EXAMINING THE POTENTIAL PREDICTORS OF ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH COMMUNICATION IN EMERGING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES: A CULTURAL COMPARISON BETWEEN TURKISH AND LIBYAN CAR BUYERS

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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that in my opinion the thesis submitted by Mohamed Ibrahim M. TUBAJI titled "EXAMINING THE POTENTIAL PREDICTORS OF ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH COMMUNICATION IN EMERGING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES: A CULTURAL COMPARISON BETWEEN TURKISH AND LIBYAN CAR BUYERS" is fully adequate in scope and in quality as a thesis for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION.

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FOREWORD

I would like to thank my father, mother, and extended family members for their prayers and support. Also, I would like to thank my supervisor and committee members, each of whom has provided patient advice and guidance throughout the research process. Thank you all for your unwavering support.

ABSTRACT

Consumers are highly influenced by brand strategies implemented in Social Networking Sites (SNSs). Therefore, it has become critical to investigate socio-cultural predictors that help engage consumers in opinion seeking and electronic-Word-Of-Mouth (eWOM) through SNSs. This study has two main aims: (1) to investigate the effects of different social variables on consumers opinion seeking behavior in SNSs; and (2) to detect the cultural differences and similarities regarding the effect of social predictors on eWOM. Although the variables such as social capital, tie strength, homophily, trust, and interpersonal relationship have been studied in the context of eWOM, no study has yet associated conformity, innovativeness, collectivism, and individualism with eWOM in the literature. Accordingly, this study aims to fill this gap. Moreover, a cultural comparison between Turkish and Libyan car buyers is made to better understand the effects of different variables in engaging in eWOM. An online survey form was shared by the researcher on Facebook using the convenience sampling method. Data were collected from Turkish and Libyan consumers who intend to purchase cars in the near future. Data were gathered from 252 Libyan and 210 Turkish participants and analyzed performing well known statistical analyses such as factor analysis, regression analysis, t-test, and z-test. Results showed that there were significant differences between the two cultures regarding the effect of the research variables on eWOM. For example, interpersonal influence, collectivism, trust, and social capital had a significant effect on eWOM in the Libyan sample only, while individualism and homophily significantly affected eWOM in the Turkish sample only. However, conformity was the common variable that had no significant effect on eWOM in both cultures.

Keywords: Electronic word of mouth, opinion seeking, interpersonal influences, conformity, innovativeness, individualism, collectivism, trust, tie strength, social capital, homophily.

ÖZET

Tüketiciler markaların sosyal ağ sitelerinde gerçekleştirdikleri marka stratejilerinden yüksek düzeyde etkilenmektedir. Bu nedenle tüketicilerin sosyal ağ siteleri aracılığıyla fikir arayışına (eWOM) girmesinde etkili olan sosyo-kültürel öncülleri araştırmak kritik hale gelmiştir. Bu çalışmada genel olarak: (1) tüketicilerin sosyal ağlardaki elektronik ağızdan ağıza iletişim davranışları üzerinde etkili olan öncüllerin neler olduğu ve (2) incelenen değişkenler açısından Libyalı ve Türk tüketiciler arasında ne tür farklılıkların olduğu sorularına odaklanılmıştır. Bu doğrultuda, araştırma modeline literatürde elektronik ağızdan ağıza iletişim kavramıyla daha önce ilişkilendirilen sosyal sermaye, bağ gücü, aynı türlük/öz benzerlik (homophily), güven ve kişilerarası etki dahil edilmiştir. Buna ek olarak elektronik ağızdan ağıza iletişim kavramıyla daha önce ilişkilendirilmemiş uygunluk, yenilikçilik, kolektivizm ve bireyselcilik yapıları da modele dahil edilmiştir. Bu doğrultuda modele dahil edilen değişkenler arasında Libyalı ve Türk tüketiciler arasında kültürel bir farklılığın olup olmadığı sınanmıştır. Araştırmanın verileri Türkiye ve Libya'da yaşayan ve otomobil satın alma niyetinde olan tüketicilerden elde edilmiştir. Bu doğrultuda kolayda örneklem yöntemiyle araştırmanın anketi sosyal ağlarda araştırmacı tarafından paylaşılmıştır. 252 Libyalı ve 210 Türk katılımcıdan elde edilen verilere Regresyon analizi, t-testi ve z-test gibi çeşitli analizler uygulanmıştır. Araştırma sonuçları, araştırmanın değişkenlerinin elektronik ağızdan ağıza iletişim üzerinde üzerindeki etkilerinin kültürel olarak farklılık gösterdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Örneğin, kişilerarası etki, kolektivizm, güven ve sosyal sermaye, yalnızca Libya örnekleminde ağızdan ağıza iletişim üzerinde anlamlı etkiye sahipken, Türk örnekleminde yalnızca bireyselcilik ve öz benzerliğin etkili olduğu ortaya konmuştur. Bunun birlikte, uygunluk değişkeninin her iki kültürde de eWOM üzerinde anlamlı bir etkisi olmadığı tespit edilmiştir Bireyselcilik ve bağ gücü değişkenlerinin elektronik ağızdan ağıza iletişim üzerinde her iki kültürde de anlamlı etkileri olduğu saptanmıştır. Sonuç olarak, literatürde daha önce eWOM ile ilişkilendirilmemiş değişkenlerin kültürel bir karşılaştırmayla incelenmesi bu çalışmanın özgün değeri olarak ifade edilebilir. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda sosyal ağlar üzerindeki eWOM davranışının pazarlama perspektifiyle incelenmesi gerektiğine dikkat

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çekmektedir. Buna göre, akademisyenlerin, uygulamacıların ve otomobil üreticilerinin, sosyal medya pazarlama stratejilerinde bu çalışmada bahsedilen kültürel boyutları dikkate almaları ve kültürel farklılıklara ve benzerliklere odaklanmaları gerektiği tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Elektronik ağızdan ağıza iletişim, yenilikçilik, kolektivizm, bireycilik, güven, sosyal ağ siteleri.

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ABBREVIATIONS

eWOM	**:**	Electronic word of mouth
CB	**:**	Consumer Behaviour
PLC	**:**	Product Life Cycle
SNSs	**:**	Social netwoking sites
EKB	**:**	Engel. Kollat and Blackwell model
OS	**:**	Opinion Seeking
OL	**:**	Opinion Leadership
SMI	**:**	Social Media Intensity
BI	**:**	Brand Image
PI	**:**	Purchase Intention
CSR	**:**	Corporate Social Responsibility
EFA	**:**	Exploratory Factor Analysis

LIST OF DEFINITIONS

Word of mouth   Any unofficial Telecommunications addressed to other consumers about the use of the property or properties of certain prudcuts or their vendors.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth   Today's new form of online WOM communication that could carry positive or negative impression about a product, service or company.

Consumer Behavior   The pattern the consumer uses in his behavior to research, purchase, use or evaluate goods, services and ideas that are expected to satisfy his needs and desires.

Social Network Sites   Web-based services which allow individuals to create a general or semi- general profile within a restricted system, formulate a roster of other users with whom they share a connection, view and experience their roster of contacts and those made by others within the system.

Facebook   Is a website designed to be used by people associated with a (social network) a term that sociologists use to refer to the structure of interactions of a collection of people.

Interpersonal influence   The operation by which relationship partners influence and change each other's thoughts, behavior, and feelings.

Conformity   Conformity refers to the act of changing one's behavior to match the responses of others.

Innovativeness   It is a creative work done on a systematic basis to increase the repository of knowledge, including knowledge of man,

culture and society, and to use this repository of knowledge to devise new implementations.

Individualism The people with individualizim values tend to see themselves as independent from others and generally act Depending on to personal attitudes and preferences.

Collectivism The people with collective values see themselves as interconnected with others and usually act based to social standards.

Trust It is the desire of one of the parties to be subject to the work of another party based on the expectation that the other party will perform a certain procedure that is important to the trustee, regardless of the ability to control or monitor the other.

Tie Strength It is a combination of the amount of time, emotional intensity, intimacy "mutually confidence" and mutual services that characterize the relationship.

Homophily It is the readiness of people to search for or attract individuals who are similar to them.

Opinion seeking Opinion Seeking occurs when people seek and then follow the advice of opinion leaders.

GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH

Lately, the influence of eWOM communication on consumers' buying behavior has increased drastically. The subject of this research is to investigate the effects of social-relationship variables, as predictors of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) in a cultural context. Accordingly, the scope of this study includes consumers from two different countries, Libya and Turkey. It is aimed, to understand the similarities and differences between two consumer groups through the lens of cultural comparison.

PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the predictors of eWOM and make a cultural comparison between Turkish and Libyan car buyers. Previous studies have associated eWOM with only five cultural variables, namely social capital, tie strength, trust, homophily and interpersonal influence. This study added four more social-cultural variables to fill this gap in the list of determinants of eWOM. These new variables were collectivism, individualism, conformity and innovativeness. Moreover, this is the first study to compare the effects of eWOM on the buying behavior of Turkish and Libyan consumers, therefore it is of special importance to fill this major gap in the literature on the subject. Moreover, based on the existing literature, no cultural comparison study between the effect of eWOM on Turkish and Libyan consumers buying behavior.

The Importance of the Research

1. The influence of eWOM has been in the interests of academics and all industries for years. Theoretically, this study helps researchers to better understand cultural dimensions which affect eWOM communication behaviors.
2. This study emphasizes the critical importance of e-WOM communication on SNSs. With the new communication technologies, eWOM has become increasingly effective in influencing consumer buying decision, and this study is at the heart of the subject.

3. It will be important for academics to help them understand what influences the buying behavior of consumers, so that consequently they will set their research directions accordingly.

4. It is also considered crucial for marketing practitioners as it will help them improve or optimize their marketing activities in SNSs.

METHOD OF THE RESEACH

This research is conducted based on quantitative research techniques and survey method to analyze how consumers' opinion seeking behaviors are affected by social variables. Based on the objective and nature of this study, previously validated scales from literature were used to design a questionnaire to measure the hypothesized relationships between research variables. In addition to those scales, the questionnaire also contained information about participants' characteristics The Seven-points Likert scale was used to measure participants' responses toward those variables. Although, scales were already verified and tested for their reliability and validity, the last two factors were investigated as shown in the third chapter. Detailed information regarding the research methodology is given in Chapter 3.

HYPOTHESES OF THE RESEARCH / RESEARCH PROBLEM

Research Questions:

RQ1: Which social variables influence consumers engagement in electronic word of mouth in social network sites?

RQ2: What are the cultural differences regarding research variables between two cultures?

Research Hypotheses:

Since rationale for all hypotheses were broadly discussed in Chapter 3, hypotheses are only shown here without discussing their theoretical backgrounds.

H1: Interpersonal influences positively affect eWOM behavior in SNSs.
H_{1a}: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between interpersonal influence and eWOM communication.

H2: Conformity positively affect eWOM in SNSs.

H_{2a}: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between conformity and eWOM communication.

H3: Innovativeness positively affect eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H_{3a}: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between innovativeness and eWOM communication.

H4: Collectivism positively affect eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H_{4a}: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between collectivism and eWOM communication.

H5: Individualism negatively affect eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H_{5a}: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between individualism and eWOM communication.

H6: The level of trust positively affects eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H_{6a}: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between trust and eWOM communication.

H7: The level of tie strength positively affects eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H_{7a}: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between tie strength and eWOM communication.

H8: Social capital positively affect eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H_{8a}: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between social capital and eWOM communication.

H9: Homophily positively affect eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H_{9a}: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between collectivism and eWOM communication.

H10: Socio-cultural variables differ by culture.

H10.1. Interpersonal influence differs by culture.

H10.2. conformity differs by culture.

H10.3. Innovativeness differs by culture.

H10.4. Collectivism differs by culture.

H10.5. Individualism differs by culture.

H10.6. Tie strength differs by culture.

H10.7. Trust differs by culture.

H10.8. Social capital differs by culture.

