ASEAN International Sandbox Conference 2025 AISC Proceedings, Volume 7, 2025
http://aseansandbox.org

The Influence of Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) on Brand Involvement and Brand Awareness in the Fashion Sector

Dao Cam Thuy[1*], Le Nguyen Hong Phuong[2], Do Thuy Linh[3], and Phung Thi Huong Giang[4]
[1,2,3,4] University of Economics and Business - Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam
*Corresponding author, Email: thuydc@vnu.edu.vn

Abstract

The fashion industry has evolved from a manufacturing-oriented sector into a platform for expressing lifestyle and cultural identity, where emotional resonance and symbolic value are central to consumer engagement. In the era of digital transformation, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has emerged as a decisive factor shaping brand perception and behavioral responses. This study investigates how different dimensions of eWOM namely volume, credibility, valence, and source influence affect brand involvement and brand awareness within the fashion sector. Using data from 300 valid respondents, analyzed through structural equation modeling (SEM), the results reveal that all three dimensions volume, credibility, and valence significantly influence brand involvement, with valence emerging as the strongest predictor. In contrast, source influence shows no significant effect, indicating that message content exerts greater persuasive power than the communicator's characteristics. Moreover, the relationship between brand involvement and brand awareness is found to be insignificant, suggesting that emotional engagement does not automatically translate into stronger brand recall. These findings extend the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework by clarifying both the cognitive and affective mechanisms through which eWOM shapes consumer responses. From a managerial perspective, the study highlights the importance of emotionally charged and credible content, authentic peer reviews, and culturally resonant storytelling as strategies to enhance brand recognition and consumer connection in the digital fashion landscape.

Keywords: *Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), Brand awareness, Brand Involvement, Fashion sector, Credibility*

1. Introduction

According to Statista (2023), the Vietnamese apparel market reached USD 6.44 billion in 2023, with an expected annual growth rate of approximately 3.54% from 2025 to 2029. The increasing availability of products featuring diverse styles and updated designs that cater to a wide range of consumer preferences, along with the growing demand for fashionable apparel, is driving the expansion of the market. According to Fortune Business Insights (2023), rising fashion consciousness particularly among younger demographic groups significantly contributes to market growth. Consumers are increasingly seeking ways to express their individuality and maintain their personal appearance through clothing, thereby fueling demand for trend-oriented fashion products. Furthermore, the growing number of collaborations with celebrities, social media influencers, and fashion designers continues to accelerate market development. Despite this strong growth, the market remains highly fragmented, unbranded fashion products account for 76% of total retail market value, while branded fashion represents only 24% (Fashion Revolution, 2022). This imbalance highlights the intense competitive pressure faced by fashion brands in the premium and luxury segments forcing them to strengthen marketing efforts, personalize consumer experiences, and improve service quality to build loyalty in an increasingly crowded market (Cam et al., 2025). Digital transformation has also reshaped consumer behavior and brand-building practices, as consumers rely more heavily on digital channels for product discovery, evaluation, and interaction, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has emerged as a critical factor influencing brand perception. Social media content including posts, short-form videos, and user reviews has become significantly more persuasive than many traditional forms of advertising (Thuy et al., 2024). The rapid expansion of features such as Facebook Reels, which surged from 78 million users in 2020 to 800 million in 2023 (Sendshort, 2025), reflects the growing dominance of user-generated content consumption. Similarly, TikTok's interactive mechanisms such as the "Keeping the Streak" feature encourage users to share videos daily, intensifying eWOM diffusion and sustaining

platform engagement. While previous studies mainly examine the general effects of eWOM on purchase intention and brand evaluation, very limited research has analyzed how eWOM influences brand involvement, brand awareness, or customer sentiment in the fashion industry. This gap is particularly significant as creative industries increasingly converge becomes a central component of global branding strategies.

2. Objectives

This study aims to examine the influence of electronic word-of-mouth on brand involvement, brand awareness, and within the fashion sector. By conducting empirical analysis, the research seeks to clarify the underlying mechanisms through which culinary-inspired eWOM shapes consumer perceptions and brand responses. The study also offers practical insights for fashion brands especially emerging and small-scale businesses looking to strengthen their competitiveness through cultural storytelling, user-generated content, and digitally driven engagement strategies.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Literature review

Electronic Word-of-mouth (eWOM) is broadly defined as the sharing and exchange of consumer opinions, experiences, and evaluations through digital channels such as social networking sites, review platforms, blogs, forums, and video-sharing applications (Hussain et al., 2018; Babić Rosario, De Valck, & Sotgiu, 2020; Doi & Hayakawa, 2020). Over the past decade, eWOM has become a powerful determinant of consumer behavior, exerting significant influence on brand perception, shaping both initial and repeat purchase decisions, and enhancing brand engagement in digital environments (Müller-Pérez et al., 2023; Ngo et al., 2024). Prior research highlights that eWOM is particularly impactful when consumers evaluate messages as credible, relevant, and appealing, and subsequently integrate them into their decision-making processes (Müller-Pérez et al., 2023; Ngo et al., 2024).

