

The Impact of Electronic Word of Mouth on Industrial Equipment Purchase Intentions: An Information Adoption Perspective

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Abstract. This empirical study investigates how electronic word of mouth impacts purchase intentions for industrial equipment among 316 consumers in Vietnam. An information adoption model tests effects of argument quality, source credibility, discounting personal information and peer imitation. All factors display significant positive influence on mechanical equipment purchase intentions, with peer imitation exhibiting the strongest effect. Findings imply viral crowd effects can override individual discernment, highlighting imperative for companies to strategically manage online platforms. As users increasingly mimic behaviors, fostering community engagement through reliable content and influencers is essential.

Keywords: Electronic word of mouth, information quality, source credibility, discounting personal information, peer imitation, information adoption, industrial equipment.

1. Introduction

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has evolved from traditional word of mouth (WOM) marketing, becoming a crucial aspect of contemporary business strategies on platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Zalo, Apps, and Web 2.0 (Huang et al., 2011). The shift to eWOM introduces a unique challenge for marketers, as they grapple with limited control over consumer-generated content, particularly in offline environments.

Despite the significant impact of eWOM on consumers' information-seeking processes, the sheer volume of eWOM presents a challenge for users in navigating relevant content (Bansal & Voyer, 2000). Consumer discernment grows as they seek efficient access to information on online platforms with minimal costs. Babic et al. (2016) highlight the substantial impact of eWOM volume on sales, noting that negative eWOM does not consistently adversely affect sales. Instead, reliance on product reviews and various personal communication technologies has shifted trust away from traditional advertising.

In the context of Vietnam, the increasing number of internet users has propelled eWOM to the forefront, prompting a surge in research investigating its operational mechanisms and distinctive characteristics. However, existing studies, particularly within the domain of industrial products such as materials and parts, often lack a comprehensive understanding of eWOM's impact on consumer perceptions and behaviors in this sector.

Online consumer reviews, a significant component of eWOM, wield considerable influence over individual purchase decisions (Shen, Zhang, & Zhao, 2014). While the effectiveness of eWOM in aiding consumer searches has been explored, research in this area remains fragmented (Cheung & Thadani, 2010). Studies, both at the market and individual levels, have investigated eWOM's impact on variables such as product sales and individual purchase decisions (Babic et al., 2016; Fan & Miao, 2012; Hassan et al., 2015; Chi & Nghiem, 2018).

Defined by Andy (2013), WOM marketing involves giving people a reason to talk about a product and creating conditions for conversations. In the digital age, eWOM transcends traditional direct interactions, becoming pervasive, rapid, and challenging to control across various apps, websites, social media, and platforms. Despite its potential for highly effective, low-cost marketing, eWOM remains under-utilized.

However, the benefits of eWOM come with challenges of control and management (Cheung & Thadani, 2010; Thao & Tam, 2017). Research in this domain is crucial for effective product promotion and management. The effectiveness and rapid spread of eWOM play a critical role in promoting products and services, acting as a valuable information source for businesses to understand consumer needs. Positive and negative evaluations can swiftly impact a company's image, attracting or repelling customers. eWOM encompasses both formal and informal communication among consumers and interactions between companies and consumers, distinct from mass advertising communications.

Despite extensive global research on the effectiveness, control, management, and application of eWOM, research on eWOM in Vietnam remains limited. This study addresses these knowledge gaps with the primary objectives of identifying influential factors of eWOM on consumer purchase intentions for industrial products, determining the extent of eWOM's impact, and providing insights into eWOM management for effective product marketing.

In essence, this study aims to explore the impact of eWOM on consumer purchase intentions for industrial products, offering valuable insights for businesses in the mechanical industry in Vietnam, facilitating the effective use of eWOM for cost-effective marketing and efficient information sharing.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Perceptual Concepts

Consumers engage in WOM, a form of direct communication regarding their experiences with products

and services (Jalivand et al., 2011; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The digital counterpart, eWOM, introduced by Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), involves any statement, positive or negative, shared through the Internet about a product or company. eWOM significantly influences consumers' decision-making by reducing perceived risks and information asymmetry, with consumers relying on it for informed purchase decisions, encompassing product feedback, reviews, and online discussions.

eWOM possesses diverse characteristics, ranging from positive to negative or neutral expressions. Communicators include previous customers, current customers, potential customers, or even the brand itself. The subject matter encompasses products, services, businesses, and organizations. Recipients include consumers, readers, and various organizations. This digital realm, existing within the Internet, social media, and various technological platforms, distinguishes itself from traditional WOM, enabling diverse communication methods. The impact and effectiveness of eWOM are significantly influenced by its characteristics, where the volume of online reviews reflects a product or service's popularity, and identifying credible sources, like trustworthy reviewers, is challenging. The conveyed sentiment in eWOM holds weight, with negative eWOM often having a more profound impact than positive eWOM.