H10.9. Homophily differs by culture.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The questionnaire was initially prepared using Google form, an online survey development tool, given that the platform's usefulness such as lower costs, quick responses and a geographically unrestricted sample. The survey form consisted of previously tested and validated measures. In order to collect data, the researcher shared it on Facebook using the convenience sampling method. Six hundred (600) invitation messages were sent randomly to Facebook members (Turkish & Libyan). They were asked to share this message with their own social networks. The target sample composed of those who were active online in August 2019. Data were collected in a three-weeks period beginning on first of September 2019. The total received and completed questionnaire were four hundred sixty-two (462). They were two hundred and fifty-two (252) Libyan and two hundred and ten (210) Turkish participants. Sample size was enough considering the z-value.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS / DIFFICULTIES

Scope of the Research

The study wasa conducted to investigate the effect of the social cultural variables - interpersonal influence, conformity, innovativeness, collectivism, individualism, trust, tie strength, social capital and homophily on eWOM behavior of car buyers. Moreover, we investigated whether there is a cultural eWOM related differences between Libyan and Turkish consumers. Also, we checked the moderating role of culture in the relationship between independent variables and eWOM communication.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although, the researcher replied on current literature when considering the framework of this study, there were some limitations. A possible limitation was that the study focused on participants from Facebook platform only. However, different social media platforms should focus on different social media platforms. For example, Arab countries mainly rely on Facebook platform (Reyaee & Ahmed, 2015). On contrary, Turkish people use many other platforms besides Facebook. It is known that the type of

social networking sites affect user behaviors (Gentile, Twenge & Freeman, 2012). From this point of view, we strongly recommend future studies on different SNSs.

The second limitation is quantitative portion of this study. Therefore we believe that the study results should be supported using qualitative research methods such as focus groups, netnography and in-depth interviews. Focus group method is usually conducted to gain in-depth insights about consumers' experiences and beliefs regarding certain issues. A focus group can be conducted to unravel emotions and feelings toward certain car brands in different cultures (Glitz, 1997). Online netnography is another qualitative research approach that can be used to interpret participants-generated content in different SNSs to provide authentic examples of experience-articulating behavior (Chung & Kim, 2015). Moreover, in-depth interviews are vital to demonstrate the most influential factors affecting consumers' engagement in e WOM activity (L. Yang, Fam, & Richard, 2014). Those in-depth interviews are expected to uncover participant's attitude, brand loyalty, affective commitment, and perceived value of any product or brand (L. Yang et al., 2014). Consequently, the study suggests using the above-mentioned research methods for more reliable findings.

The third limitation was that the researcher focused on car buyers' opinion seeking behavior. The aim was to find out social relationship factors that affect car buyers' involvement in eWOM in SNSs. Future research should focus on different product/service types.

The fourth limitation is about the culture of the respondents. Since we focused on Turkish and Libyan consumers' behaviors our results cannot be generalized on other cultures. We believe that conducting further comparison studies between eastern and western cultures would be beneficial. This is because, eWOM communication influence exceed traditional WOM by many dimensions. It is considered more scalable, diffuse much faster, cheaper than conventional WOM. It is also, (eWOM) more measurable, persistent, accessible when compared with traditional WOM. For that also, conducting eWOM based studies would be useful for academics, marketers and practitioners.

CHAPTER ONE

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH

1.1. Introduction

Consumer behavior is the science to understand how individuals, groups or institutional buyers choose, purchase, utilize products or services to meet their needs and desires (Vinerean et al., 2013) . Consumer behavior, as a research field and discipline, studies individuals' actions in the market environment based on their motives. Human social behavior is the attitude or intentions that reflect personal behavior of individuals and/or groups in different settings, including the that during the purchasing process. Vinerean et al. (2013) mentioned that consumer behavior can be highly influenced by different cultural factors as well as market factors. Scholars all over the world have extensively studied the subject of consumer behavior and grouped the factors affecting it into market, personal, psychological, situational, social and cultural. Market related factors are about the ways the product is designed, priced, packaged, promoted, placed and distributed. Personal factors are about demographical information such as age, gender, level of their education and annual income. Psychological factors also influence how individuals react to certain products or services, and they influence consumers' buying motives, their perception and attitude about a certain product or service. On the other, situational factors do not come from the consumer themselves. Instead, they are external factors such as environment, the surrounding atmosphere and/or social context at the time of purchase. In this study, the focus is on social and cultural factors. Social factors are about consumers' social status, their reference groups and families, while cultural factors are about consumer's preferences, basic values, needs, wants, behavior and perceptions about a product or service (Bowman & Narayandas, 2001).

Consumer behavior is not static but it changes over time based a number of factors such as consumers' age, preferences, social status, increasing level of income or education. It also changes from one product to another; for example, a consumer might be willing to spend several hundred dollars on a smart phone from a certain brand with certain specifications while at the same time refusing to spend half of that money on

another phone from different brand but with same or even better specifications. Such discrepancies mean that a thorough understanding of consumer behavior is of very high priority for marketing firms and academics. Consumer behavior also changes from one region to another, highlighting the subject at the heart of this study; investigating cultural predictors of eWOM in social networking sites.

These factors normally influence consumer behavior through various ways, including through the information transmitted to consumers from their surroundings. This information is known in the market as word of mouth. Due to the recent advancements in communication technology, it become essential to give it a specific another term that reflects its influence and world-wide spread. It is known as electronic word of mouth or eWOM for short. Through eWOM consumers have influenced companies' production policies and marketing activities because of their online reviews, comments and complaints. Nowadays organizations are only able to design their marketing strategies through understanding their consumers behavior by taking into account the eWOM predictors.

Recently, Social networking websites (SNSs) such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook are considered one of the most popular social communication platforms that attract thousands of users around the world (Paul, Baker, & Cochran, 2012) . This means that product and service promotions are no longer restricted to traditional word-of-mouth marketing nor to conventional marketing. Instead, they are done through social media platforms, blogs and online testimonials where the power to express their opinions freely belong to the individual consumers(Subramanian, 2018) . Because SNSs have turned into a world-wide-global phenomenon and gaining popularity all over the world, it has become essential to capitalize on this phenomenon (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). Networking, conversation, and cooperation provides great opportunities for users to participate actively in one to one product suggestions and word-of-mouth based on eWOM (Chu & Kim, 2011). Consequently, marketers around the world have increased the usage of product-focused eWOM strategies to form strong ties and boost users involvement in their brands evaluations (Smith, Coyle, Lightfoot, & Scott, 2007).

The notion of eWOM publicity can be either negative or positive. This means that it could be catastrophic to a product or service if the consumers' requirements, needs

and voices are not heard and taken into account. When people receive advice from their acquaintances or friends on social media, they can make wise purchasing decisions about products of their choice (Poturak & Turkyilmaz, 2018). Lam, Lee, and Mizerski (2009) stated that through understanding the influence of cultural determinants on eWOM, managers will be better prepared to use this new online tool for their promotional programs.

Consumer behavior is influenced by eWOM predictor factors from which an impression is formed about certain product or service. Consequently, this impression may turn into a trend of acceptance or rejection of that product or service (Wirtz & Chew, 2002).

Lately, with advancement of communication technologies and internet cloud, it is not possible to imagine any marketing strategy separated from social networking platforms (SNSs). With the rise of web and telecommunication technology, SNSs have become the global electronic WOM (eWOM) hubs to share brand-related data about certain products' quality, price and position (W.-K. Chen, Huang, & Chou, 2008). For that, it is crucial to use SNSs as media for eWOM, a topic that is the center of the current research (Paul et al., 2012) (Y. Chen & Xie, 2008) . The product of choice for this dissertation is cars and the areas of interest are Turkey and Libya because the research related to this particular topic in these two countries is either scarce or non-existent. Therefore, this study aims to find out social relationship factors that affect consumers' involvement in eWOM in SNSs in Libya and Turkey.

1.2. Consumer Behavior: Historical Background

The antecedents of studies on consumer behavior date back to about 300 years ago with Nicholas Bernoulli. After a long pause, the field started fresh after the World War II as the world witnessed an unprecedented economic growth by using newly developed production methods (Sheth, 1985). John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern introduced the method of measuring consumer preferences in the early 20th century. Their study provided explicit measures and behavioral factors for testing and validating alternative preference models.

A brief search on consumer behavioral history clearly shows that it is intimately intertwined with marketing history. Recently, marketers have shifted their focus from classical marketing to consumer behavior-based marketing. During the last 25 years, consumer behavior has considerably changed as it is no longer determined strictly by product/service quality or price, but instead it is mainly dependent on consumer reviews, comments and suggestions (Voinea & Filip, 2011). Table 1 shows steps undergone by the idea of consumer behavior since the term was coined down and it was set up as a science. The need for legislations that regulate the relationship between buyers and sellers pushed academics and stakeholders to intervene and put rules for it. Consumer behavior is the study of how consumers, whether as individuals, groups or organizations, decide to spend the resources they have to acquire a product or service (Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2012). In addition, the purchasing behavior and consumer's interest is developed, and proved by historical development of the concept of marketing.

Table 1. The stage of historical development on consumer purchasing behavior.

Stage	Time phase	Distinctive position of the stage
Production orientation stage	Before 1920	Good product sells itself
Sales orientation stage	Before 1950	Good advertising, creative and personal selling will overcome resistance and convince customers to buy
Marketing orientation stage	The 2nd half of the 20th century	The consumer at the center. They discover their needs and fulfill them
Social marketing stage	After the 2nd half of the 20th century	Highlight social responsibility for marketing

Source: (Swaidan & Ibrahim, 2006)

In the past, there was no hardship in identifying buyers because of their closeness to the production sites. But nowadays, marketing a product or service has drawn the attention of marketers' research and development through understanding consumer behavior:

1. The nature of the current economic process in which the consumer is a key element.
2. Accepting that consumer needs are the most important factors in marketing campaigns.

3. High failure rates among many new products due to lack of understanding of the behavior of consumers regarding enterprises.

4. The elements in the surrounding environment which affect the organizations and often determine their survival in the market, including demographic growth, high level of education, increasing leisure time and the emergence of new thoughts.

5. In addition, the need for most companies to enter foreign markets has increased especially after the fall of communist regimes in parts of current European Union and other Eastern European countries (Abdel Hamid, 2000).

1.3. Factors Affecting Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior includes a series of mental and physical processes that continue before, during and after the purchase (Mirzaei & Ruzdar, 2010). It is affected by a set of variables that have been studied by marketers for ages. According to some, those factors are classified into psychological, social, cultural, and personal Figure 1 However, according to other marketers they are classified into internal and external factors (Ramya & Mohamed Ali, 2016) . This classification will be followed in the current study. They are explained in more details below.
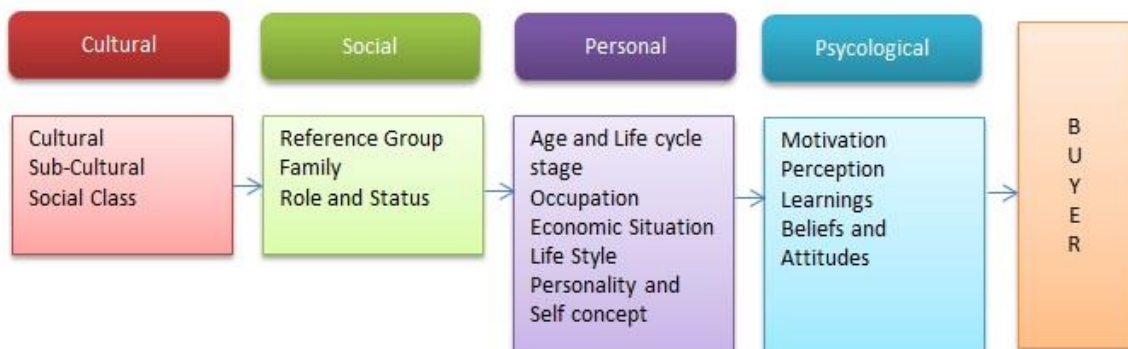

Figure 1. Factors Affecting on Consumer Behavior.

