significant relationship with purchase intention.

Involvement

A study by Yan et al., (2016) revealed that involvement does have a moderating impact on eWOM. The authors described involvement as the degree of information concern, importance and relevance the consumer has with a stimulus or stimuli. Furthermore, Park et al., 2007 adopted ELM in their studies to explain how level of involvement (high vs low) with a product moderates the relationship between quality (and quantity) of online reviews and consumer purchasing intention. On the other hand, Park and Lee (2008) suggested in their study that low-involvement consumers focusing on perceived popularity overcome the information overload (in online consumer review websites), resulting in an increase of their purchasing intention. In addition, previous studies have revealed that the level of involvement of consumers moderates the impact of eWOM (Cheung et al., 2009; Gupta & Harris, 2010; Park & Kim, 2008).

Additionally, a study by Krishnamurthy and Kumar (2018) found a relative difference in time spent reading eWOM information between low and high-level involvement consumers. The authors clarified that depending on its level of involvement, customers may form their expectations in eWOM. Another study by Shankar and Jebarajakirthy (2020) indicated that the valence of eWOM continues to differ from high to low involvement, which means that highly involved consumers favor positive eWOM compared to negative content and such results helps in understanding the theory of ELM. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7: The greater the involvement the stronger the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention.

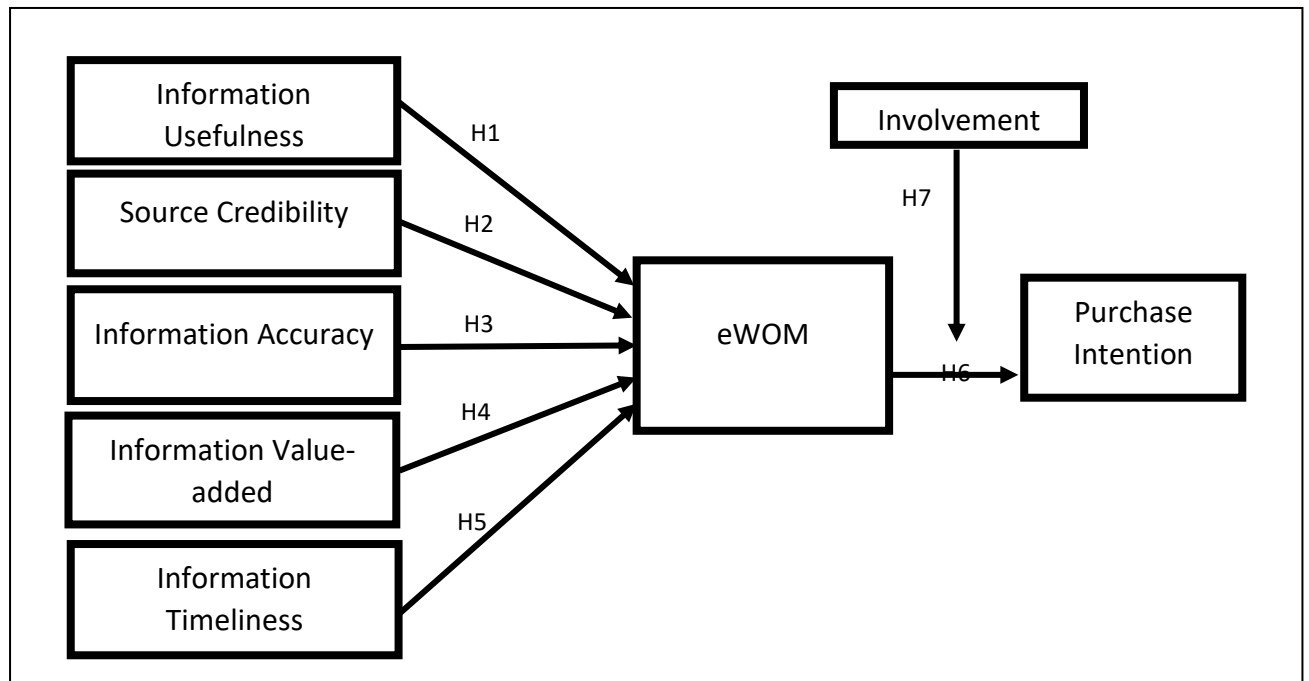


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

Methodology

This study utilized cross sectional empirical study to discover the relationship between independent variables that influence the dependent variable using the moderating effect. Purposive sampling method was employed in order to effectively and efficiently approach the targeted respondent. The research model is depicted in Figure 1. The unit of analysis for this study involves Malaysian adult consumer (above 18 years old) and have at least one social media account with Facebook. This is to ensure that the respondents are able to answer the items in the questionnaire based on their personal experience. Since the exact population figure for this study is not possible to be determined, the minimum sample size for this study is determined by referring to a stand-alone power analysis program known as G*Power (Faul et al., 2007). The minimum sample size is calculated to be 138. However, in order to increase the validity and reliability of the data, 600 questionnaires were distributed and self-administered by the researcher and enumerators.