Factors related to eWOM communicators involve the credibility and expertise of the sender, central to source credibility. The impact varies based on the recipient's perception and experience, making the receiver's role pivotal. Trust extends to unknown individuals in online communities, highlighting the importance of the sender-receiver relationship.

Beyond these aspects, other influencing factors include consistency and dispersion of product-related discussions across multiple platforms, impacting eWOM perception. The persistence and observability of these conversations influence future eWOM and post-purchase evaluations. Companies leverage word of mouth marketing to promote favorable eWOM, recognizing its potential for enhancing brand reputation. Platforms facilitating consumer discussions contribute to brand loyalty and competitiveness in the digital space.

In this study's context, eWOM encompasses product-related information shared online, such as images, usage details, recommendations, reviews, and emotional expressions. Consumers utilize eWOM platforms to make informed purchase decisions based on others' experiences and feedback.

2.2.Theoretical Framework

Theories of Behavior

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) play a crucial role in understanding and predicting human behavior, particularly in consumer decision-making. TRA highlights the influence of subjective standards on decision-making, with influential figures in a consumer's life significantly impacting purchasing choices. Trust in these individuals plays a pivotal role in shaping decisions, as TRA focuses on shaping beliefs and explaining the inclination to purchase rather than directly driving consumer buying behavior.

TRA asserts that behavioral intention is influenced by three key factors: personal attitude, representing an individual's opinion about a specific behavior; subjective norms, encompassing social pressures from others' expectations; and perceived behavioral control, reflecting an individual's perception of their ability to perform a specific behavior. Behavioral intention precedes actual behavior and is shaped by specific conditions, emphasizing the importance of specificity, stability, and voluntary control.

Building upon TRA, TPB explores the roles of attitude and intention in influencing behavior. It incorporates social norms and perceived behavioral control, with subjective norms reflecting the impact of social support and perceived behavioral control addressing internal and external factors. TPB underscores the significance of attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, providing valuable insights into understanding and predicting behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Both TRA and TPB offer valuable insights into intention formation and its impact on behavior,

empowering researchers and practitioners to deepen their understanding of human behavior.

Models of Adoption

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM; Davis, 1989), rooted in the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), examines users' acceptance of information technology. TAM centers on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, gauging users' confidence in the system's efficiency and expected ease of interaction.

While TAM has historically provided valuable insights, its relevance in today's technological landscape merits examination. The Information Acceptance Model (IAM; Sussman & Siegal, 2013) explores determinants influencing individuals' information acceptance, drawing inspiration from TRA, its derivatives, and TAM. IAM emphasizes beliefs, including perceptions of usefulness and ease of use.

IAM acknowledges the crucial role of individuals perceiving information as useful, drawing insights from Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) Elaboration Likelihood Model. IAM underscores argument quality and source credibility as primary factors determining information usefulness, subsequently influencing information acceptance.

IAM's relevance is affirmed in previous research, such as Thao and Tam's (2017) study on eWOM acceptance in the tourism sector and Chi and Nghiem's (2018) research on online word of mouth impact on purchase intentions via social media.

This research integrates insights from TAM and IAM to comprehend the acceptance of technology and information in the modern landscape, forming a robust foundation for investigation.

2.3.Previous Research

Previous research has extensively investigated the dynamics of collective behavior in technology adoption and continued use. Sun (2009) contributed an in-depth longitudinal perspective on this phenomenon. Furthermore, Lerrthaitrakul and Panjakajornsak (2014) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the impact of eWOM factors on consumer decision-making processes, particularly in the context of budget airlines. Their research delved into these influences. Shen, Zhang, and Zhao (2014) explored information acceptance within online review communities and the role of herd behavior, shedding light on how community members accept and act on the information they encounter. In the specific context of information adoption and trust within Vietnam's tourism sector, Thao and Tam (2017) made valuable contributions to the understanding of information acceptance and brand trust. Additionally, Chi and Nghiem (2018) delved into the influence of online word of mouth on consumer purchasing intentions within the realm of social media, enriching our comprehension of the role eWOM plays in shaping consumer behavior.

eWOM serves as a valuable source of information for both consumers and businesses, taking various forms and containing a wealth of content that aids in consumer decision-making. Consumers turn to eWOM platforms such as forums and social media to gather information for their decisions. For businesses, eWOM offers insights into crafting effective marketing strategies. The importance of eWOM quality and credibility has been well-established in prior studies (Lerrthaitrakul & Panjakajornsak, 2014; Shen, Zhang, & Zhao, 2014; Thao & Tam, 2017; Chi & Nghiem, 2018).

The role of eWOM in influencing consumer purchasing intentions is a powerful tool when combined with other marketing techniques such as guerrilla marketing and viral marketing. However, many Vietnamese businesses have yet to fully harness its potential, and there is a need for scientific grounding in its implementation. In addition to information quality and credibility, the concept of herd behavior significantly influences consumer decision-making. Consumers may utilize information to make decisions rather than synthesizing information to form their decisions. Importantly, herd behavior can lead to shifts in initial intentions and beliefs, thus influencing decision-making (Sun, 2009).