Source: https://relivingmbadays.wordpress.com/2013/01/25/factors-influencing-consumer-behavior/

1.3.1. Internal Factors

1.3.1.1. Motives

A motive can be simply defined as the desire to achieve or do something. Many theories related to human motivation have been introduced, the most famous of them

being that of Abraham Maslow which is also known as Maslow's pyramid of needs, and Sigmund Freud. However, each have interpreted those needs differently for marketing and consumer behavior analysis. Maslow categorized those needs into five levels and ranked them in the form of a pyramid (Seeley, 1992) and according to him, \an individual will be feeling the pressure to do something only if he or she is motived enough based on their motive threshold. However, according to the Freudian motivation theory that was brought up by Sigmund Freud, it is suggested that unconscious psychological forces, motives and hidden desires shape the personal behavior including their purchasing patterns.

During the early 1880s, the term motivation first crept into psychologists' vocabulary (Forgas, Williams, Laham, & Von Hippel, 2005). Later, motivation was intensively studied and was used for all types of business. Also, the thought about WOM was mentioned many times as being an off-the-cuff and non-commercial sort of person-to-person communication between an opinion leader and an opinion seeker about a product, service or a company. Motivation is described as the underlying forces which induce people to follow a specific behavior, that is, a need or desire or anything that leads a person to behave in certain ways (Abdel Hamid, 2000).

 On the other hand, Abdel Hamid classified motivation into four categories; First, product involvement, such as reducing the tension or excitement due to use of the products. Second, self-enhancement, such as drawing attention, showing connoisseurship and looking for approval. Third, message involvement, such as sharing distinctive and attractive advertisement or promotional messages. And fourth, other involvement, such as assisting other people (Shen, Huang, & Li, 2016).

1.3.1.2. Perception

The idea that a consumer creates in his/her mind about a certain product or service is called perception. It is considered a major factor to be utilized by marketers due to its influences on consumer behavior (Fill, 2002). The image engraved in the consumer's mind about a specific product is due to various pieces of information collected from different sources, including WOM (Abdel Hamid, 2000). However, that image is significantly affected by promotions, advertisements, social media feedback,

consumer reviews, etc. Therefore, a consumer's decision to buy a product is influenced by many thoughts that are constantly floating in his/her mind.

1.3.1.3. Learning

Learning is a type of behavior that rises from past experiences and is affected by our human needs, external stimuli, small cues and reinforcement (İnankul, 2016). Learning is the set of changes in the behavior of a person towards a response under the influence of his experiences or his view about marketing activities (Abdel Hamid, 2000).

Every time a consumer buys a product, he/she learns something new about it. Over time, more and more knowledge is acquired and that person could even achieve the level of an expert in one or more particular products. The leaning process could happen through conditional or cognitive process. Positive learning about certain products can lead to consumer loyalty and consequently recommending that product or service to others in the surrounding environment, a phenomenon that is very common in SNSs through eWOM (Janiszewski & Meyvis, 2001).

1.3.1.4. Beliefs and Attitudes

According to Gvili and Levy (2016), beliefs and attitudes are acquired by experiencing various events, actions and all types of scenarios one can face in his/her own life. Also, Makanyeza (2016) mentioned that beliefs and attitudes, whether conscious or unconscious, do affect people's buying behavior. Belief can be defined a descriptive idea or image a person has about anything he/she think of. They also defined attitude as a specific position to respond to an event or group of events, commodity or products which provides either satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Our attitudes have a major role in the purchasing decisions, especially in determining the available choices. Consumers are different in their acceptance of the available information about different goods that are offered by the companies. Therefore, some products may find wide acceptance while others may be outrightly rejected, such as the positive attitude some consumers have towards large cars but not towards the smaller one (Abdel Hamid, 2000). Attitudes have a number of specifications (Fotis, 2015):

1. Attitudes are acquired through an individual's experiences and his/her direct interaction with the surrounding environment or through interaction in social media by word of mouth.

2. Attitudes can be directed towards general phenomena, or towards specific products and brands.

3. Attitudes can be either positive or negative, and they can be strong or weak; therefore, you may strongly desire or despise a product.

4. Attitudes are also classified according to specified by firmness and may be difficult to change quickly. They are also characterized by generalization, such as the case when a person creates a negative attitude against a product and then generalizes it over all the products of the same brand.

1.3.2. External Factors

1.3.2.1. Culture

According to , culture is a vital element of a community that differentiates it from other cultural groups. The underlying elements of each culture are their values, language, myths, customs, rituals, laws, and artifacts, or products that are transmitted from one generation to the next (Fotis, 2015). Other scholars have defined culture as a vital and influential element that determines the behavior of individuals and the wider society. In other words, culture provides individuals with ideas, values, habits and standards that govern their behavior and attitudes towards goods and services to satisfy their needs (Abdel Hamid, 2000). Surprisingly, scholars have proved that culture does affect consumer behavior which in turn is reflected on buying behavior. Jawad (2018) stated that culture with its unique characteristics varies from tribe to another, from one region to another and from one country to another. However, some cultures tend to be strong and influential, therefore it is important for marketers to have a sound understanding of the cultures they operate in. If marketers do not grasp the culture properly, they would be like someone living in a foreign country and trying to have an important discussion without knowing the local language.

1.3.2.1.1. Cross-Culture

The term cross-cultural is used when a comparative study is conducted across multiple cultures for the purpose of understanding how people behave and what are the differences and similarities between them. Any form of interaction or communication between two or more cultures is called cross-culture (Nolcheska, 2017). The subject of cross-culture is a worldwide issue and scholars have analyzed how consumers of two or more cultures behave differently or similarly towards certain issues. Additionally, it is a major scientific field for marketers as well as academics (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2012). To understand cultural dimensions, Geert Hofstede developed a theory called Cultural Dimensions Theory (Hofstede, 2001) which explains cross culture differences and both within and across countries. This theory was designed to help business people comprehend how to conduct business in different cultures (Hofstede, 2001).

In order to understand the concept of communication, one must first know that it is the process of transmitting information from a source to a receiver. It is the image that another creature understands and interprets when it receives a piece of information. Communication includes sending verbal and nonverbal messages and it is a cyclic process of back-and-forth communication to assure that the right message is delivered. However, this is difficult to achieve across different cultures. Cross culture communication happens when someone from one culture sends a message to someone from a different culture. Cross-cultural miscommunication happens once the person from other culture does correctly understand the meaning of the sender's message. When the differences between the cultures of the sender and the receiver cultures are large, the chance for cross-cultural miscommunication will be big as well (Adler, 2003). In a nutshell, the message will get manipulated every time it is sent and this increase when transmitted across different cultures.

The effect of culture on eWOM could be restricted. When consumers post comments online, they do not reveal their identities and therefore do not risk facing anyone in their social network who may be connected to the product. As explains, independent self-construal are mainly found in individualistic cultures, while interdependent construal are widely found in collectivist cultures (Tao & Jin, 2017). Although several studies have focused on investigating the impact of culture on

consumer's WOM, other studies have addressed cross-cultural differences about the general willingness of consumers to engage in eWOM (Lamb, Hair, & McDaniel, 2011) and the effects of WOM on the process of consumer choice (Money, Gilly, & Graham, 1998). These studies have shown considerable cultural effects on consumers' WOM behavior (Ma, 2013). According to the studies, cultural differences might describe differences in perceptions and in the adoption and diffusion of information technologies. People are affected by others within their societies/communities when considering usage of new technologies, and this also shapes their behavior towards the usage of new systems (Lekhanya, 2013). Global marketers should understand the culture in each international market and modify their marketing strategies accordingly (Al-Dhuhli & Ismael, 2013).

1.3.2.1.2. Community Behavior

The behavior of an individual has been determined as a key factor of the long-term viability and prosperity of virtual communities (Tsai & Bagozzi, 2014). It is hard to separate individual behavior from his/her group behavior simply because group behavior has a huge impact on the behavior of its individuals. In practice, an increasing numbers of companies are trying to leverage the information spread on virtual communities about product design, development, brand, and other related activities (Zahra & Nambisan, 2011) Consumers feel free to express their feelings and attitudes in their virtual and real social groups. Through these connections, consumers voluntarily display their brands and preferences with their personal information such as name and picture, and this that can endanger eWOM (Chu & Kim, 2011).

1.3.2.1.3. Reference Groups

In virtual communities, it is much easier for consumers to freely express their opinions to their related groups members with whom they share the same interests. They tend to share information about ways they could contribute to the development of new products or service through WOM. When consumer trust their reference groups, they tend to follow and adopt their suggestions and recommendations and thus, consequently, their purchasing behavior is affected (Scaraboto, Rossi, & Costa, 2012). Humans as social beings tend to follow their group leaders who are normally characterized by wisdom and possession of better knowledge. For that, all groups tend to have one or

sometimes more opinion leaders that other group members tend to follow (Bhayani, 2016).

Reference groups influence consumer behavior and purchasing decisions. Therefore, if reference groups recommend a product or service to others, this will initiate the desire and will to acquire or buy that product or service (Escalas & Bettman, 2003).

Those reference groups are classified into several categories. First is the group with whom a person meets every day and interact with them most of the time such as family members, close friends or roommates. Those are among primary reference group. Due to this close relationship, they tend to give the most sincere opinions about a product or service.

The other type of reference group is called secondary reference group which is formed by professionals, seniors, club members or even people with whom a person share his/her hobbies. Here, the power of influencing other members is less than that of the primary group but it is effective in cases when a consumer is not comfortable with sharing his/her thoughts about certain products or services with the primary group (Scaraboto et al., 2012).

Another reference group to be addressed is called aspirational group. This is a group that a person is willing to join and have strong attachment and desire to become a member of. This pushes that member to act and mimic their attitudes, attributes and behavior. In contrary, dissociative reference group is about people who hate everything and do not like to get involved with any group at all. Some consumers tend to be like those and as a result behave similarly (Scaraboto et al., 2012).

Thus, marketers need to understand the likes and dislikes of consumers and also the groups to which they belong. Marketers should recognize the extent to which a reference group influences their consumers.

1.3.2.1.4. Family

A family is formed of at least two individuals who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption and share their accommodation. In general, it can be claimed that family is the most important group that heavily influences human and consumer behavior (Lautiainen, 2015). Consumers' families play a major role in purchase decision-making process. Every member of the family has a say about a particular buying process. However, every person in the family has roles that are different from other family members. Influencers are those who initiate ideas about buying some products or services. Gate keepers on the other hand are those who usually control and guide the flow of information (Glitz, 1997). Usually, they are parents or even elder sons or daughters who have a better image and understanding about a specific product or service. Decision makers are those who have the power to act after the evaluation process is completed. Buyers are the ones who actually buy the product or service for the end users who get to enjoy that product or service (Glitz, 1997).

For that reasons, families are being bombarded with ads and promotions to influence their buying behavior. The process starting with information search to a final decision is affected by family members. Thus, marketers are trying to understand the roles of husband, wife and children in the family buying decisions (Gibler & Nelson, 2003).

1.3.2.1.5. Social Class

Social class is described as the hierarchical division of society that into relatively distinct and homogeneous groups by attitude, values and lifestyles. However, social class is mainly based on consumer spending habits. The dividing line between social class groups is the level of their disposable income. Wealthy people tend to have the ability to buy premium and luxuries goods while less fortunate poor people buy low quality, cheap and affordable goods and services (Rani, 2014).

Normally, societies are divided into several hierarchies, with class and status being the principal dividers. Class was mainly an economic category as per Weber's suggestion. It has been diversely related to job, wealth, or broadly speaking, life chances. In addition, status has to do with social distinctions and thus has been commonly

connected to lifestyle (Fisher, 1987). In a social class, individuals are usually influenced by their beers to reproduce and reinforce their class belonging. This buying behavior is based on the understanding of his/her social class, learning from the environment, awareness about new brands based on the information available in the market and thinking process (Tsai & Bagozzi, 2014). Marketers try to promote their products on social class-based market segments (Camilleri, 2018).