To explain how eWOM shapes consumer responses, scholars frequently draw on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model originally introduced by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). Within this framework, eWOM characteristics—including message volume, credibility, valence, and source influence function as external stimuli. These stimuli trigger internal organismic states such as emotional reactions, perceptions of brand reputation, or cognitive appraisals related to product categories. These internal states then lead to behavioral responses, including brand recognition, purchase intention, and attachment to the brand (Hung et al., 2023). The S–O–R model thus provides a structured theoretical lens for understanding how eWOM activates psychological mechanisms that ultimately enhance brand-related outcomes. Compared with traditional word-of-mouth, eWOM possesses several unique properties: it is asynchronous, many-to-many, persistent, searchable, multimedia-rich, and rapidly scalable (Babić Rosario et al., 2020; Doi & Hayakawa, 2020). In the eWOM process, three stages are typically emphasized content creation, exposure, and evaluation or adoption reflecting how user-generated content is produced, encountered by other consumers, and incorporated into their decision-making (Babić Rosario et al., 2020).

Brand involvement refers to the level of personal relevance, interest, and emotional connection that consumers feel toward a brand and its marketing communications (Vazquez et al., 2021). Prior research identifies eWOM volume as a key determinant of consumer involvement, as large amounts of brand-related information increase visibility, signal popularity, and trigger deeper cognitive processing (Hung et al., 2023). This aligns with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), which argues that repeated exposure to relevant information promotes greater message elaboration and enhances the likelihood of central-route processing. In fashion contexts where symbolic value, trend sensitivity, and social identity cues are salient high levels of online discussion can activate social proof mechanisms that stimulate consumer interest (Vazquez et al., 2021). Empirical findings further suggest that eWOM volume on short-form video platforms such as TikTok predicts consumer engagement and serves as a critical precursor to brand attachment and purchase intention (Zahrah et al., 2024).

eWOM credibility refers to the perceived believability and trustworthiness of user-generated messages, and higher credibility systematically increases consumers' likelihood of accepting and using online information (Pooja & Upadhyaya, 2024; Verma et al., 2023). Credible reviews reduce uncertainty by enhancing the diagnosticity of the

information environment, a key precondition for stronger downstream responses, and credibility elevates perceived usefulness and information adoption, thereby strengthening the impact of eWOM on subsequent evaluations and actions (Ngo et al., 2024). Extending beyond information adoption to brand-level outcomes, recent research links active eWOM dynamics to customer brand engagement a construct closely related to brand involvement suggesting that credible, adopted eWOM fosters deeper cognitive and affective investment in the focal brand (Srivastava et al., 2025). Moreover, recent syntheses and large-sample studies show that higher eWOM credibility amplifies the effects of review attributes on perceived usefulness and adoption, and in turn, on engagement-related outcomes, providing a clear pathway through which credibility escalates into stronger brand involvement (Hung et al., 2023; Verma et al., 2023; Ngo et al., 2024; Qiu & Zhang, 2024). Credible electronic word-of-mouth on social media and online platforms also increases consumer trust in brand-related information, which strengthens brand involvement and engagement. High eWOM credibility driven by trustworthy sources, message quality, and perceived expertise leads consumers to view brands more favorably, increasing their willingness to interact with, recommend, and remain loyal to those brands (Ismagilova et al., 2020; Rani et al., 2021; Daowd et al., 2021; Tobon & García-Madariaga, 2021).

eWOM Valence refers to the positive, negative, or neutral tone of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) messages shared by consumers about brands, products, or services. Valence indicates whether shared opinions are favorable or unfavorable, shaping how other consumers perceive and engage with a brand (Tardin & Pelissari, 2021; Wang & McCarthy, 2023; Hong & Pittman, 2020). Prior research suggests that positive eWOM valence enhances brand image, perceived quality, and brand preference, which in turn increases purchase intention and consumer engagement, while negative eWOM valence can discourage purchase decisions especially for experience goods and often exerts a stronger influence on consumer attitudes and information diffusion than positive eWOM (Tardin & Pelissari, 2021; Hong & Pittman, 2020). The effect of eWOM valence is moderated by consumer involvement, where highly involved consumers are more influenced by detailed or conventional eWOM, particularly when coming from weak social ties, whereas strong social ties (e.g., friends on social media) may override valence effects (Zniva et al., 2020). Brand involvement is also shaped by trust propensity, and consumers with higher trust are more affected by eWOM valence (Wang & McCarthy, 2023). Additionally, eWOM valence along with argument quality and message consistency enhances initial trust and intention to adopt information, with stronger effects observed among highly involved consumers (Shankar et al., 2020).