Building upon prior research, Shen, Zhang, and Zhao (2014) introduced the intention factor to their model to explore the eWOM elements influencing consumer decision-making processes. This study aims to further this exploration and provide insights into the effects of eWOM factors on consumer intentions.

2.4. Research Model

In reality, the behavior of others can significantly impact an individual's decision-making process to the extent that it may override their private information. Private information, the data gathered from various sources that individuals incorporate into their decision-making process, may be overshadowed in this context. Decision-makers tend to mimic their predecessors without paying significant attention to their private information (Darban, 2018). Sun (2009) indicated that the herd effect influences various fields, particularly in the age of the internet, technology platforms, and applications, where the herd effect shapes the decisions of other individuals who tend to follow the information they received earlier.

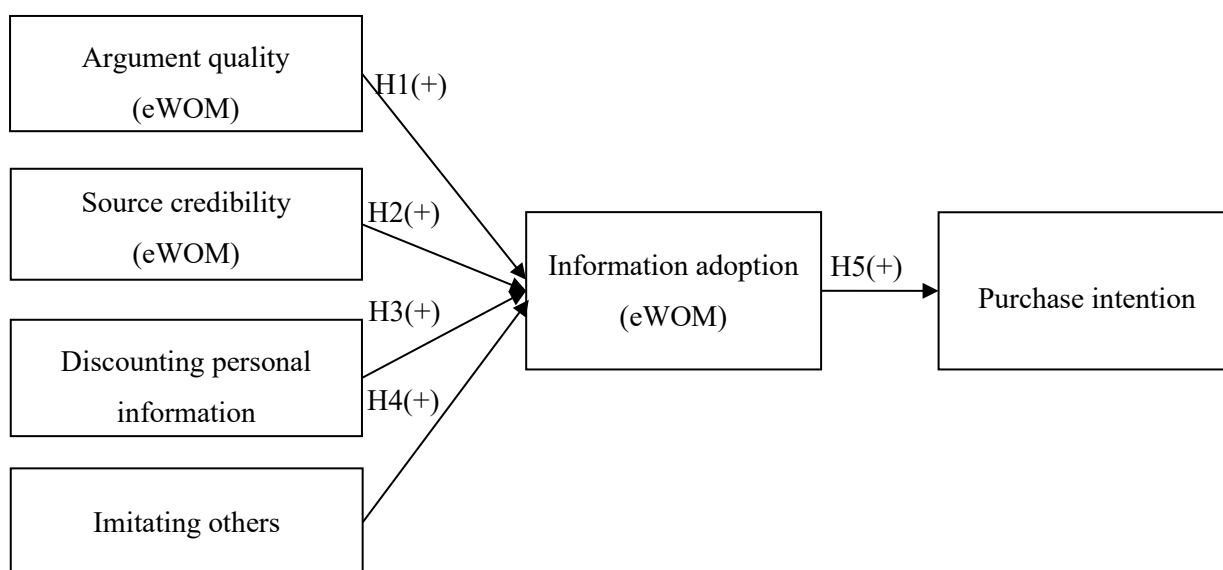


Fig. 1: Research Model

The research model, as illustrated in Figure 1, is built upon prior research concerning information acceptance and herd behavior, particularly informed by Shen, Zhang, and Zhao's seminal study in 2014. The factors incorporated into the research model are derived from this influential study. The research utilized Shen, Zhang, and Zhao's (2014) research as the cornerstone for constructing their research model. While previous investigations predominantly centered on how eWOM influences the information adoption factor, the author innovatively expanded this focus by introducing the intention to purchase factor, aiming to comprehend how consumers' acceptance of information influences their purchase intentions. Additionally, as the role of herd behavior remained largely unexplored in the consumer goods domain, the author introduced this factor into their research model in the context of Vietnam to scrutinize its impact on consumer purchase intentions.

Argument quality (eWOM) encompasses information about products, reviews, evaluations, emotional expressions, and feedback regarding a product or brand, all characterized by accuracy, reliability, and honesty. Source credibility (eWOM) comprises feedback, reviews, evaluations, and opinions from acquaintances, experts, or trusted individuals on a user's preferred platforms. These two factors significantly influence information adoption. According to IAM, argument quality and source credibility positively impact the utility of information, subsequently having a greater influence on information adoption (Thao & Tam, 2017). Consumers rely on reviewers' assessments to mitigate

uncertainty and bolster confidence in their purchasing decisions. They place trust in online reviews from reliable sources, assuming these reviews originate from experts or individuals possessing more knowledge about the product or service than themselves (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). Consumers are more inclined to utilize information from sources they deem reliable, showcasing rational decision-making (Shen, 2013).