1.4. The role of eWOM in Consumer Behavior

1.4.1. Definition of WOM

WOM has been explained differently by various researchers in marketing literature. Recently WOM has become one of the most mentioned concepts in marketing and consumer research literature. WOM explains informal conversations and recommendations from current and potential consumers about various products and services. Due to their credibility, these conversations and suggestions have a massive impact on sales (Karlíček, Tomek, & Křížek, 2010). WOM is about all informal communications spread and shared among consumers that describe, evaluate or discuss the characteristics of specific products or services (Karlíček et al., 2010).

WOM is a consumer-dominated network of marketing communications where the sender is independent of the market. Thus, it is perceived to be more reliable, credible, and trustworthy by consumers compared to company-initiated communications (Arndt, 1967). WOM is considered to have a strong influence on consumer behavior by traditional communications theory, especially on consumers' information search, evaluation, and subsequent decision making. Moreover, it gives information about product performance and the social and psychological conditions of the purchasing decision (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

WOM is a message about products, services or their organizations (Charlett, Garland, & Marr, 1995). It is the free verbal and face-to-face discussions and communications among consumers who are involved in brand, products, or services in the market or consumption-related issues (Demirbaş, 2018). Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler (2004) has described WOM as any statements, whether positive or negative that are received or spread by the actual, previous or potential consumers about

any merchandise or service (Muzamil, Qadeer, Makhija, & Jahanzeb, 2018). According to business dictionary, WOM is defined as verbal or written suggestions by a consumer who is satisfied to the prospective consumers of a product or service. It is considered to be the most efficient type of promotion; it's additionally referred to as word-of-mouth advertising. Advertising might be non-personal or paid communication. Although marketer-generated information and business sources have vital role in development of consumer's interest in commercial products, WOM is the strongest source of information affecting consumers' actual adoption of innovations and new goods (Chu & Choi, 2011). Word-of-mouth method of communication refers to sharing information and communications among consumers to receive better services in return. In this form of relationship, consumers who have been satisfied with a product, service, or event, would tell other individuals about their satisfaction level and will attract progressive attention of people towards that products. As a matter of fact, it has a tendency to behave like viral marketing because one person would share the information with two people, two with four people, four share it with eight and so on, creating an exponential growth in a short timed (Akbari, Kazemi, & Haddadi, 2016). WOM communication has become an important source of consumer information. It shapes the basis of interpersonal communications and it especially influences product evaluations and purchase decisions. In fact, word of mouth is considered to be stronger than printed information mainly because WOM information is known to be more credible (Huete-Alcocer, 2017).

1.4.2. Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) is a form of new and creative marketing medium that can become viral if properly handled. It is about modernizing the ancient way of marketing, i.e., the spoken word.

The advancement of communication technology through the usage of global internet along with the appearance of SNSs have extended buyers' choices for collecting unbiased product data from various shoppers to create an image about a certain product. It also gives the opportunity to consumers to contribute with their own suggestions by engaging in eWOM (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Therefore, eWOM has become one way that individuals use to share their opinions about products and services they purchase. Consumer reviews are shared on

some websites like Web 2.0, chat board, websites review and weblogs, and nowadays are enhanced through newly developed voluntarily social network platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Those platforms have been used by consumers to present and exchange concepts and information regarding things for consumption and services. Thus, it is now a widely-accepted fact that the development of internet has widely transformed the traditional WOM into its modern version, eWOM (Lerrthaitrakul & Panjakajornsak, 2014). eWOM communication refers to any positive or negative statement that has been made by potential, real and former consumers about a product or company on the Internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). EWOM is different from commercial advertisements because it is not intended for commercial purpose. Also, it has been created by consumers, not companies. This message transmits the direct experiences of consumers and has huge impact on purchasing decisions of other consumers (Mowen, Park, & Zablah, 2007). Also, eWOM communication possesses an exceptional speed of diffusion and is more persistent and reachable. Furthermore, eWOM is not limited to people in the close proximity such as friends and family, but it can be transmitted between complete strangers who are geographically distanced (Chu & Choi, 2011). From a managerial point of view, eWOM is widely recognized as a non-commercial and reliable source of information that has huge impact on consumer attitude and purchasing behavior. When a product has positive eWOM, consumers are more likely to think of purchasing that product while the opposite holds true for products with low eWOM (Gvili & Levy, 2016).

Marketers should consider eWOM because of its wide costumer range and impact unlimited by time, cost-effectiveness and prompt communication, therefore it can improve image and brand awareness among consumers. Thus, when eWOM is managed properly, it will have major potential to catapult a product from a tiny market to a much bigger one (Kala & Chaubey, 2018).

1.4.3. WOM vs eWOM

Although eWOM is the modern version of the traditional WOM, it is different from traditional WOM in several ways as list in Table 2 The most obvious difference is that it is spread online while WOM is diffused through face-to-face conversations such as meetings or telephone conversations. Online discussion forums, blogs, and e-mails

are instead used for dissemination eWOM (Hoffman & Novak, 1996). Another important difference is that information transmitted through eWOM is often anonymous, unlike traditional WOM which is usually communicated among people who know each other (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014). Besides these differences, eWOM is more accessible than WOM, which means that millions of people can communicate and share their information (Jeong & Jang, 2011). Moreover, WOM is normally spoken words and its spread is low as it relies on people repeating it while eWOM is written or at least recorded, and it is not limited by time, location or distance of the source.

Table 2. WOM and eWOM Defining Terms.

		Three Themes Used to Perceive Credibility		
		Source Age	Product Type	Buyer Readiness
Similarities	WOM and eWOM	Source age informs more expert comments and fewer trustworthiness or approachability comments	Both WOM and eWOM are used in concert toward a path to purchase	Both WOM and eWOM can be used when consumers are ready (pull strategy) and not ready (push strategy) to purchase
Differences	WOM	Younger sources are perceived as more credible	Used to build prior purchase approval to lower potential cognitive dissonance for all product types	Low product interest; source credibility more overt due to social pressure
	eWOM	Older sources are perceived as more credible	Used to build awareness and product knowledge for used and service/hedonic products	High product interest; multiple reviews and website reputation mitigate need for source credibility

Source: (Porter, 2017)

1.4.4. Types of WOM

Word of mouth is discussing goods and services among individuals excluding firms' advertisement about products or services. These conversations can be either sided or unilateral recommendations (Maisam & Mahsa, 2016). The information that is transmitted by senders can be positive, negative, or a combination of both (Charlett et al., 1995). However, the main idea of these conversations is being done by those who have a little benefit to convince others to use that product. Word of mouth is more than just a simple talk about products (Maisam & Mahsa, 2016). Word of mouth is one of the methods that mainly has impact on individuals and encourage them to buy a merchandise

or service more than other advertisements methods. This holds true because people generally trust in what they hear from others. Overall, researchers need to understand how to consumer perceive information for withing their relationships more than just from mass media (Armstrong, Adam, Denize, & Kotler, 2014). recommend that when the consistency (or congruity) between the brand's image and the consumer's self-image is great, the consumer's evaluation of the brand will be high and as a result his/her willingness to purchase is high that brand. This commitments is based on eWOM marketing influence (Larasati & Hananto, 2012).

When the product or service is offered based on consumer's expectations, consumer will adopt desirable attitudes toward that brand. The result of this positive experience may give positive word-of-mouth and, in many cases, it will create brand loyalty and advocacy. Therefore, positive word of-mouth, is product-related information that is being transmitted by those consumers who are more satisfied than others (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2008). According to previous studies, a negative valence message would have a stronger impact than a positive value message (Kanouse, 1984). This could be partly discussed by the fact that a negative message would decrease the probability of that the information being posted by the firm or someone who wants to promote the product. In fact, when consumers trust the negative eWOM message, they can help themselves avoid making wrong buying decision (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011). Other scholars have observed a positivity bias (Chu & Kim, 2011). According to in his White House report, he claims that at least 90% of those consumers who are unsatisfied with the product or service will not purchase again. In addition, each of those consumers who will share his/her experience to at least nine other individuals and 13% among them will pass on their experience to 20 people (Demirbaş, 2018). Marketers through WOM and eWOM listen or read consumers' needs and opinions about product or service and it is an opportunity for them to promote their products/services to better meet their consumers' concerns. Ultimately, increasing their return. A negative or positive eWOM about a product or service impact consumers' future purchase plans because they compare their experience of that product or service with their expectations (F. X. Yang, 2017). Other scholars insisted that eWOM communication is the most outstanding results of the internet revolution, information and communication technology and has become an important part of a person's daily life. Consumers who surf social media to find information about potential goods or services of their interests are trying to make

short-cuts by reaching-out other's ideas and opinions in order to obtain larger amount of information to make better, faster, wiser and effective purchasing choice (DI VIRGILIO & Antonelli, 2017). EWOM as compared to traditional WOM has a stronger impact on convincing new consumers. As it will have longer impact compared to traditional marketing activities, and the quality and quantity of e-opinions have positively affected buying intentions of potential consumers. Consumers believe in eWOM simply because they think that they gained information based on trusted referrals from their friends, family members and reference groups in SNSs. While, they consider push market to be false or misleading.

1.4.5. Effects of WOM

One of the most important and influential ways of communication is word of mouth. Therefore, it outshines all other types of communication networks. As explained before word of mouth is known for being 'independent of marketers' and due to that consumers considered to be more reliable and credible (Lau & Ng, 2001). This is a very important issue for marketing managers to follow this type of conversations because it can transfer crucial information about consumers' experiences, plus their needs, the information they can capitalize on to motivate sales (Manders, 2013). WOM communication is appealing due to it over come consumer resistance to traditional marketing and lower the cost of marketing significantly by utilizing the nature of SNSs. There are few evidences that show how significant the use of WOM over other marketing tools.

Scholars predict prominent future electronic Word of mouth marketing. In fact, eWOM marketing has revolutionized the marketing by too many dimensions including speed, amplitude and cost. Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2008) in their paper quoted that "Instead of tossing away millions of dollars on Superbowl advertisements, fledgling dot-com companies are trying to catch attention through much cheaper marketing strategies such as blogging and [WOM] campaigns". Because, WOM referrals on SNSs gained popularity in online era and become the driving force for those SNSs, this trend encouraged those SNSs to acquire new group members. For that to beneficial, it is crucial to invest in this trend. However, when certain SNS mature and prevail, people in

charge of it, could start using traditional marketing on it which could engender the relative effectiveness of this phenomena (CETIN & DINCER, 2014).

Because eWOM is a message which is about organization's products, services or about the organization itself, consumers tend to listen or read it. EWOM usually get involves in comments relating to product performance, quality of service, trait, and procedure and it passed on from one person to those potential. 'Senders' who have personal experience with products from a particular firm are considered as fairly objective sources of information by receivers. The information communicated by senders can be positive, negative, or a mixture of both (Charlett et al., 1995). WOM has been playing a crucial role than ever before in affecting consumer's decisions. Although, eWOM is a form of communication that takes place beyond the control of the firms, it is becoming more effective in consumer's preferences and purchasing decisions as compared to marketers generated persuasive messages (Pandir & Enginkaya). Past study on shopping and purchase behavior has shown that consumers are more affected by those who they interact with (Beneke, Mill, Naidoo, & Wickham, 2015). Thus, WOM has shown that it has significantly affected consumer decisions, and will help them to present good post-purchase wakefulness. Moreover, eWOM could have optimistic or unconstructive effects depending on how consumer perceive a product or service. Secondly, it could influence the product, the brand, the service or even the staffs' performance within the firm (Naz, 2014). in his empirical study found that being exposed to favorable WOM will increase the actual buying levels, while exposure to unfavorable comments will reduce these levels. When WOM mediates the relationship between marketing activities and consumers' responses, WOM will reinforce the original effect of marketing message on consumers' responses (Charlett et al., 1995). The issue is that WOM broadens the discussion of the company's offer by considering experiences, preferences, ideas and acceptability (Cakir & Cetin, 2013). Therefore, WOM will be considered as added value to or deducted from the brand marketing message, which could alter the impact marketing message have on consumers' responses (Martensen & Mouritsen, 2016). Word of mouth will have higher level of impact on selling because of social media. Based on the previous mentioned studies, eWOM have a strong economic effect as it generates several folds of the profit gained from traditional marketing approaches. It has also built-up trust and loyalty to brands that consumers are referred to by family member from their referral groups, which in turn increase brand

popularity. Also, eWOM could adversely affect brand image if consumer emotions are not looked after.