eWOM Sources Influence refers to the perceived trustworthiness and believability of user-generated messages, and research consistently shows that higher credibility increases consumers' likelihood of accepting and using online information (Pooja & Upadhyaya, 2024; Verma et al., 2023). Credible eWOM reduces uncertainty by enhancing perceived information diagnosticity, which strengthens usefulness perceptions and facilitates information adoption, thereby amplifying eWOM's influence on subsequent evaluations and behaviors (Ngo et al., 2024). Beyond information adoption, credible eWOM also fosters deeper emotional and cognitive investment in brands, strengthening brand engagement a construct closely related to brand involvement (Srivastava et al., 2025). Meta-analytic evidence further shows that eWOM credibility magnifies the effects of message quality and perceived usefulness, ultimately leading to higher engagement and involvement (Hung et al., 2023; Verma et al., 2023; Qiu & Zhang, 2024). On social media, credible eWOM supported by trustworthy sources, message quality, and perceived expertise enhances consumer trust and increases willingness to interact with, recommend, and remain loyal to brands (Ismagilova et al., 2020; Rani et al., 2021; Daowd et al., 2021; Tobon & García-Madariaga, 2021).

Brand awareness refers to the extent to which consumers can recognize or recall a brand and associate it with a specific product category. It consists of both brand recognition identifying a brand when visually exposed to it—and brand recall, which involves remembering a brand when thinking of a particular category (Masa'deh et al., 2021). High brand awareness indicates that a brand is easily brought to mind in different contexts, thereby increasing the likelihood that it will be considered during purchase decisions (Tan et al., 2022). Recent research shows that eWOM has a significant and positive impact on brand awareness across multiple industries and digital platforms (Pourkabirian et al., 2021; Cheung et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2022). eWOM strengthens brand awareness by rapidly and widely spreading information, increasing brand visibility to potential consumers (Pourkabirian et al., 2021; Cheung et al.,

2020; Makrides et al., 2020), and by enhancing consumer engagement and interaction, which deepens brand knowledge and improves brand recall (Masa'deh et al., 2021; Ningrum & Roostika, 2021). eWOM also builds trust and credibility, as consumers frequently rely on peer-generated opinions when forming brand judgments (Tan et al., 2022; Siddiqui et al., 2021). Furthermore, studies find that eWOM is often more effective than traditional digital marketing in increasing brand awareness and influencing purchase intention (Pourkabirian et al., 2021; Cheung et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2022). Positive eWOM not only boosts awareness but also strengthens brand image and purchase intention, whereas negative eWOM can weaken both (Wang & McCarthy, 2023).

3.2. Data collection

After developing a comprehensive measurement scale, the authors conducted a survey of 305 respondents between the ages of 18 and 44. This age group was selected due to its high level of influence in the fashion industry and frequent use of social media platforms as a primary source of information. All constructs were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Totally Disagree" (1) to "Totally Agree" (5). According to Smith (1993), "sampling survey is a type of incomplete survey," in which a sufficiently large and representative subset of the population is selected for investigation. Such an approach allows researchers to generalize findings to a wider population, thereby ensuring external validity. In line with this principle, the study employed a non-probability purposive sampling method, chosen for its suitability in targeting respondents relevant to the research context.

Data collection was carried out through digital platforms where eWOM exerts a strong influence on consumer perceptions. Social media channels such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter were used as key sources, as these platforms frequently host discussions about food-inspired fashion trends, culinary-themed branding, and influencer collaborations. The sample consisted primarily of individuals who follow or interact with fashion brands that integrate culinary elements into their marketing strategies. In addition, expert insights and industry reports were consulted to enrich the consumer data and offer a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic. The survey was administered over a period of three weeks. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation. Measures were taken to safeguard participant privacy and confidentiality, including the secure storage, separation, and restricted handling of identifiable data. Results are reported in aggregate form only.

Following data collection, responses were processed using SPSS 20, AMOS 24, and Microsoft Excel. Data analysis included assessments of internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha, followed by Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to evaluate the validity of constructs. Pearson correlation analysis and Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multiple regression analysis were subsequently conducted to test hypothesized relationships. Prior to analysis, all data were coded, screened, and cleaned to eliminate errors and invalid responses, ensuring the reliability and accuracy of the dataset.