Websites and social media platforms facilitate engagement with received information, elevating the quality of eWOM compared to eWOM without comments, responses, or emotional expressions. However, this interaction can yield both positive and negative outcomes for subsequent recipients. In this research, eWOM quality is defined as comments, agreements, or disagreements specific to each eWOM that enhance its quality. The quality of eWOM is positively influenced by the number of responses, likes, and agreements it receives. Both the quality of eWOM and its source exert an impact on consumer decision-making.

H1. Argument quality (eWOM) positively influences information adoption.

H2. Source credibility (eWOM) positively influences information adoption.

The application of information is influenced by two facets of the herd effect: Imitating others and discounting personal information. In online communities and websites, the repetition, numerous views, emotional expressions, and direct interaction with shared information can lead consumers to use online reviews explicitly or implicitly. This implies a belief in the reliability of information, prompting action based on others' choices without meticulous analysis.

Imitating others, a facet of the herd effect, signifies individuals following the decisions or actions of others within a community. This behavior is particularly pronounced if the decision-makers are perceived as leaders, experts, or having made correct choices (Bandura, 1986; Rao et al., 2001). Individuals may rely on both their own and others' information when making decisions. The influence of Imitating Others on technology adoption has been established in prior research, such as Sun's study (2012). Actions aligned with others' information become prevalent when individuals find external information more influential than their own. This influence can be potent, leading individuals to entirely depend on group information, organizations, or communities in decision-making. Online environments, characterized by limited and inaccurate personal information, make individuals more likely to choose based on the majority and accept information from others. When trust in personal information is lacking, individuals seek information from alternative sources or challenge received information. In such cases, external information can alter initial perceptions, making individuals more inclined to accept others' proposals in online information.

The herd effect commonly manifests in online communities, where consumers identify popular products based on the volume of consumer reviews. Research indicates that popular products attract more consumers, creating a positive feedback loop influencing subsequent contributions to online reviews (Escalas et al., 2003; Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). Online reviews are valued recommendations for consumers, impacting trust, initial intentions, and subsequent changes in trust and intentions. Individuals are less likely to deviate from the majority's decision, exhibiting confidence when receiving information from like-minded individuals. Higher levels of imitation result in increased sharing of information and positive comments, augmenting the likelihood of consumers adopting online reviews and following others' choices over their personal information.

Similarly, when consumers discount their personal information, they seek external sources to bolster their confidence in decision-making. Lack of trust in received information prompts individuals to search for alternatives, potentially altering their initial perceptions. Consequently, consumers are more inclined to adopt information proposed by others in online contexts.

H3. Discounting personal information positively influences information adoption.

H4. Imitating others positively influences information adoption.

When consumers accept information from various sources, they trust the information they receive from others is accurate and reliable (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). They have trust in information posted on platforms they frequently use and believe that the information they receive genuinely helps them gain a better understanding of the product they are researching. Information adoption influences the consumer's decision-making process.

H5. Information adoption positively influences purchase intentions.

3. Methodology

3.1.Methods

Preliminary research: This initial phase involved conducting in-depth interviews with both theoretical and practical experts, as well as consumers. The primary objective was to meticulously select appropriate measurement scales, refine the survey questionnaire, and customize the research model to suit our specific context, thereby establishing a solid foundation for the subsequent quantitative study. Additionally, preliminary quantitative research, with 50 consumer participants, focused on assessing the reliability of measurement scales, validating the survey methodology, and gathering feedback on the ease of questionnaire responses.

Formal research: The formal quantitative study involved survey data collection. This phase emphasized evaluating measurement scales, utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), and applying bootstrap estimation to rigorously test for discriminant validity and convergence. Measurement scale reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and scale validation employed Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA).

3.2.Measurements

To align with the current research context, measurements were adapted from previous research and adjusted. Initially, each construct had five observed variables, which were subsequently streamlined to three variables for constructs such as information quality, discounting personal information, and imitating others. Information adoption contained four observed variables. All constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (Table 1)..

3.3.Sampling

A non-probability convenient sampling method was employed to address resource constraints. Surveys were distributed through Google Forms via email and physical surveys at industrial goods retail stores and mechanical equipment shops in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The sample size, in line with the rule of thumb for SEM, comprised 441 survey responses.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1.Descriptive Results