1.4.6. Cultural Values and WOM

It has been well documented that WOM is influenced heavily by culture and does effect consumers' buying behavior. However, there is a shortage of studies that investigate the role of cultural values on eWOM. When examining eWOM characteristics, only the consequences of eWOM are found to be different from one culture to another. By understanding Hofstede's cultural dimensions, scholars have examined the role of cultural values on different aspects of eWOM. The first is the accumulation of eWOM along a time span and the second is the impact of eWOM on consumers' buying behaviors. It is well also well documented that culture strongly affect consumers' thoughts and actions (Hui & Triandis, 1989). Some scholars, defined culture as "the collective programming of the mind which differentiates the member of one group from another." Cultural values are a strong force which is forming people's motivations, lifestyles, and product choices (Feather, 1995).). They influence how people communicate and socialize with other members of society (Ball-Rokeach, 1973). They affect the values and importance people attach to different situations (Feather, 1995). Cultural values are a strong force which is forming our motivation, lifestyle, and product choices (Tse, Belk, & Zhou, 1989). In essence, cultural values show the foremost basic and core beliefs of a community, for the most part these beliefs affect our communication patterns. Hence, culture can potentially have a significant influence on consumers' WOM behavior through its impact on people's values and group norms (Fong & Burton, 2008).

The internet and its recent integration with the mobile technology have greatly changed people's communication methods. Therefore there is an urgent need to study the relationship between these changes with culture (Kaul, 2012). After the huge success and wide spread of microblogging applications such as Facebook, Twitter and Weibo, microblogging has become a crucial platform for international companies to contact their consumers in various local markets. They adopt microblogging to develop and promote their brands, provide consumer services, and observe public ideas. Understanding the impact of culture on consumer microblogging WOM content would

significantly develop the effectiveness of companies' application of this new marketing tool in different markets (Ma, 2013).

1.5. EWOM in SNSs

It has been known for a long time that eWOM influences consumers' buying behavior. However, the emergence of SNSs has opened the door for a new perspective for eWOM by enabling users to interact with their relevant groups on SNSs. By sharing helpful product data, SNS users will make purchase-related decisions easier because of the social connections among the people (Alhidari, Iyer, & Paswan, 2015). Considering that social property is at the core of SNSs, social relationship-related variables are vital in understanding the underlying eWOM effect.

Many researches have indeed linked social relationship constructs to WOM referral behavior in both offline and online settings (Smith et al., 2007). According to the literature about WOM and eWOM, researchers have found that tie strength, homophily, trust and interpersonal-influence impacts are determined to be focal aspects in characterizing the social-relationships and affect WOM dynamics (Gilly, Graham, Wolfinbarger, & Yale, 1998). These four variables have been recognized in marketing and consumer-behavior research as major players in influencing WOM consumer behavior (Brown & Reingen, 1987).

1.5.1. Social Networks (Origination)

stated that in the United States, social networking platforms appeared as a medium of interaction between classmates. In 1995, the first social networking website appeared for American school students (Classmates.com); this site divided the American community into states, divided each state into districts and each district had several schools, and all of them were sharing the site and every one could check the division around the school they belonged to and were able to find their classmates (Eke & Odoh, 2014). Later on, SixDegrees.com was launched in 1997 which was based on sharing and connecting all the members involved into that site. Since then, revolutions in development of SNSs have taken place, and during this period some succeeded while others failed shortly being launched. Some consider SixDegree SNS as the milestone of social-networking-sites because it allows its users to create their own profiles, group

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their friends into lists and browse those lists to review, connect with or omit any member according to the user's choice (Harrison & Thomas, 2009). However, some of those features had existed in some form of another before SixDegree. Classmates.com for example, allowed users to associate their school friends and explore the network for other users who were also affiliated but were not actual members of that group. It was like a library member who can search information for a friend who has no access to that library (Harrison & Thomas, 2009)

MySpace.com on the other hand, widened the horizons of SNSs. It succeeded since it's day one back in 2003. This was followed by several other SNSs, but Facebook has been the landmark of them all so far as it enabled its users to exchange information while having access to personal information (Harrison & Thomas, 2009). Figure 2 shows the order in which the main SNSs were found.
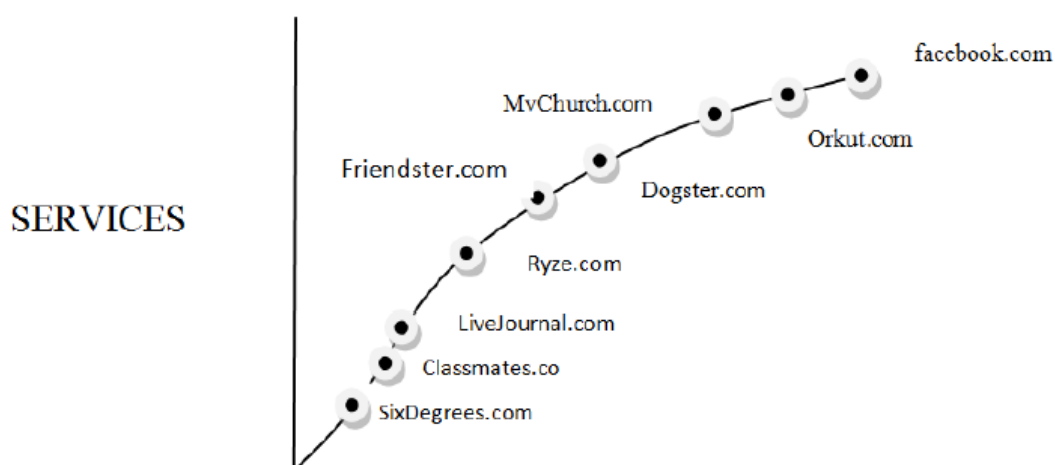
Figure 2. History of SNSs development.

Source: https://www.iosrjournals.org/iosrjce/papers/conf.15013/Volume%205/5.%2021-23.pdf?id=7557

1.5.2. The Importance of Social Networking Sites

Social networking platforms let their users to connect with each other and it builds connection between people who have similar interests or carry out similar activities (Das & Sahoo, 2011). With the multitude of products offered and the variety of choices, on one hand the consumer is keen to get new and innovative products in order to satisfy his/her needs and tendencies, developed new interests and explore new tastes in an attempt to make a change for a better lifestyle.

On the other hand, this diversity makes the consumer anxious to choose the appropriate product or service, especially when it comes to a new product that is complex and associated with high technology or new intangible service that cannot be tested before purchasing. These make it hard for costumers to make buying decisions. The important matter is that through social networking sites such as Facebook, twitter, Orkut, Myspace, Skype etc., people are able to communicate with parents, relatives and friends. Those SNSs provide a new way of sharing views, opinions, supporting a cause and raising awareness about existing problems and troubles faced by society. People in traditional marketing coordinate what messages need or do not need to be passed on, while in eWOM in SNSs such people have no say as the messages come directly from experienced consumers to a potential consumer. Thus, the new consumers will have the chance to be exposed to several views or comments about a particular product or service (Baruah, 2012).

Social networking sites are a phenomenon that can have significant impact on the reputation, sales and even survival of organizations. However, many executives would like to deny this type of media because they do not how to get around it, specially SNSs that are formed of different forms from those they are familiar with (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). SNSs become effective through conversations, partnerships, relationships, reputation and groups. Furthermore, they have different impact which may help a company to grow or even destroy it completely. Therefore companies should develop appropriate strategies to monitor, understand and respond to different social media activities for their survival and continuation (Al-Yaseen, 2017). Any business entity needs to widen its prospective and understanding of how to utilize the concept of eWOM in SNSs as it is crucial for them to update their information into their SNS accounts and spread a good image about themselves because all the companies who failed to do so have been left behind in the new virtual marketing world.

1.5.3. The Role of Social Networking Sites in Marketing

The consecutive developments in the internet have contributed to the creation of new virtual social networking websites, blogs, e-forums, mailing groups and other many other forms of virtual communication. This is a major leap not only in the field of

communication between individuals and groups but also in the results that this communication has. This communication has affected human life both socially and politically and has become one of the most important elements of social change. Marketing with traditional media was much more about delivering the marketing message to the target group. However, with the rise of SNSs building connection and conversation has become the main part of marketing strategy. Social media marketing is not only for the largest multinational corporations but also for small and medium size firms to get advantage of it (Thakur & Kumar).

1.5.4. Growing Social Networks in Turkey & Libya

The appearance of internet is one of the most significant advancements in the history of humanity. Information, knowledge and culture are exchanged between masses of people through interconnected information platforms. These platforms enable cultures to be analyzed and rewritten, opens new windows into people's understandings to a wide variety of concepts and beliefs. The connected networks of the internet have formed a virtual but communicative space where individuals can cross borders freely and can surf for information from anywhere, see anything, learn, compare and understand the unknown and mysterious (Stevenson, 2002). The main drivers within this area are social networking websites which simplify the way to build a social relation between individuals who for instance share interests, activities and backgrounds. These sites provide an opportunity for information to be spread to an unlimited number of audiences and boost interactive dialogue on issues of common interest (Fotis, 2015).

Since 2007, the number of families in Turkey who have access to the internet has risen by more than 100%. It is understood that the rise in access to the internet is related to the changes in types of connection. During the past years, mobile-broadband subscriptions have grown by almost 110%, thus increasing the usage of internet among people and eventually enriching the new media and internet to every moment of our lives (Ugurlu & Ozutku, 2014).

Turkey has been ranked first in the Middle East for users of the social networking platform Facebook and ranked ninth in the world with more than 53 million users. According to a 2014 Gallup poll, 7 out of 10 adults say they have a working computer

at home. Turkey is one among a lot of socially engaged countries in the world. Facebook is the most well-liked website in Turkey (TranslateMedia, 2020).
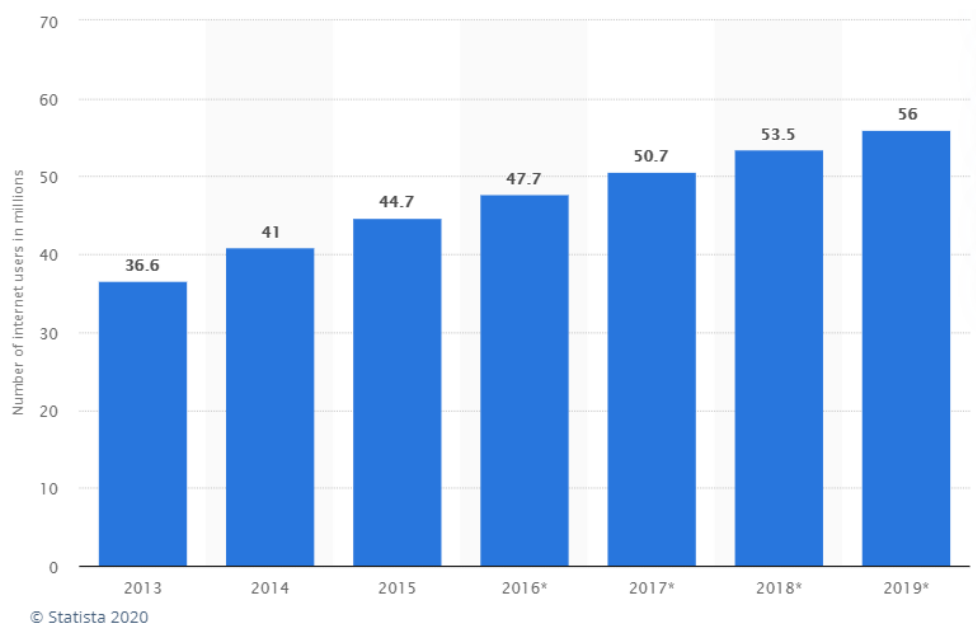
Figure 3. Number of internet users in Turkey from 2013 to 2019 (in millions).