3.3. Research model and hypotheses

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) suggests that consumers process eWOM differently depending on their level of brand involvement. High involvement leads to deeper cognitive evaluation of message quality and source credibility, justifying the moderating role of brand involvement in the model. When brand involvement and ability are sufficient, consumers process centrally: eWOM credibility and valence are scrutinized and strengthen evaluations (H2+, H3+); when involvement/ability are lower, consumers rely on peripheral cues: eWOM volume and source influence guide quick judgments and still move evaluations (H1+, H4+). These processing outputs consolidate into customer sentiment, which mediates the overall effect of eWOM on downstream brand outcomes (H5+). The authors suggest a research model as below:

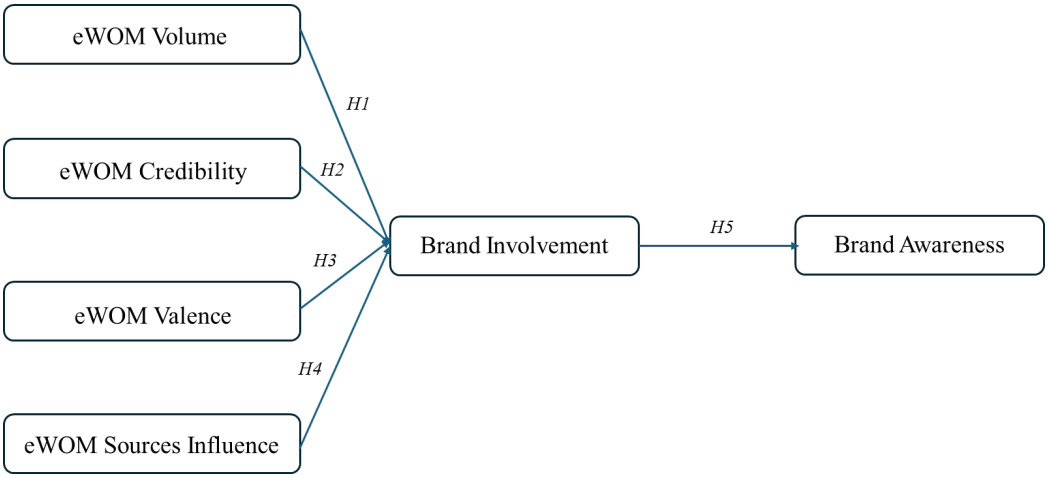

Figure 1 Proposed Model

This research proposes these following hypotheses:

H1: eWOM Volume has a positive (+) impact on Brand Involvement.
H2: eWOM Credibility has a positive (+) impact on Brand Involvement
H3: eWOM Valence has a positive (+) impact on Brand Involvement
H4: eWOM Sources Influence has a positive (+) impact on Brand Involvement
H5: Brand Involvement has a positive (+) impact on Brand Awareness

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Descriptive analysis

The descriptive statistics indicate that the sample is predominantly young, with respondents aged 18–24 accounting for the largest proportion (45.9%), followed by those aged 25–40 (33.1%). Females represent a majority of the sample (63.6%), while males account for 34.4%. Most participants reside in urban areas (90.8%), reflecting the concentration of fashion consumers and social media users in major cities. In terms of occupation, students constitute the largest group (39.34%), followed by office employees (33.77%). Regarding monthly income, nearly half of the respondents (45.6%) earn between USD 200 and 500, while 34.1% fall within the USD 500 to under 1,000 range. Overall, the sample reflects a young, urban, digitally active population aligned with the primary target demographic of the fashion industry.

Table 1 Descriptive analysis

		Categories	PercentSS (%)
Age groups	18 – 24	140	45.9%
	25 – 40	101	33.1%
	41 – 60	58	19.0%
	>60	6	2.0%
Gender	Female	194	63.6%
	Male	105	34.4%
	Other	6	2.0%
Area	Rural	12	3.9%
	Suburban	16	5.2%
	Urban	277	90.8%

Occupation	Employee (Office-worker)	103	33.77%
	Freelancer/Self-employed	42	13.77%
	Student	120	39.34%
	Manager/CEO	40	13.11%
Monthly income	Over 1000$	38	12.5%
	500 – under 1000 $	104	34.1%
	200 – under 500 $	139	45.6%
	Below 200 $	24	7.9%

4.2. General research model testing

The research scales have Cronbach's Alpha ranging from 0.766 to 0.856, indicating that the scales are well constructed and exceed the recommended threshold (> 0.6). The component variables have correlation coefficients with the total variable greater than 0.3 (specifically in the table below). Thus, it ensures that the eWOM Volume variable has standard reliability and the measurement scale is appropriate.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient is 0.741, which exceeds 0.5, indicating that the dataset is suitable for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). Additionally, the significance level of Bartlett's test is <0.001, which is below 0.05, confirming that EFA is appropriate for the research data. The Chi-square value of Bartlett's test is 1348.765 with 66 degrees of freedom, suggesting that the observed variables are correlated within the overall sample. EFA analysis results are in the following table.