The research focused on individuals who resided, studied, or worked in Ho Chi Minh City, intending to purchase mechanical products, specifically hand tools for daily use. Eligible participants were at least 18 years old. Of the 441 participants, 77% reported using the internet for product information, indicating a prevalent trend in the industrial and mechanical equipment sector. Among the 316 valid responses, 73.6% were male, aligning with the sector's male-dominated involvement. Within the 316 valid responses, the majority (93.4%) belonged to the 18-45 age group, showcasing their relevance to the

research topic. Popular technology platforms such as websites, Facebook, and YouTube were commonly used for information gathering, with 87.4% using two or more platforms. Regarding information sources, 47.3% relied on opinions, comments, and reviews, while 46.7% used user communities, and 39% turned to interest-based groups (Fanpages), highlighting the diversity of eWOM usage. Education-wise, 59.6% had a university education, and 69.6% worked in technical occupations, making the data meaningful for the study.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Argument quality (Park, Lee, & Han, 2007; Sussman & Siegal, 2003)		
CL1: Opinions, comments, and reviews are complete	3.36	0.811
CL2: Opinions, comments, and reviews are accurate	3.33	0.796
CL3: Opinions, comments, and reviews are objective	3.54	0.920
Source credibility (Sussman & Siegal, 2003)		
NTC1: Information senders are knowledgeable	3.17	0.777
NTC2: Information senders are experts	3.24	0.734
NTC3: Information senders are trustworthy	3.32	0.766
NTC4: Information senders are honest	3.51	0.885
Discounting personal information (Huang & Chen, 2006; Sun, 2009)		
GG1: Relying more on others' opinions than your own	2.81	1.025
GG2: If a product has more reviews than the product you like	3.33	0.916
GG3: When the product is more popular than other products	3.56	0.966
Imitating others (Huang & Chen, 2006; Sun, 2009)		
BC1: When the product is on the bestseller list	3.55	0.821
BC2: When the product has been used by many people	3.61	0.834
BC3: When many others recommend using that product	3.81	0.832
Information adoption (Liang, Ho, Li, & Turban, 2011; Zhang & Watts, 2008)		
CN1: Will buy a product after considering the shopping experiences of other users	3.53	0.885
CN2: Will ask other users to provide their suggestions before you decide to buy	3.57	0.815
CN3: Willing to buy products recommended by many other users	3.20	0.994
CN4: Use information to make appropriate brand choices	3.73	0.748
CN5: Use information as a basis for your purchase decisions	3.75	0.768
Purchase intention (Sinh & Hien 2023)		
YD1: Will buy the product when there is complete product information	3.73	0.944
YD2: Will buy the product if it is available in your area	3.65	0.888
YD3: Will buy a product that meets your requirements in the near future	3.94	0.847
YD4: You intend to buy a product that is industrial and mechanical equipment	3.34	1.097

4.2.Measurement Testing

Reliability

The reliability of the measurement scales was assessed using the internal consistency method through Cronbach's alpha coefficient. This analysis was conducted prior to performing EFA to identify and eliminate inappropriate variables. The results of Cronbach's alpha reliability testing indicate that all measurement scales achieved a satisfactory level of reliability when the inter-item correlation coefficients exceeded 0.3. However, two variables, CN3 and YD4, displayed Cronbach's Alpha values that exceeded the Cronbach's alpha values of the total scales, leading to the removal of these variables. The elimination of CN3 and YD4 did not have a substantial impact on the two factors of information acceptance and purchase intention.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

According to Hair et al. (2014), EFA meets the requirements when the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value falls between 0.5 and 1, the factor loadings should be equal to or greater than 0.5, the total variance extracted should be over 50%, and eigenvalues should be equal to or greater than 1. The EFA was performed to prepare for SEM analysis. According to Gerbing and Anderson (1988), Principal Axis Factoring combined with Promax rotation reflects the data structure more accurately.

Table 2. Factor Rotation Matrix

Indicators	Factors					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
CN5	0.886					
CN2	0.740					
CN4	0.711					
CN1	0.667					
NTC3		0.826				
NTC2		0.746				
NTC4		0.721				
NTC1		0.689				
CL2			0.860			
CL1			0.798			
CL3			0.763			
GG1				0.838		
GG2				0.807		
GG3				0.770		
BC2					0.844	
BC1					0.824	
BC3					0.719	
YD2						0.857
YD1						0.800
YD3						0.658

The factor loading scores were all greater than 0.5, with the lowest at 0.658. No variables loaded on multiple factors with close factor loadings, indicating that the factors maintained convergent and discriminant validity during EFA. Additionally, there was no cross-loading, meaning that the items

within one factor did not overlap with items from other factors. As a result, these independent factors were preserved, and the observed variables converged to these distinct factors. The results of the factor rotation showed that 6 factors met the criteria for convergence and discrimination, and all factor loadings were above 0.5. These results provided evidence of the reliability of the measurement scales for use in CFA.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFA was conducted to ensure that the measurement scales demonstrated good reliability before proceeding with SEM. Following Hair et al.'s (2014) recommendations, CFA goodness-of-fit indices included $\chi^2/df < 3$, GFI > 0.9 , CFI > 0.9 , RMSEA < 0.08 , and RMSEA < 0.03 . The results of the CFA showed that the regression weights of all observed variables had $p < 0.05$, indicating statistical significance at the 95% confidence level. This implied that all constructs exhibited discriminant validity, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression Weights