Source: (Statista, 2020)

According to the Intel Research on Facebook and Twitter, the data show that there is still a rise in number of Facebook user subscriptions worldwide but this rise has a small rate. In addition, Twitter has increased by a rate of 80% and 33.3%, for the last two years respectively (Ugurlu & Ozutku, 2014) . Social media is popular for spreading news among online users in urban Turkey; hence Facebook is the leading platform used for news by 69% while Twitter only by a third (33%). In addition, usages of social media include entertainment, sports, and lifestyle as well as following personalities such as Turkish singers, TV and movie celebrities, athletes, journalists and politicians (Dogramaci & Radcliffe, 2015).

The following figure show the rise in Facebook user subscriptions:
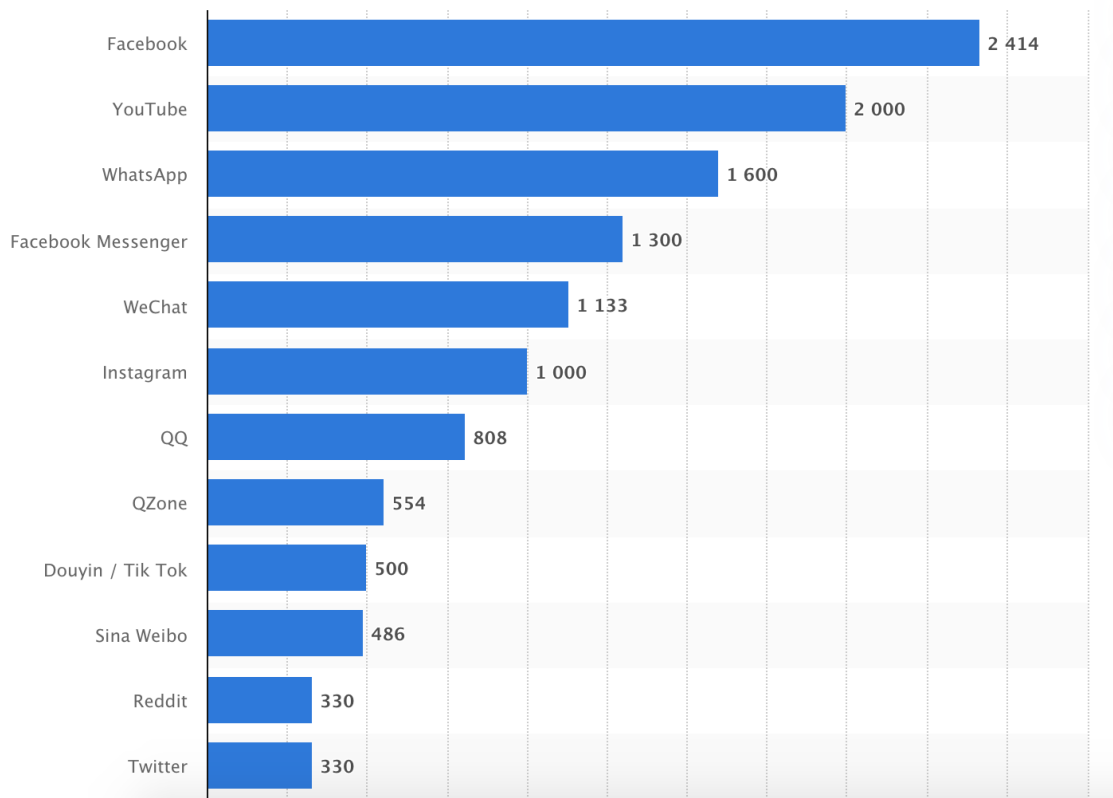
Figure 4. Increasing Facebook users' subscriptions in Turkey.

Source: (Hunter, 2019)

In 2000, Libya had only 10,000 internet users. In 2008, Internet became more accessible and by December 2017 the number had jumped to 3.8 million, or approximately 60% of the total population. According to International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Internet is the third most accessible media in the country and it is mainly used to access social media (Musa, 2020).

Libya occupies the fourth place in Africa in terms of having Facebook users relative to its population, and 69% of population of Libya uses social media according to a Hootsuite report (2019). Global social media users passed the 3 billion mark in April 2018. That means that about 45 percent of the world's population uses the internet to surf through social media with more than 200 million new active users for the first time since April 2018.

In Libya, the number of people who are spending time on social media is rising too. Hootsuite, a social media management platform, revealed that 4.5 million Libyans were regularly used social media in January 2019, with a rise of 18 percent or 700,000 people compared to the previous year. This figure represents about 69 percent of total population. Hootsuite also added that about 4.3 million people in Libya (approximately 69%) have access social media via mobile phones. Libyans severely rely on social media, especially Facebook to follow news and developments in the country (News218, 2019).

In Libya, social networking and video-sharing websites are the most visited international pages, and of course Facebook is the most popular foreign platform. Nearly more than a quarter of the Libyan population is registered on Facebook with males and youth having a slightly better access to the social network. Libyans use Facebook to communicate with each other, search for different events to attend in their city, and to get various forms of information (Tardy, Dillais, & Hargreaves, 2013).

Twenty six percent of the Libyan population have stated that they own at least one Facebook accounts. Among the internet users, 58% have one or more Facebook profiles with males being more likely to have a Facebook account (63%) than females (52%). Overall, young males with secondary or university education are the most likely to have a Facebook account, while those who are not connected to Facebook usually have the same socio-demographic specifications as those who are disconnected from the internet, such as those with low education level or who are seniors (Tardy et al., 2013).

Although Libyans a large number of Libyans are active on social media (61% of the population of an estimated 6.5 million use Facebook), politics is not a major subject for discussion. Most of the people prefer to discuss topics related to entertainment.

Because of the traditional Arab culture, men use the internet more than women as they have greater social freedom. Also, 100% of natural sciences students use the internet as compared with 88% of social science students. Therefore, there appears to be a relationship between the domain of studies and internet usage (Aibraheem, 2008). Women have been shown to use the internet for studying more than men, and this is because men have more time to connect, while women are not free to go out at any time. Furthermore, men were more interested and spent more time than women in using the

internet to do fun activities (Gharssalla, 2018). As such, this study will intentionally focus on Facebook more than other sites and address the cultural impact of the word of mouth on Facebook in Libya and Turkey.
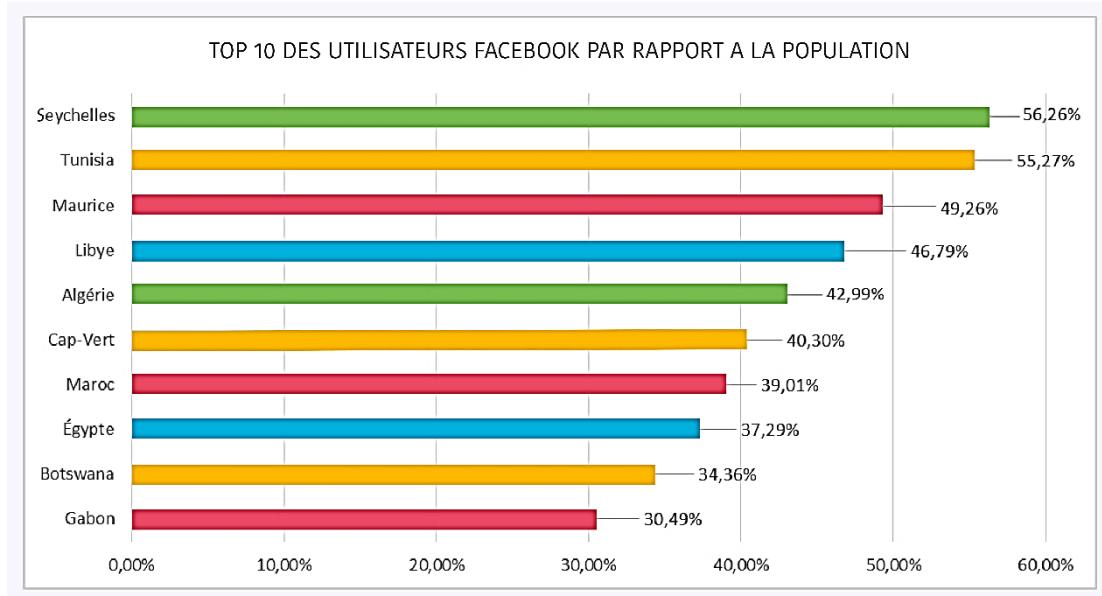
Figure 5. Libya is ranked fourth on the African continent in terms of Facebook users.
Source: (TV.net218, 2017)

1.5.5. The Impact of SNSs on Decision-Making Process

Nowadays social media acts like a hub for consumer decision process starting from the time they are considering to buy a product till their thoughts after the purchase. Similarly, firms are trying hard to reinforce consumer engagement, produce complete awareness, and drive traffic for promoting goods and conjointly increase the number of communication networks (Alsubagh, 2015). Many firms specialized in e-marketing use social networks to advertise and promote their products.

The development of SNS has unfolded a new medium through which personal connections are conducted. They offer enormous opportunities for businesses eager to hop in the boat where the consumers themselves are becoming the commodity. There are many scholars, training programs and app developers who are trying to help companies to get into social media and enhance their position in the virtual world (Yasmin, Tasneem, & Fatema, 2015).

1.6. Effect of EWOM in SNSs on Purchasing Behavior

Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication is considered to have an important role in effecting and shaping consumer attitudes and intentions towards certain products (Farzin & Fattahi, 2018). Considering the distinctive social nature of communications in social networking platforms and understanding the potential impact of social relationships developed in these sites on brand communications could promote consumers' knowledge through eWOM (Chu & Kim, 2011). Therefore, individuals believe that WOM has a large impact on the success of recent product. Nowadays, the web permits people to share their knowledge and overcome the restriction of WOM; eWOM will transfer any idea or comment from people with experience to those who have not been exposed to it. Therefore, eWOM lets buyers explore, grasp and ledge the data associated with the product (Hsu & Tran, 2013).

During the last two decades, marketing theories and methods have experienced different changes and nowadays marketing specialists base their practices on social drivers rather than traditional methods for attracting more consumers. SNSs let marketers have direct access to their target group (Farzin & Fattahi, 2018).

A few research studies have used concepts pertaining to social and cultural relationships to understand traditional WOM referral behavior in offline atmosphere. However, through the support of internet and SNS platforms, eWOM is lying on fertile ground to exist and further develop in the future (Arenas-Gaitan, Rondan-Cataluna, & Ramírez-Correa, 2013).

1.7. Social Relationships and eWOM in SNSs

An individual's desire to affect others' perspectives and influence their behavior is usually called as opinion leader and is expressed by the person's skill and motivation to share information (Arenas-Gaitan et al., 2013). On the contrary, searching for ideas is the counterpart of opinion leader, and it happens once a person seeks recommendations and knowledge from a devotee, friend, or colleague who is usually thought as an associate to the opinion leader about the subject of interest (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008). In fact, opinion leadership and keens to search for ideas are considered

two necessary pillars for knowledge exchange that lead WOM communication within the domain of shopper's attitude.