Table 2 Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis

KMO and Bartlett's Test		**Independent variables**	**Intermediate variable**	**Dependent variables**	**Moderating variables**	**Controlled variables**
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.741	.693	.710	.698	.663
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1348.765	231.377	297.587	244.791	195.643
	df	66	3	3	3	3
	Sig.	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
EFA Explained Variance		72.656%	68.278%	72.45%	68.278%	66.107%

To assess the model fit of the CFA (Confirmatory Factor Analysis), the following indices are used: Chi-square/df (CMIN/df): A value less than 5 is considered an acceptable level of model fit. CFI (Comparative Fit Index): This index should be ≥ 0.9 to ensure a good model fit. TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index): The model is considered satisfactory when TLI ≥ 0.9. GFI (Goodness of Fit Index): A GFI value greater than 0.9 indicates a good measurement model fit. RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation): A value below 0.08 suggests a high level of model fit.

The CFA results indicate that the measurement model demonstrates a good fit with the survey data. Specifically: Chi-square/df = 2.371, which falls within the acceptable range. CFI = 0.923, exceeding the minimum threshold, indicating a high model fit. TLI = 0.910, ensuring good model compatibility. GFI = 0.902, surpassing the 0.9 benchmark, confirming a good fit. RMSEA = 0.062, below 0.08, validating a high level of fit with actual data. Overall, all fit indices meet the standard thresholds, confirming that the CFA model exhibits a strong fit with market data.

Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are two essential indicators used to assess the convergent validity of measurement scales. CR (Composite Reliability): Measures the overall reliability of the

observed variables within a latent construct. A scale is considered reliable when CR > 0.7. AVE (Average Variance Extracted): Evaluates the extent to which observed variables converge to their respective latent construct. A construct meets convergent validity requirements when AVE > 0.5.

Table 3 Testing the discriminant value between research concepts

Factors	CR	AVE
BI	0.916	0.732
BA	0.949	0.823
VO	0.938	0.794
CR	0.934	0.781
VA	0.924	0.796
SI	0.948	0.785

All CR values exceed 0.7, confirming that the measurement scale has high reliability. All AVE values are greater than 0.5, indicating strong convergent validity of the observed variables.

To test discriminant validity, the square root of AVE is compared with the correlation coefficients between constructs. If the square root of AVE is greater than the correlation between the construct and others, the constructs exhibit good discriminant validity.

Table 4 Correlation and Reliability Matrix

	BR	BA	VO	CR	VA	SI
BR	**0.855**					
BA	0.686	**0.907**				
VO	0.469	0.319	**0.891**			
CR	0.537	0.456	0.539	**0.884**		
VA	0.601	0.494	0.431	0.425	**0.861**	
SI	0.520	0.389	0.412	0.433	0.419	**0.886**

Source: Authors

The results indicate that the square root of AVE for each construct (bolded along the diagonal) is greater than the correlation coefficients between constructs. This confirms that the measured concepts are distinct, ensuring discriminant validity. The CFA validation results confirm that the measurement model meets the requirements for reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity: The model fit indices validate the overall model fit; Standardized regression weights exceed 0.5, confirming that observed variables adequately measure their corresponding latent constructs; CR and AVE values meet the required thresholds, ensuring high reliability and convergent validity of the measurement scales; The discriminant validity test confirms that the research constructs are distinct and non-overlapping. Thus, the CFA model is validated, providing a strong foundation for the next stage of analysis: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

The Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach was employed using AMOS 24 software to test the research model. The SEM results demonstrate strong alignment with market data. The key fit indices indicate an acceptable model fit, confirming the robustness of the research framework and its applicability to industry insights: Chi-square/df ratio = 2.341 (acceptable when ≤ 3.0), confirming model adequacy. Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.962 (exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.95), indicating a well-fitting model. Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) = 0.911 (above the minimum threshold of 0.90), reinforcing model compatibility. Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.954, demonstrating

strong model adjustment. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.057 (below the 0.08 benchmark), supporting model appropriateness. Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) = 0.041, indicating a low model error. These fit indices suggest that the model provides meaningful insights into the interplay between customer sentiment, brand reputation, and brand awareness in response to eWOM characteristics.

Conclusions can be drawn from the results presented in Table 5. Through the results by SEM model, it can be seen that most of the relationships in the research model have statistical significance at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$). Most of the relationships in the research model are statistically significant at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$).

Table 5 Results from the SEM model

Hypothesis	Estimate	P-value (*** < 0,1%)	Result
H1: eWOM Volume has a positive (+) impact on Brand Involvement	.091	***	Approve
H2: eWOM Credibility has a positive (+) impact on Brand Involvement	.132	***	Approve
H3: eWOM Valence has a positive (+) impact on Brand Involvement	.488	***	Approve
H4: eWOM Sources Influence has a positive (+) impact on Brand Involvement	.055	.062	Rejected
H5: Brand Involvement has a positive (+) impact on Brand Awareness	.022	***	Approve