	Estimate		Estimate
CN5 <--- CN	0.782	CL3 <--- CL	0.770
CN2 <--- CN	0.771	GG1 <--- GG	0.772
CN4 <--- CN	0.753	GG2 <--- GG	0.825
CN1 <--- CN	0.756	GG3 <--- GG	0.821
NTC3 <--- NTC	0.796	BC2 <--- BC	0.849
NTC2 <--- NTC	0.776	BC1 <--- BC	0.804
NTC4 <--- NTC	0.722	BC3 <--- BC	0.758
NTC1 <--- NTC	0.686	YD2 <--- YD	0.787
CL2 <--- CL	0.864	YD1 <--- YD	0.844
CL1 <--- CL	0.808	YD3 <--- YD	0.690

Discriminant and Convergent Validity

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should be greater than 0.5, and it is also a reliability measure that reflects the common variance of observed variables computed by latent variables. Convergence is measured using AVE (Nguyen, 2024a; 2024b). Composite reliability (CR) and AVE were calculated utilizing standardized regression weights and correlation data from the CFA results (Table 4).

Table 4. Discriminant and Convergent Validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	Sqtr AVE	MaxR (H)	GG	CN	NTC	CL	BC	YD
GG	0.846	0.647	0.213	0.805	0.852	0.805					
CN	0.804	0.578	0.213	0.760	0.804	0.461	0.766				
NTC	0.834	0.557	0.092	0.746	0.839	0.188	0.204	0.746			
CL	0.855	0.664	0.118	0.815	0.863	0.332	0.206	0.303	0.815		
BC	0.848	0.650	0.132	0.806	0.850	0.363	0.155	0.245	0.344	0.806	
YD	0.819	0.603	0.120	0.776	0.834	0.251	0.346	0.039	0.186	0.236	0.776

The results indicate that all CR values are above 0.7, indicating that the reliability of the measurement scales is confirmed. Additionally, all AVE values are above 0.5, ensuring convergent validity. Furthermore, all MSV values are smaller than the AVE, and the SqrtAVE values are higher than the inter-construct correlations, ensuring discriminant validity. These results confirm that the measurement scales used in the study exhibit convergent and discriminant validity and are suitable for inclusion in the SEM analysis.

4.3.Hypothesis Testing

The results of SEM are depicted in Figure 2. The model fit indices also support the overall model's appropriateness: $\chi^2/df = 2.681$, $p = 0.000$, RMSEA = 0.073, CFI = 0.903, TLI = 0.889. Hence, the model meets the theoretical expectations and is suitable for the market data (Hair et al., 2014).

Table 5. Regression Weights SEM Analysis

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
CN	<---	CL	0.174	0.066	2.657	0.008
CN	<---	NTC	0.189	0.082	2.305	0.021
CN	<---	GG	0.135	0.054	2.488	0.013
CN	<---	BC	0.435	0.067	6.481	***
YD	<---	CN	0.420	0.081	5.165	***
NTC1	<---	NTC	1.000			
NTC2	<---	NTC	1.061	0.093	11.361	***
NTC3	<---	NTC	1.155	0.099	11.646	***
NTC4	<---	NTC	1.208	0.111	10.889	***
GG1	<---	GG	1.000			
GG2	<---	GG	0.945	.069	13.695	***
GG3	<---	GG	0.984	0.072	13.640	***
BC1	<---	BC	1.000			
BC2	<---	BC	1.064	0.074	14.374	***
BC3	<---	BC	0.944	0.070	13.400	***
YD2	<---	YD	0.882	0.071	12.487	***

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
YD3	<---	YD	0.747	0.064	11.657	***
YD1	<---	YD	1.000			
CL2	<---	CL	1.063	0.073	14.613	***
CL3	<---	CL	1.076	0.078	13.779	***
CL1	<---	CL	1.000			
CN2	<---	CN	0.941	0.074	12.730	***
CN4	<---	CN	0.842	0.068	12.446	***
CN5	<---	CN	0.896	0.070	12.866	***
CN1	<---	CN	1.000			

Chi-square=442.296 ; df=165 ; P=.000;
 Chi-square/df=2.681 ;
 GFI=.872 ; TLI=.889 ; CFI=.903 ;
 RMSEA=.073