Indeed, a number of studies have connected social relationship constructs to WOM referral behavior both offline and online (Brown & Reingen, 1987). SNSs have become the main social communication channels on which millions and millions of ideas and reactions are uploaded every day, representing different attitudes or thoughts about certain subjects. What consumer express on those SNSs are considered eWOM that reflect consumers' feelings and attitudes. Social relationships do affect human behavior and those relationships are not static but tend to change based on what people go through or face (Hsu & Tran, 2013).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Due to huge success and widespread deployment of popular applications such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, microblogging has turned an important place for international organizations to be in touch with their consumers in different local and international markets (Culnan, McHugh, & Zubillaga, 2010). It adopts microblogging to promote the brand, provide services to the consumers, and monitor public thoughts. Social networks provide more effective and user-friendly way to keep social connections and share information in different forms and mediums (Yazdanifard, Obeidy, Yusoff, & Babaei, 2011). Due to the evolution of mobile internet access and since users now expect it to be accessible in an easy-to-use way on each device. There is now an online application for every economic and social activity that the consumer can imagine (Cachia, 2008).

There is not much empirical research about eWOM on social platforms. EWOM online communication is likely to happen on a large scale and regular basis in this social media (Okazaki, 2009). When consumers share their idea and suggestion about a product or service on their social media profiles, they try to convince their companions, friends or other potential consumers to see their opinion. Therefore, they will influence his/her friends' buying decision-making process (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009).

By understanding the effect of culture on WOM microblogging-content for consumers, the effectiveness of firms will considerably improve. The direct effects of cultural elements combined with eWOM in influencing purchasing behavior are discussed intensively in literature. As in previous studies, they associated eWOM with only five cultural variables namely; social capital, tie strength, trust, homophily and interpersonal influence. This study added four more social-cultural variables to fill the research gap in list the determinants of eWOM. They are collectivism, individualism, conformity and innovativeness social variables. According to our knowledge, this study is the first that answer the research questions together.

Furthermore, cultural differences of eWOM in Turkey and Libya have not been reported in literature, although car market in Turkey is lucrative and very crucial for Turkish economy. On the other hand, in Libya, car market is under-estimated because, they assume that due to relatively small population, the car market is small, instead it is very big as compared to all countries in the region. This is because Libya is a hub for smuggling cars into Africa and the car market is so lucrative and enjoy proximate location to Europe and African countries. This is why the searcher approached eWOM influence on car-buyers' intentions in Libya and Turkey and suggest its importance for academics and practitioners. This study is addressing predictors of eWOM by analyzing the degree of consumer participation in Libya and Turkey in eWOM related to consumer behavior in social media and the impact of this participation on their purchasing decision.

2.1.1. Interpersonal Influences

Research has found two determinants of susceptibility to interpersonal-influence, they are normative interpersonal influences and informational interpersonal influences. Informational interpersonal influence expressed consumers willingness to accept and believe in the information provided by others and consider it credible and reflects the reality (Hsu & Tran, 2013). It boosts personal knowledge and help individuals become wiser and experienced person in certain subjects of interest. Normative interpersonal influence occurs when people change their behavior, values or thoughts with intention to be accepted by others (Campbell & Fairey, 1989). Researchers have analyzed social and cultural effect of each normative and informational influence and found that innovative products or services are greatly obsessed with social influence (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989). The issue of social influence on regular consumption has received wide attention. Research also showed that eWOM may turn into the strongest source of data when consumers are sensitive about interpersonal influence (Chu & Choi, 2011). Interpersonal influence is considered a social factor that enjoy key role in affecting consumer's decision making process when acquired products with new technology (Chu & Kim, 2011). Members of social networks see their contacts as an important supply of product data. Such behaviors are linked to the social impact of eWOM. From that point of view, it is rational to discuss that consumers susceptibility to both normative and informational influence on their involvement in eWOM in SNSs.

2.1.2. Conformity

A significant part of researches shows that consumer adaptation had significantly influenced consumer decision making. is the early contributor in this area, found that the normative social influences consumers decisions and thoughts? Further researches, show that the informational perspective of social influence may also have affect purchasing behavior (Khandelwal & Bajpai, 2013).

People often change their behavior and ideas to match their social groups. This method of matching one's idea to a normative group opinion is known as social conformity. Social influences on people behavior is often unavoidable because they have a strong need for belonging and avoiding punishments if not complying and may be punished by social exclusion from the group (Kukkonen, 2017).

Conformity is desires in behavior and way of thinking to gain the approval and fulfilling expectations of group members (Bearden et al., 1989), even if they know that such a position is not necessarily correct (Allen, 1965). When consumers observe a large number of reviews that deal with a specific issue, they are eager to involved and understand everything about it became wide spread issue or gain publicity (Chatterjee, 2001). People who show a strong tendency to conformity also show higher level of normative and informative conformity than those who are less inclined toward conformity (Chatterjee, 2001).

Literature show that offline conformity influences are different from those of online conformity. Some studies considered normative conformity influences (Phau, Sequeira, & Dix, 2009). Other studies have focused on informational conformity influences (Martin, Wentzel, Tomczak, & Henkel, 2007), There was no study that approached both (Martin et al., 2007). Marketers are keen to find when normative or informational conformity affect consumer behavior (Piumali & Rathnayake, 2017).

2.1.3. Innovativeness

Innovative studies about consumer behavior concentrate on recognizing traits that clearly help consumers in getting adopted with new products and processes, while the goal of innovativeness studies in personality research is to analyze individual

innovativeness in terms of innate traits and characteristics (Menold, Jablokow, Purzer, Ferguson, & Ohland, 2014).

Consumer innovativeness is considered an individual's desire for searching novelty and searching for new products and experiences (Manning, Bearden, & Madden, 1995). Those researchers, , who studied the originality of WOM relationship in an ancient (offline) setting, have found a negative relationship between innovativeness and WOM receiving. When it comes to eWOM setting some researchers , have found that consumer innovativeness has positively affected opinion seeker while the majority of these researches have dealt with the opinion giver (Ho & Dempsey, 2010). have categorized people or other parts of adoption into five different groups based on their level of innovativeness that are innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards (Rogers, 2010).

McCarthy, Tsinopoulos, Allen, and Rose- Anderssen (2006) has stated that marketer's power to find innovators has directly affected the success or failure of new product introductions. Consumer innovators (the first individuals within a community who buy innovative products) will reflect more favorable new product behavior and are fluctuating by newness appeals than early buyers (Muzinich, Pecotich, & Putrevu, 2003). Highly innovative people with high innovation are willing to take lot of risks, show larger social participation and have higher opinion leadership scores. They are also, experienced in new product and more aware of product class, which in turn, they have bigger media exposure, and will be heavier users of the product category (Goldsmith & Newell, 1997). In the market, the first people who buy new products are consumer innovators, so initiating the diffusion process for wider consumer base. Research findings show that people with high innovativeness are keen to adopt new products than people with a low level of general innovativeness (Goldsmith & Matherly, 1987).

When these consumer innovators buy new products, they make revenues for companies, and they play key role in spreading out the information about the newly introduced products (Goods & Services) through eWOM. Many businesses have been leaded towards premium products diffusion in the hope of reaching the highest possible

number of adopters or obtaining largest amount of market share in the shortest possible period of time (Gheorghe, 2012).

2.1.4. Individualism and Collectivism

The structure of individualism-collectivism illustrates differences between prevalent cultural orientations, which value the importance of a person versus those who give value group harmony. People with individualist values have tendency to see themselves independent compare to others and they usually behave based on personal behavior and preferences. On contrary, other people with collectivistic values see themselves as interdependent with others and usually act based on social norms (Triandis, 2001). Personal objectives have priority over in-group objectives in individualistic communities, while in collectivist societies, in-group goals take priority over those people (Sivadas, Bruvold, & Nelson, 2008). Triandis and his colleagues: Bontempo, Villareal, Asaim, & Lucca, (1988) stated that individualism and collectivism are both multi-dimensional structures. Although there are differences between them but may coexist (Li & Aksoy, 2007). Individualistic cultural values focus on self-direction, autonomy, competition, personal control, and individual objectives. On the other hand, collectivistic cultural values focus on filial devotion, harmony, sociability, and a willingness to put personal needs aside for the sake of one's social group. The self is considered to be an aspect of shared group identity (Cho, Mallinckrodt, & Yune, 2010). It is obvious that people's relationship with others may affect sharing information and opinion exchange between consumers. Thus, it can be discussed that users of social networking sites' social relationship might have contribution to the root of eWOM communications that is happening on these websites (Bayraktar & Erdogan, 2015).

People of all cultures have collective and relational self-construal attributes but they are being assessed differently by different cultural contexts. However, here the researcher uses the following terms individualism and collectivism although individualism and collectivism have unclear nature and are open to debate (Kashima et al., 1995). Most authors have discussed and realized a proof for additional pronounced information that is being sharing and buying behavior between people in collectivist cultures (Dwyer, Mesak, & Hsu, 2005).

Individualism and collectivism firstly appeared on literature by Triandis (1992) in a multicultural study called "The analysis of subjective culture". Triandis in his study, chose America and Greece as individualistic and collectivistic culture respectively. He reported that Americans and Greeks are different in how they perceive their values and how they prioritize their interests over their social group interests.

On the other side, Geert Hofstede suggested his five different cultural dimensions and chose individualism and collectivism as one of those dimensions. He reported that individualism lies within societies that have weak bonds between people. On opposite, collectivism appear on societies that have strong bonds between people. Triandis in 1995 brought up any study on which he specifies four features of individualism and collectivism. It is better categorized in the following Figure 6.

	Individualist	Collectivist
Vertical	Independence Unequal status Explicit knowledge *Theoretical analysis* *UK, USA, Europe*	Interdependence Unequal status Tacit knowledge *Hierarchy* *Asia*
Horizontal	Independence Equal status Explicit knowledge *Abstract knowledge* *Scandinavia, Australia*	Interdependence Equal status Tacit knowledge *Oneness* *Japan, Israel*

Figure 6. Simple table individualistic and Collectivistic cultures.
Source: https://delarue.net/blog/2010/05/culture-knowledge-sharing/

2.1.5. Trust

Another related structure is trust in contacts in social media platforms, which is worth mentioning here in the understanding consumers' decisions to engage in eWOM in SNSs (Sherchan, Nepal, & Paris, 2013). The current trust mechanisms that are being

used in SNSs are limited to simple access control mechanisms, where authorization is needed to contact, write on, or read all or some part of a user's profile, considering that giving comment or blogging features are enabled (Manzano, Ferreres, & Garnacho, 2014).

Communities in SNSs are usually classified into different groups such as person's family, friends and neighbors. To assign a date, the ways to control accesses to a person's profile are deployment of trust mechanisms in SNSs, where users are able to block some specific members as well as giving different levels of access to certain other members (Hart, Johnson, & Stent, 2007). The eWOM is probably the main instrument in the digital world of commerce. The technological characteristics of the internet and social media platforms would provide the ability for eWOM to be spread quicker than anything else. When consumer has more trust on social media networks and their connections, it is more likely that they will be active participants (Valkeinen, 2015).

Trust is a key factor in sharing data and quality of eWOM. Since people have a desire to believe that trust is the first need for individuals both in face-to-face and online environments. Trust would affect the effectiveness of knowledge sharing. Mutual trust has affected positively transferring knowledge (Choi & Scott, 2013).

Previous research shows that consumers pay attention to WOM as something more reliable medium than traditional media (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). So generally, users trust other users more than sellers (Nieto, Hernández-Maestro, & Muñoz-Gallego, 2014). As a result, eWOM can have an impact on many receivers and is seen as a consumer-dominated marketing network in which the senders are acting independently from the market. This independency makes eWOM to be more reliable and credible medium (Huete-Alcocer, 2017).

Trust boosts sharing of knowledge between group members whether they are based on face-to-face or in online environments (Fang & Chiu, 2010) . Trust also will decrease the level of uncertainty on the users' mind which is a main concern for online users. When the level of trust is higher, sharing of information will be higher as well (Hajli, Sims, Zadeh, & Richard, 2017). As a result, when people trust each other in SNSs, they tend to vary their behavior according which is the main focus here.