The hypothesis testing results provide important insights into how different dimensions of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) influence brand involvement and brand awareness in the fashion industry. First, the positive and significant effect of eWOM Volume on brand involvement ($\beta = 0.091$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that frequent exposure to brand-related online content enhances cognitive processing and stimulates consumer engagement. This is consistent with the findings of Hung et al. (2023), who demonstrate that higher review volume increases perceived information diagnosticity, thereby strengthening consumer responses. Similarly, Erkan and Evans (2016) show that large eWOM volume creates a social proof effect, signaling brand popularity and shaping consumer perception. Likewise, eWOM Credibility also shows a positive and significant influence on brand involvement ($\beta = 0.132$, $p < 0.001$). This result aligns with the meta-analysis by Verma et al. (2023), which identifies eWOM credibility as one of the strongest predictors of online information adoption. Similarly, Daowd et al. (2021) found that credible online reviews significantly influence purchase intention and brand engagement among younger consumers in Thailand. These findings reinforce the idea that when eWOM is perceived as trustworthy, consumers are more likely to transition from information processing to emotional connection and deeper brand involvement.

Among all the predictors, eWOM Valence has the strongest effect on brand involvement ($\beta = 0.488$, $p < 0.001$). This result is consistent with Tardin and Pelissari (2021), who show that positive eWOM enhances brand equity and purchase intention, while negative eWOM has an even stronger impact on attitudes and information diffusion particularly for experience-based products. Supporting this, Wang and McCarthy (2023) argue that consumer trust propensity increases the influence of eWOM valence on brand image, underscoring the emotional weight of evaluative content in digital environments. In contrast, the influence of eWOM Source was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.055$, $p = 0.062$). These finding challenges influencer-driven persuasion theories, such as those demonstrated by Tobon and García-Madariaga (2021), who found that opinion leaders actively shape consumer decisions. One possible explanation is that in fashion contexts, consumers may prioritize message content and emotional tone over the messenger. This aligns with Zniva et al. (2020), who argue that in saturated media environments, the persuasive power of the source may weaken when content is not sufficiently distinctive. Interestingly, the relationship between brand involvement and brand awareness was also unsupported ($\beta = 0.022$, $p > 0.05$). This suggests that emotional or cognitive engagement with a brand does not automatically translate into higher brand recall. Masa'deh et al. (2021) similarly observed that online engagement translates into brand awareness only when message exposure is sufficiently

frequent. Meanwhile, Dabbous and Barakat (2020) emphasize that visual presence and repetition exert a stronger effect on brand recognition than involvement alone.

Overall, these findings highlight that emotional tone and credibility of eWOM are more influential than source cues, and that brand involvement alone may be insufficient to increase brand awareness without sustained exposure. This supports the idea that engagement and recognition are partially decoupled in fast-paced digital fashion environments. Future research may explore the conditions such as content repetition, platform effects, or visual branding under which involvement more effectively translates into awareness.

5. Conclusions

This study contributes to branding and eWOM literature by demonstrating that different dimensions of electronic word-of-mouth exert distinct influences on brand involvement, with valence emerging as the strongest predictor. This finding extends existing eWOM models by emphasizing the central role of emotional tone in shaping psychological engagement, particularly in symbolic consumption categories like fashion. Moreover, the research enriches the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework by showing that while volume and credibility function as cognitive stimuli, valence stimulates affective processing more strongly. The non-significant effect of source influence challenges traditional persuasion models centered on influencers, suggesting a shift toward content-driven rather than source-driven communication. Finally, the lack of linkage between brand involvement and brand awareness provides theoretical insight into the partial decoupling of engagement and recognition, calling for renewed examination of how brand memory is formed in fast-paced digital environments.

For brand managers and practitioners, the findings offer several actionable insights. First, given the strong impact of eWOM valence, fashion brands should prioritize emotionally engaging content rather than merely increasing volume. Strategies such as aesthetic storytelling, experiential campaigns, and positive user narratives may deepen consumers' psychological connection to the brand. Second, credibility remains a crucial driver of involvement, suggesting that marketers should foster authentic customer reviews, transparent interactions, and peer-to-peer recommendation mechanisms. The limited role of source influence indicates that influencer strategy must evolve shifting focus from celebrity scale to message authenticity, cultural relevance, and community alignment. Finally, since high involvement does not automatically increase brand awareness, managers should pair engagement strategies with consistent visual identity, repetition across channels, and platform-specific amplification to strengthen recall and recognition. Overall, the study equips brand strategists with clearer guidance on how to leverage eWOM more effectively to build lasting brand equity in the digital fashion landscape.

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of eWOM in shaping brand involvement and brand awareness within the fashion industry, several avenues remain for future research. The study's focus on Vietnamese consumers aged 18–44 suggests opportunities to explore cross-cultural or multi-generational comparisons, particularly in markets where fashion identity or digital behaviors differ. Future research could examine platform-specific effects, as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook each foster distinct content formats and engagement dynamics that may influence how eWOM is processed. Additional psychological constructs such as brand attachment, self-construal, or consumer aesthetic sensitivity could be integrated to clarify the mechanisms through which eWOM shapes perception and behavior. Given the non-significant effect of source influence, further studies should also reassess the evolving role of influencers including micro-, nano-, or AI-generated personas in digital persuasion.