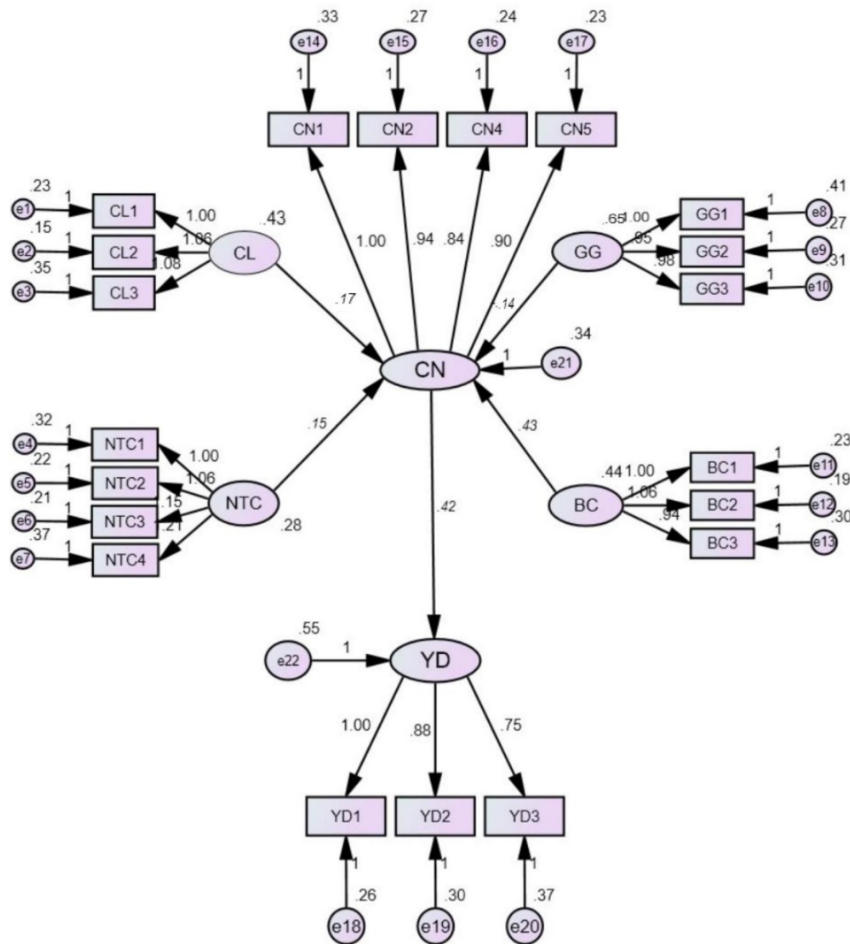


Fig. 2: Results of SEM

The analysis of SEM revealed that all five hypotheses are accepted. Argument quality (eWOM) has a positive impact on information acceptance, $\beta = 0.174$, $p = 0.008$ (H1). Credibility (eWOM) positively influences information acceptance, $\beta = 0.153$, $p = 0.021$ (H2). Discounting personal information has a positive impact on information acceptance, $\beta = 0.166$, $p = 0.013$ (H3). Imitating others positively influences information adoption, $\beta = 0.438$, $p < 0.001$ (H4). Information adoption has a positive effect

on purchase intention, $\beta = 0.350$, $p < 0.001$ (H5).

4.4. Discussion

The research findings confirm the acceptance of the research model and do not reject any hypotheses. All influencing factors have positive effects on the intermediary factor, which, in turn, positively influences the dependent variable, purchase intention. The study reveals that the variables, namely argument quality, source credibility, discounting personal information, and imitating others, have a positive influence on information adoption, and information adoption in turn, positively affects purchase intention. Particularly, imitating others has the strongest impact (0.438) on information adoption.

Furthermore, the research shows that all four factors significantly affect purchase intention in the industrial and mechanical equipment sector, emphasizing the crucial role of herd behavior, specifically imitating others, on consumer purchase intentions. Specifically, information adoption positively impacts purchase intention ($p < 0.001$) with $\beta = 0.350$. This indicates that when consumers accept information, they have a higher intention to purchase products, in line with prior studies (Chi & Nghiem, 2018; Lerrthaitrakul & Panjakajornsak, 2014). This demonstrates that the information received from eWOM on various platforms influences consumers' decision-making processes when purchasing industrial and mechanical equipment products.

Argument quality (eWOM) positively influences information adoption ($p = 0.008$) with $\beta = 0.174$. Quality of information directly affects information adoption, consistent with previous research (Lerrthaitrakul & Panjakajornsak, 2014; Shen, Zhang, & Zhao, 2014; Chi & Nghiem, 2018). This highlights the impact of information quality from eWOM on consumers' decisions to purchase industrial and mechanical equipment.

Source credibility (eWOM) positively impacts Information adoption ($p = 0.021$) with $\beta = 0.153$. Consumers perceive reliable sources and apply the information received to their purchase decisions, as found in the studies by Shen, Zhang, and Zhang (2014) and Chi and Nghiem (2018). However, in this study, source credibility has the lowest impact (0.153) among the four factors affecting information adoption, indicating that consumers do not place high trust in this factor.

Herd behavior, specifically imitating others, significantly influences information adoption ($p < 0.001$) with the highest impact (0.438). This demonstrates the powerful role of herd behavior in shaping consumers' decisions to accept information. Consumers are influenced by the crowd effect and tend to imitate the choices of others.