Questionnaires were distributed across major shopping malls in Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching. The gathered information was tabulated and analysed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science Statistical) software version 24 as well as Smart Partial Least Squares (SmartPLS) in Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) version 3.0. A total of 65 scale items were used to measure the construct in this research. The summary of the purpose and measurement item are tabulated in Table 1.

Section	Purpose	No. of Measurement Items	Source
	Preliminary Questions	2	-
A	Socio Demographic Profile	9	-
B	General Knowledge and Background on Internet, Social Media, Facebook and Airlines	12	-
C	eWOM	19	Goyette et al., (2010)
D	Information Usefulness	4	Luo, Luo, & Bose, (2018)
E	Source Credibility	3	Zha, Yang, Yan, Liu, & Huang, (2018)
F	Information Accuracy	3	Filieri & McLeay (2014)
	Information Value Added	3	Filieri & McLeay (2014)
H	Information Timeliness	3	Filieri & McLeay (2014)
I	Purchase Intention	4	Erkan & Evans (2016)
J	Involvement	3	Yan et al. (2016)

Table 1: Summary of the Questionnaire's Sections

Findings

In this research, the analysis of the data was conducted in two phases. The first phase was involved in the preliminary analysis and data screening analysis. This process is essential to ensure that to meet the initial assumption for further multivariate analysis using PLS-SEM. In general, the characteristics of the data fit the univariate and multivariate distributional assumption underlying PLS-SEM testing of research hypotheses. In the second phase, the two stages of PLS-SEM were applied. The first stage involved the establishment of the measurement models of the latent variables. Having confirmed to the individual item reliability and validity, the next action was to perform the second stage of SEM (structural model) to test hypotheses developed in Chapter Two. In the second stage, the initial structural model was tested with several models in an attempt to achieve the best test model. The structural model was separated into two parts. The first part was to examine the direct relationship. The second part was to examine the moderating effect of involvement on the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. Hence, the orthogonalization approach was to utilize in PLS-SEM as this approach is claimed to be the most appropriate approach to test the moderating effect (Henseler et al., 2010). All hypothesized relationships in all parts were analysed using the bootstrapping procedure. Thereafter, a hypotheses testing was carried out.

To test the significant effect for direct hypotheses, the size of the path coefficients was examined through PLS-SEM Algorithm, and the significance of the relationship was examined through PLS-SEM bootstrapping procedure in the SmartPLS 3.0. The bootstrapping method with 5000 (one-tailed, 0.05) bootstrap re-sampling and bias-corrected confidence intervals were utilized. The results of the hypotheses testing for direct relationships (H1-H6) is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Results of the Hypotheses Testing Direct Relationships

H	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	T-Value	p-value	10 %	90 %	VIF	R ²	Q ²	SR MR	f ²	Supported
H1	IU→eWOM	0.108	0.051	2.035	0.018**	0.042	0.174	1.590				0.013	Yes
H2	SC→eWOM	0.205	0.053	3.788	0.000***	0.138	0.272	2.084				0.036	Yes
H3	IA→eWOM	0.143	0.058	2.494	0.009**	0.067	0.115	2.142				0.017	Yes
H4	VA→eWOM	0.075	0.053	1.356	0.086*	0.007	0.044	2.082				0.005	No
H5	IT→eWOM	0.290	0.060	4.736	0.000***	0.21	0.363	1.919				0.078	Yes
H6	eWOM→PI	0.005	0.044	0.119	0.452	-0.05	0.063	1.001	0.173	0.291	0.073	0.000	No

Note: ***significant at $p < 0.001$, ** significant at $p < 0.05$, *significant at $p < 0.1$ (one-tailed), bootstrapping (5000, N=530)

EA = eWOM, IU = Information Usefulness, SC = Source Credibility, IA = Information Accuracy, VA = Information Value-Added, IT = Information Timeliness, PI = Purchase Intention, IN = Involvement

Source: SmartPLS 3.0

H7 proposed that the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention is moderated by involvement, such that the higher the involvement, the stronger the purchase intention. As shown in Table 3 there is a statistical significance interaction between eWOM and involvement on the purchase intention online airline ticket. Hence, H7 is supported by the analysis.