References

Babić Rosario, A., De Valck, K., & Sotgiu, F. (2020). Conceptualizing the electronic word-of-mouth process: What we know and need to know about eWOM creation, exposure, and evaluation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *48*(3), 422–448. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00706-1

Cam, T. D., Bich, N. D. T., Van Loc, N., Khanh, L. V., Quynh, A., & Phuong, U. B. (2025). The impact of personal factors on Vietnamese consumers' attitudes towards sustainable fashion and their purchase decisions. *Salud, Ciencia Y Tecnología: Salud, Ciencia y Tecnologia*, *5*, 1375. https://doi.org/10.56294/saludcyt20251375

Cheung, M. L., Pires, G., & Rosenberger, P. J. (2020). The influence of perceived social media marketing elements on consumer–brand engagement and brand knowledge. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, *32*(3), 695–720. https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-04-2019-0262

Dabbous, A., & Barakat, K. A. (2020). Bridging the online offline gap: Assessing the impact of brands' social network content quality on brand awareness and purchase intention. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *53*, 101966. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.101966

Daowd, A., Hasan, R., Eldabi, T., Rafi-ul-Shan, P. M., Cao, D., & Kasemsarn, N. (2021). Factors affecting eWOM credibility, information adoption and purchase intention on Generation Y: A case from Thailand. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*, *34*(3), 838–859. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEIM-04-2019-0118

Doi, N., & Hayakawa, H. (2020). Electronic word-of-mouth: A survey from an economics perspective. *International Journal of the Economics of Business*, *27*(2), 303–320. https://doi.org/10.1080/13571516.2020.1747853

Fashion Revolution (2022). *How transparent are the world's largest fashion brands?* https://www.fashionrevolution.org/how-transparent-are-the-worlds-largest-fashion-brands/#:~:text=How%20transparent%20are%20the%20world's%20250%20largest,evidence%20of%20clothing%20waste%20around%20the%20world

Fortune Business Insights (2023). *Fast Fashion Market Size, Share & Industry Analysis, By Type (Casual Wear, Formal Wear, and Others), By End User (Women and Men), By Distribution Channel (Offline Stores and Online Stores/E-commerce), and Regional Forecast, 2025-2032*. Source: https://www.fortunebusinessinsights.com/fast-fashion-market-112250https://www.fortunebusinessinsights.com/fast-fashion-market-112250

Hong, S., & Pittman, M. (2020). eWOM anatomy of online product reviews: Interaction effects of review number, valence, and star ratings on perceived credibility. *International Journal of Advertising*, *39*(7), 892–920. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1703386

Hung, S.-W., Chang, C.-W., & Chen, S.-Y. (2023). Beyond a bunch of reviews: The quality and quantity of electronic word-of-mouth. *Information & Management*, *60*(3), 103777. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2023.103777

Hussain, S., Guangju, W., Jafar, R. M. S., Ilyas, Z., Mustafa, G., & Jianzhou, Y. (2018). Consumers' online information adoption behavior: Motives and antecedents of electronic word of mouth communications. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *80*, 22–32. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.09.019

Ismagilova, E., Slade, E., Rana, N. P., & Dwivedi, Y. K. (2020). The effect of characteristics of source credibility on consumer behaviour: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *53*, 101736. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.005

Makrides, A., Vrontis, D., & Christofi, M. (2020). An empirical study on the importance of electronic word of mouth in the concierge industry: The case of Cyprus. In *Exploring the power of electronic word-of-mouth in the services industry* (pp. 265-287). IGI Global. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-8575-6.ch015

Masa'deh, R., AL-Haddad, S., Al Abed, D., Khalil, H., AlMomani, L., & Khirfan, T. (2021). The Impact of Social Media Activities on Brand Equity. *Information*, *12*(11), 477. https://doi.org/10.3390/info12110477

Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). *An approach to environmental psychology*. The MIT Press.