These findings indicate that consumers, regardless of the information from various sources, are influenced by herd behavior when making purchasing decisions. This is particularly relevant to eWOM information, as consumers tend to imitate others' behaviors, aligning with the results of Shen, Zhang, and Zhao's (2014) study.

5. Conclusion and Implications

5.1. Conclusion

This study offers valuable insights into the impact of herd behavior on eWOM acceptance for industrial purchases. Online imitation plays a crucial role in shaping initial preferences, emphasizing the importance of ensuring content quality and source credibility. Actively encouraging influencer endorsements and fostering community interactions can stimulate bandwagon momentum; however, these intentions may not readily translate into sales, necessitating longitudinal tracking.

Despite limitations related to measurement and sampling constraints, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by aligning with prior studies, notably Shen, Zhang, and Zhao (2014).

It distinguishes itself by highlighting the most influential factor, discounting personal information, among the examined variables. The research reaffirms the vital role of informational factors in shaping consumers' decision-making processes, emphasizing that high-quality and reliable eWOM information significantly influences consumer choices. The substantial impact of herd behavior or the "crowd effect" is underscored, with both imitating others and discounting personal information significantly affecting information acceptance and purchasing decisions. Notably, imitating others emerges as the most influential factor, with $p < 0.001$ and $\beta = 0.438$.

Furthermore, this research confirms the influence of eWOM on consumers' intentions to purchase industrial machinery and mechanical equipment. Factors such as argument quality, source credibility, discounting personal information, and imitating others impact information adoption, subsequently influencing purchase intention. The study evaluates the extent of eWOM influence on consumers' intentions, with all factors exerting an impact on purchase intentions. Source credibility has the lowest impact at 0.153, followed by discounting personal information at 0.166, argument quality at 0.174, and imitating others with the most substantial impact ($\beta = 0.438$). The research underscores the strong influence of the crowd effect on consumers' purchasing decisions.

In sum, these findings emphasize that disregarding the information consumers receive from various sources and mimicking the decisions of others significantly affects consumers' use of eWOM information in their purchase decisions, particularly in the industrial machinery and mechanical equipment sectors.

5.2.Implications

This study has illuminated the influence of herd behavior on consumer psychology, with significant implications for real-world scenarios such as crowd effects in stock markets and products subject to rapid market trends. Additionally, this research advances our comprehension of how high-quality eWOM impacts decision-making within online communities. Building upon previous work, it underscores the substantial effects of two key herd behavior factors: imitating others and discounting personal information. These findings carry substantial implications for industrial product providers, with broad applicability across diverse sectors. Primarily, the pivotal role of informational factors underscores the imperative for eWOM information providers to consistently furnish high-quality online reviews. Effective management of eWOM information, involving the removal of inaccurate or deliberately misleading reviews and the promotion of reliable contributors, is of paramount importance. Moreover, managers should remain attuned to the crowd effect within online communities, as strategies to stimulate this effect can facilitate consumer decision-making. Implementing features that encourage crowd influence enables consumers to discern and act upon the choices of others, based on a wealth of information from various sources. This, in turn, effectively encourages consumers to mimic the choices of others.

For the manufacturing industry in Vietnam, particularly in the burgeoning mechanical sector, these findings hold particular relevance. To maintain a competitive edge, companies must leverage online platforms to effectively promote their products. As consumers transition from passive recipients of commercial information to active sharers of product information, businesses should establish well-structured online platforms with user-friendly interfaces and transparent information presentation. Ensuring website convenience and professionalism is essential, making information readily accessible. By engaging consumers through offers and inviting them to participate as collaborators, companies can enhance customer engagement and loyalty. To manage eWOM effectively, companies should not only selectively retain information that favors their brand but also provide specific and clear responses to consumer feedback and complaints. Addressing these issues appropriately can leave a favorable impression and bolster consumer trust in both the received information and the company's brand.

5.3.Limitations and Future Research

This study focused on industrial products, specifically industrial machinery and mechanical equipment, potentially limiting its generalizability to other product categories. The influence of cultural and community-specific characteristics, survey question phrasing, and the product type under examination may have impacted the research model's results. The study's relatively modest sample size required participants to possess some product knowledge for accurate survey responses. Furthermore, the relatively recent inclusion of the herd effect, encompassing discounting personal information and imitating others, in the research, may not have been fully captured by the wording of survey questions. Lastly, a χ^2/df value of 2.681, falling below 5, suggests that the sample size might not be adequately suited for the research model.

Given these limitations, future research should consider broadening the study's scope to encompass a larger and more diverse sample, enhancing question clarity and specificity for each concept. Furthermore, exploring the impact of the crowd effect on various industries, considering the rapid dissemination of online community information in decision-making processes, should be a focus. Finally, investigating specific eWOM types or platforms and synthesizing their effects could yield more precise insights into their influence on consumer purchase intentions.

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