Table 3: Results of the Hypothesis Testing on the Moderating Effect of Involvement

Dependent = Purchase Intention								
H	Variables	Main Effect		Interaction Effect		Supported	f ²	Size
		Std. Beta	Std Error	T-Value				
	IN	0.173	0.225					
H7	eWOM*IN ->PI		-0.208	-0.046	4.568*	Yes	0.066	Small
	R ²	0.173	0.220		**			
	R ² Change		0.047					

Note: ***significant at p<0.001, ** significant at p<0.05, *significant at p<0.1, bootstrapping (5000, N=530), EA = eWOM, PI = Purchase Intention, IN = Involvement

Source: SmartPLS 3.0

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of the study confirmed that in the context of online airline tickets purchase intention among Malaysian adults Facebook users, four antecedents were found to have a positive and significant relationship with eWOM (i.e. information usefulness, source credibility, information accuracy and information timeliness). Besides, involvement was found to have a moderating effect between eWOM and purchase intention.

The key findings of this study have revealed that Malaysian adult Facebook users value useful information, credible sources, accurate and timely information in Facebook and their purchase intention is moderated by the level of involvement that they have with online airline tickets. The greater the involvement, the stronger the relationship is between eWOM and purchase intention. In other words, Malaysian Facebook users who considers airline tickets to be important, relevant and of concern to them will have a stronger purchase intention. Information usefulness was found to have a positive and significant relationship with eWOM and this implies that when an individual perceives the received information as valuable, informative, helpful and instructive (Luo, Luo & Bose, 2018), the individual will discuss about it in social media sites such as Facebook (Goyette et al., 2010; Wang & Yu, 2017).

Furthermore, source credibility was also found to have a positive and significant impact on eWOM and this indicates that when an individual perceived the source as trustworthy, knowledgeable and believable, he/she will discuss about the information in social media ((Zha et al., 2018). Other than that, information accuracy was also found to have a positive and significant relationship with eWOM in the context of airline tickets purchase intention by Malaysian Facebook users. This finding illustrates that when an individual perceives an information about airline tickets in Facebook as correct, accurate and reliable, he/she will discuss about it in social media platform such as Facebook.

Additionally, this study also revealed that information timeliness has a positive and significant relationship with eWOM in the context of online airline tickets purchase intention by Malaysian Facebook users. This suggests that eWOM will take place when an individual believe that the information is current, timely and up-to-date (Filiari & McLeay, 2014). Two hypotheses of this study were not accepted in which it was found that there is no positive and significant relationship between information value-added and eWOM as well as there is no positive and significant relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. However, this

study revealed that involvement moderates the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. This finding signifies that Malaysian adult Facebook users that have greater level of involvement with online airline tickets will have a stronger purchase intention.

In a nutshell, this study provides several significant implications for future scholars and practically for both industry practitioners and policy makers. The purchase intention literature is expanded through this research, which investigated the antecedents of eWOM as well as the impact on purchase intention. Despite the fact that this study is limited to eWOM in the context of online airline tickets purchasing of Malaysian Facebook users, it is expected to be of value to airline and travel organizations in Malaysia. More importantly, this study contributes to the body of knowledge, specifically to both theories adopted in the study which is S-O-R model and ELM. Additional new knowledge and findings to the literature in eWOM and purchase intention were predicted to benefit both academics and policy makers dealing with social media platform such as Facebook particularly in online airline tickets. Conclusively, understanding on purchase intention of Malaysian adult Facebook users and the antecedents that lead towards eWOM is indeed crucial and beneficial towards both scholars and social media marketers to better comprehend the Malaysian consumer market.

The findings from this study is expected to provide significant practical implications for Asian business as the findings are consistent with the current trend on the need to tap into consumers behavior on social media especially on the highest social media community such as Facebook. It is important to note that, according to Hootsuite (2019), Malaysia was ranked among the top five globally and highest for mobile social media penetration in Southeast Asia in its Digital 2019 survey (Digital 2019: Malaysia, DataReportal.com, 2019). Valuable information in Facebook is not only limited to airline ticket promotion but also include consumer review (Isa et al., 2019), travel tips, currency exchange information, forecasting of future airline promotion, suggestions and tips on travel itinerary to many destinations, car rental information, travel insurance and travelling products (luggage, bags and accessories) to name a few. Statistically, Facebook is ranked as the highest (social category) of websites by average monthly traffic of 163,300,000 as of January 2019 by Hootsuite compared to other social media websites such as Twitter and Instagram (Hootsuite, 2019). Internet Users Survey 2018 by Statistics Department of Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) also reported that Facebook scored the largest social networking users with 97.3% out of 24.6 million social networking users in Malaysia compared to other social medias such as Instagram, YouTube, Google+, Twitter and LinkedIn (Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission, 2018).