Müller-Pérez, J., Acevedo-Duque, Á., Rettig, P. V., García-Salirrosas, E. E., Fernández-Mantilla, M. M., Izquierdo-Marín, S. S., & Álvarez-Becerra, R. (2023). Consumer Behavior after COVID-19: Interpersonal Influences, eWOM and Digital Lifestyles in More Diverse Youths. *Sustainability*, *15*(8), 6570. https://doi.org/10.3390/su15086570

Ngo, T. T. A., Bui, C. T., Chau, H. K. L., & Tran, N. P. N. (2024). Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on social networking sites (SNS): Roles of information credibility in shaping online purchase intention. *Heliyon*, *10*(11), e32168. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e32168

Ningrum, K. K., & Roostika, R. (2021). The influence of social media marketing activities on consumer engagement and brand knowledge in the culinary business in Indonesia. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147- 4478)*, *10*(5), 34–45. https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v10i5.1314

Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1984). The effects of involvement on responses to argument quantity and quality: Central and peripheral routes to persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *46*(1), 69–81. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.46.1.69

Pooja, K., & Upadhyaya, P. (2024). What makes an online review credible? A systematic review of the literature and future research directions. *Management Review Quarterly*, *74*(2), 627–659. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-022-00312-6

Pourkabirian, A., Habibian, M., & Pourkabirian, A. (2023). *Brand Attitude in Social Networks: The Role of eWoM* (No. arXiv:2109.15315). arXiv. https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2109.15315

Qiu, K., & Zhang, L. (2024). How online reviews affect purchase intention: A meta-analysis across contextual and cultural factors. *Data and Information Management*, *8*(2), 100058. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dim.2023.100058

Rani, A., & Itam, U. (2021). Determinants of customer engagement in electronic word of mouth (eWOM) communication. In *Insights, innovation, and analytics for optimal customer engagement* (pp. 196-225). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-3919-4.ch011

Sendshort (2025). *Short-Form Video: Industry Statistics (2025)*. https://sendshort.ai/statistics/short-video/

Shankar, A., Jebarajakirthy, C., & Ashaduzzaman, M. (2020). How do electronic word of mouth practices contribute to mobile banking adoption? *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *52*, 101920. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.101920

Smith, P. L., Liu, Z., & Joss, J. (1993). A study of sampling-variability effects in raindrop size observations. *Journal of Applied Meteorology and Climatology*, *32*(7), 1259-1269. https://doi.org/10.1175/1520-0450(1993)032%3C1259:ASOSVE%3E2.0.CO;2

Srivastava, M., Abhishek, S., & Pandey, N. (2025). Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and customer brand engagement (CBE): Do they really go hand-in-hand? *Electronic Commerce Research*, *25*(3), 1865–1933. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10660-023-09743-z

Statista, 2023. *Apparel market in Vietnam*. https://www.statista.com/outlook/cmo/apparel/vietnam

Tan, P. L., Rasoolimanesh, S. M., & Manickam, G. (2022a). How corporate social responsibility affects brand equity and loyalty? A comparison between private and public universities. *Heliyon*, *8*(4), e09266. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09266

Tan, P. L., Rasoolimanesh, S. M., & Manickam, G. (2022b). How corporate social responsibility affects brand equity and loyalty? A comparison between private and public universities. *Heliyon*, *8*(4), e09266. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09266

Tardin, M., & Pelissari, A. S. (2021). The influence of eWOM valence on brand equity dimensions and on purchase intention. *International Journal for Innovation Education and Research*, *9*(8), 407–423. https://doi.org/10.31686/ijier.vol9.iss8.3309

Thuy, D. C., Ngoc Quang, N., Huong, L. T., & Phuong, N. T. M. (2024). The moderating effects of involvement on the relationships between key opinion leaders, customer's attitude and purchase intention on social media. *Cogent Business & Management*, *11*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2400600

Tobon, S., & García-Madariaga, J. (2021). The Influence of Opinion Leaders' eWOM on Online Consumer Decisions: A Study on Social Influence. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, *16*(4), 748–767. https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer16040043

Vazquez, D., Cheung, J., Nguyen, B., Dennis, C., & Kent, A. (2021). Examining the influence of user-generated content on the fashion consumer online experience. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal*, *25*(3), 528–547. https://doi.org/10.1108/JFMM-02-2020-0018

Verma, D., Prakash Dewani, P., Behl, A., Pereira, V., Dwivedi, Y., & Del Giudice, M. (2023). A meta-analysis of antecedents and consequences of eWOM credibility: Investigation of moderating role of culture and platform type. *Journal of Business Research*, *154*, 113292. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.08.056

Wang, P., & McCarthy, B. (2023). Beyond Positive and Negative eWOM: The Role of Trust Propensity and Individuation in Shaping Consumers' Perception of Brand Image. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, *24*(3), 387–414. https://doi.org/10.1080/15256480.2021.1988881

Zahrah, N., Ruzain, M. F., Sengorou, J. A., & Mat Salleh, N. S. (2024). The Impact of User-Generated Content and Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Consumer Purchase Intention: Consumer Engagement as a Mediator.

International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, *14*(7), 2159-2174. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i7/21981

Zniva, R., Weitzl, W. J., Müller, J. M., & Schneider, A. (2020, May). Types of electronic word-of-mouth and their impact on consumer attitudes. In *Digital Marketing & eCommerce Conference* (pp. 62-69). Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-47595-6_9