Furthermore, Asian airlines and tourism industry practitioners which are mainly airline companies should be aware that Malaysian Facebook users will discuss about any topics related to airline tickets if the information that they found in Facebook is (1) perceived as valuable, informative, helpful and instructive (information usefulness-Luo, Luo, Bose, 2018); (2) trustworthy, knowledgeable and believable (source credibility-Zha, Yang, Yan, Liu, & Huang, 2018b); (3) perceived to be correct, accurate and reliable (information accuracy-Filieri & McLeay, 2014); (4) current, timely and up-to-date (information timeliness-Filieri & McLeay, 2014). It should be also a point to be noted that the findings of this study highlighted that the degree of information concern, importance and relevance that the Facebook users have with regards to the online airline tickets will determine the strength of the intention to purchase airline tickets online (involvement). In other words, if an individual is concern about airline tickets, the higher will be his/her intention to purchase airline tickets. Additionally, if the individual thinks that the airline ticket is important to him/her, the higher the intention to

purchase airline tickets. Moreover, if the airline ticket is considered to be relevant to the individual, the higher the intention to purchase the airline ticket. Therefore, Asian business tapping and focusing into social media users especially Facebook, will benefit from the findings of this study.

On the basis of the promising findings of this study as discussed earlier, much more areas of eWOM remained unknown and may be explored further in future research. Even though this study found that involvement moderates the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention, other possible moderating factors were unknown and perhaps if further explored in future studies, other moderating variables may bring different results and significance in both scholarly knowledge and marketing practice. Future studies may employ moderators such as user experience, social media knowledge, commitment, loyalty as well as demographic profiles as the moderating variables for this study. Specifically, these moderators could be included in future studies to better understand the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention. It is expected that by introducing more moderating variables to the research model, new interesting findings will better equip the understanding on eWOM and purchase intention.

Additionally, future studies may also gauge further on the possible antecedents of eWOM by adopting the research model on a different context. Besides travel industry, other interesting context which are worth paying attention to are mobile food delivery services such as Food Panda, Grab Food and McDelivery, to name a few. Market Watch reported that globally, in 2018 alone, online food delivery market has reached a value of USD84.6 billion. This trend is worth to be explored and studied due to its growing contribution to the gig economy on a worldwide basis. Furthermore, the scope of future study may be expanded to comparison study across different cultures and not only focusing on single nation or country. For example, a cross-culture study between Malaysian consumers and American consumers may yield more interesting findings and noteworthy comparison for global marketers as well as scholars. Besides, other social media platform such as Instagram, Snapchat, Youtube, Twitter and Google+ should also be explored. Most internet users have more than one social media account and apps hence making it even more interesting to know which social media sites influence them the most when it comes to gauging their purchase intention.

Theoretically, this study provides several significant implications for theory. Firstly, the purchase intention literature is expanded through this research, which investigated the antecedents of eWOM as well as the impact on purchase intention. Erkan and Evans (2016) noted more research on eWOM should focus on one specific social media or shopping website or even focus on one specific product type. The present study has empirically verified that information usefulness, source credibility, information accuracy, and information timeliness were found to have a positive and significant relationship with eWOM. These findings have contributed to the in-depth understanding of the stimulus (in S-O-R Model) that leads to eWOM among Facebook users in Malaysia in the context of online airline ticket purchases. This study shed more examples of elements that can be tested as stimulus in S-O-R Model which was developed by Mehrabian & Russell, (1974).

Additional new knowledge and findings to the literature in eWOM and purchase intention were predicted to benefit both academics and policy makers dealing with social media platform such as Facebook particularly in online airline tickets. Contextually, understanding on purchase intention of Malaysian adult Facebook users and the antecedents that lead towards eWOM is indeed crucial and beneficial towards both scholars and social media marketers to better comprehend the Malaysian consumer market. Essentially, this study has

achieved the research objectives and has provided answers to the research questions as well as add to the body of knowledge of eWOM and purchase intention.

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