2.1.6. Tie Strength

Here it is about how intense the social relationship between the consumer and the source of eWOM message. Since WOM is a social event, the properties of social relations are likely to play a vital role in WOM behavior. In other words, tie strength describes the intensity degree of the social relationship between consumers. Generally, relationship ties between consumers are different in a wide range. They are varied from strong primary ties like the ones which are shared with family and close friends to weak secondary ties that lie between those who are shared with acquaintances (Kapoor, Jayasimha, & Sadh, 2013).

Those who have strong ties to tend to be proximate to each other the flow of information between them is easier (Reingen & Kernan, 1986). Strong ties indicate a lot of familiarity with each other's desires and preferences, which motivates the preparation of relevant advice. Apart from having relational strength, strong ties also have two weaknesses known informative and structural weakness. The informative weakness is about the fact that transmitted information through strong ties tends to be unneeded because people with strong ties often share similar interests, professions, or geographical location. The structural weakness embedded in transitive closure where weak ties are just acquaintances (Hu, Wang, Jiang, & Yang, 2019). Typically, weak ties provide access to novel data and information that is not circulating in the closed-knit network of strong ties. Moreover, weak ties are only acquaintances. (Granovetter, 1977) explains that weak ties have a key role in describing a wide range of social networks, which particularly connect behaviors between micro and macro levels (Granovetter, 1977).

Therefore, information about a product with weak-tie sources will rise if some of the weak-tie individuals possess better expertise. WOM from experts who have high knowledge about specific product or service may be more effective than WOM from non-experts because according to the availability-diagnostic theory, such information is considered to be more diagnostic of real performance (Bone, 1995). Consequently, tie strength in general tend to affect people behavior regardless of how strong the bond is although the degree of influence varies significantly from one to another.

2.1.7. Social Capital

Social capital is described as relationship's network between people who are living and working in a given community and this enables the community to function effectively. Social capital is an intrinsic part of relationship between individuals; it has been granted by interactions within the network, resources - data, opinions, norms, cooperation, emotional support, and interpersonal trust (Coleman, 1988). Putnam (2000) has stated, social capital is about the inward-looking and the desire of reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups with similar background like ethnic or country groups (Hsu & Tran, 2013).

A recent study has found that the employment of Facebook was connected with each bonding social capital and linking social capital among faculty students (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Thus, when people use SNSs, they are likely to realize positive effect of interactions with others, both strong or loose ties in social capital. By applying the notion of social capital, the results show that the potential of online networking sites as a powerful social platform that increase connections among people. Also, SNSs provide opportunities for consumers to look after existing personal networks and expand them. That is done to improve bonding and bridging social capital at the same time (Chu & Kim, 2011).

Social capital has value in the network because the relational, structural, and cognitive resources inherited in social network sites and can help group members to get personal advantages and achieve common objectives (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In addition, social capital might act as an effective driver that affects consumers' usage of social networking sites as a vehicle for eWOM (Chu & Kim, 2011).

2.1.8. Homophily

According to Oxford Dictionary, homophily is defined as desire for individuals to look for or be attracted to people who are similar to themselves. Friends, spouses, romantic partners, co-workers, colleagues, and other professionals and recreational associates are generally willing to be similar to each other. As opposed to be similar to randomly chosen members of the same population with respect to different criteria such as race, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and education (Bhayani, 2016). Since people

want to socialize with those who have similar attributes, interpersonal communications are more likely to happen between them (Chu & Kim, 2011).

People are in contact with each other further than geographical barriers, across different time zones reducing the limitations of physical borders in making new ties (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). One of the strongest elements in the physical world that lead to homophily is locality due to geographic proximity. This is one of the main differences between ties in the physical and virtual world (J. Park & Feinberg, 2010). Often some data like age, gender, education on social media is either inaccessible or slippery. However, people express their interests, likes, dislikes, ideas, point of views and thoughts (Bisgin, Agarwal, & Xu, 2010). The digital age has a scientific approach to homophily, especially because of the role of social networks (Colleoni, Rozza, & Arvidsson, 2014). SNSs provide the opportunity to be in contact with other consumers and therefore simplify the way of keeping interpersonal contacts and other natural necessary tools for studying (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Moreover, SNSs might reset Hemophilus relationships in the offline world, potentially setting up some social barriers and let individuals to communicate despite geographical distance or everyday confrontation (Chin & Zhang, 2013). In addition, debates on echo chambers and filter bubbles shows that SNSs may amplify homophily (Flaxman, Goel, & Rao, 2016). Many scholars have concluded homophily have positive influence on eWOM. Additionally, some other scholars suggest that homophily have positive but indirect influence on eWOM with tie strength being the mediator. However, the researcher is conducting this study and consider each factor to independent from the other and evaluate their influence on eWOM.

2.2. eWOM in Social Networking Sites

The Consumer eWOM behavior has become a major element in forming purchasing behavior. has stated that knowledge and information through eWOM is considered more efficient and trustworthy by consumers. Normally, opinion leaders are the source of SNSs eWOM provided to opinion seeker through pass along medium (Lowenstein, 2011).

Soon, it won't be scary to pretend that everyone uses at least one SNS and spends a significant amount of time using it every day. In this busy life, people are open to

alternative solutions to fulfil their needs and found SNSs as ideal choices. People can quickly meet, reach, and speak with their friends and family about any topics, especially when they are buying something (Hossain, Jahan, Fang, & Hoque, 2019). Lately, with corona virus pandemic, people spend more time at home while surfing and net and buying behavior have moved to online shopping extensively. This should not go by without notice from marketers. As, first adopters as winners always as many experts say.

2.3. Features of eWOM Behavior in Social Networking Platforms

The appearance of the internet has given more choices to consumers to gather impartial product information from other consumers and it has provided the opportunity for consumers to share their opinions or consumption-related experiences by getting involved in eWOM (A. S. Güngör & ÇADIRCI, 2013). The important characteristic of eWOM in SNSs communication within social networking platforms is that personal networks can be accessed easily (Ellison et al., 2007). The different specification of eWOM is its power to be directed among several people, convenience, unlimited space, time and availability to the other consumers for an indefinite period of time (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). This causes social networking platforms to turn into a key source of product information for consumers (Ellison et al., 2007).

2.4. Conceptualization of eWOM in Social Networking Sites

In the last two decades, marketing theories and methods have changed a lot and these days marketing experts' practice according to social drivers rather than traditional aspects for getting more consumers. SNSs would allow marketers to get to their target directly (Drury, 2008). EWOM is commonly described as "positive or negative statement that is made by potential, genuine or former consumers about a product, service or company (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

People are in contact with each other on SNSs such as Facebook, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, and Pinterest. SNSs are web-based social media application that are built based on the conceptual and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and would permit the creation of user-generated content and it is virtually free exchange (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In addition, users may actively search for opinions from their companions and acquaintances in SNSs. Such behaviors are related with the social effect of eWOM,

where members of social networks would see their contacts as an important source of product and brand information (Chu & Kim, 2011).

It seems that recent academic publications have emphasized on users' idea transmitting behavior as well as giving opinion and searching online (Chu & Kim, 2011). The exceptional growth of social networking websites offers opinion leaders a specific network to strengthen their personal specifications and boost their ability and motivation for giving recommendations and suggestions to their fellows, which encourages the development of eWOM in social networking sites (Mata & Quesada, 2014).

As advancing technology of social networking sites make closer connection between consumers, marketers should get more information about exchanging patterns of information about their target users in order to have an effective communication (Smith et al., 2007). The process of eWOM happens through social networking websites and this can be understood by analyzing potential social elements that govern the flow of information exchange (Chu & Kim, 2011).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the rationale for research hypotheses and analyses results are evaluated. Accordingly, hypotheses development, the instruments used in this study, data collection procedures, characteristics of the participants, statistical analyses and results are given in the methodology chapter. For more information about other methodological issues such as sampling please refer to the first sections of this dissertation. The main objective of this study was to examine the potential predictors of electronic word of mouth communication in the social networking sites. In addition to that, making a cultural comparison between Turkish and Libyan consumers was aimed. To test the aforementioned hypotheses of the research, a survey research design was used.

3.1. Hypotheses Development

As discussed in the previous sections, there has been little attempts in literature to make cultural comparisons regarding eWOM communication. Based on the relevant literature, this study is the first attempt which associates different research variables with eWOM communication in SNSs. The background and rationale for hypotheses are discussed in the next section.

3.1.1. Rationale for Hypotheses

Although the definitions and backgrounds of research variables have been widely discussed in Chapter 2, it is also necessary to support the research hypotheses with convincing arguments. This section was written with this purpose.

Interpersonal Influence:

Interpersonal influence refers to that individuals differ in their responses to social influence (Bearden et al., 1989). In the context of this dissertation, interpersonal influence can be seen as a social factor that has a key role in affecting consumer's decision making process (Chu & Kim, 2011). Members of social networks see their contacts as an important supply of product data. Users may actively ask for ideas from

their companions and connections in SNSs. Their behaviors are related to the social influence of e-commerce members of social networks who view their contacts as vital source of product and data for brand (Chu & Kim, 2011). Informational influences are the desire to accept information from others with knowledge and can help lead users in product, brand, and store search (Bearden et al., 1989). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Interpersonal influence positively affects eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H_{1a}^*: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between interpersonal influence and eWOM communication.

Conformity:

Research on the usage and influence of suggestions on consumers has been typically categorized under word-of-mouth (Demirbaş, 2018). Consumers may follow others' opinions a result of obvious conformity pressures from peer groups, in regards to issues about what others may think of them, or they may react to the product that they choose and use (Yaylı & Bayram, 2012). That is because consumers believe that others provide reliable information about value of a product (Lee & Park, 2008). Demirbaş (2018) stated that conformity rises as a direct function of the size of the reference group. Other researchers concluded that size of a group was an element which boost normative pressure (Campbell & Fairey, 1989). They also suggested that rise in group size would have stronger impacts on conformity. Regarding online consumer reviews, consumers regard reviewers as one group of consumers. If the number of positive reviews goes up, the size of the reference group who suggests a product will rise as well. Consequently, as the number of users and reviews increase in SNSs, it will lead consumers to make their consumer behaviors rationalize. For example, a consumer who obey the rules and copy other consumers' behaviors has a potential to spread eWOM messages of brands. For instance, a consumer is more likely to conclude that a product is more popular when s/he reads more positive reviews about the product. This is supported by the empirical results of previous studies on online consumer reviews, showing that the number of

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* Note. All the second level hypotheses (from H_{1a} to H_{9a}) which propose the moderating effect of culture in the relationships between the dependent and independent variables were developed based on the discussion given under the "A cross-cultural Values and WOM heading." Please see page 68.

ratings has important impact on sales (Lee & Park, 2008). Accordingly, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2: Conformity positively affects eWOM in SNSs.

H2a: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between conformity and eWOM communication.

Innovativeness:

Consumer innovativeness is defined as the individual's desire for creativity looking and searching for new products and experiences (Manning et al., 1995). Researchers who have studied the innovativeness and WOM relationship in traditional (offline) environment found negative connections between innovativeness and WOM (Manning et al., 1995). Talking about eWOM setting, some researchers have found the positive effects of consumer innovativeness on information seeking, while most of these researches have dealt with the sender's point of view (Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996). . If opinion seeking is realized as a sort of stimulation to search, to get information about WOM, it might be valuable to relate these ideas in both online and offline contexts. In some studies, researchers advised further research from eWOM point of view and innovations and expert reviews.

Previous research shows lack of empirical evidence about innovativeness and WOM relationship in online and offline environments, especially from the receiver's point of view. In addition, based on literature, there is no study that focused WOM and eWOM environments. This provides a possibility for getting some new findings. Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3: Innovativeness positively affects eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H3a: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between innovativeness and eWOM communication.

Individualism/ Collectivism:

Collectivism is about societies in which people can expect their relatives, tribes or other groups to support them in exchange for being loyal to these groups. While

collectivist cultures are motivated with group rewards, individualist cultures are motivated with individual rewards. Personal and public objectives are more closely equal to collectivist cultures when compared to individualist cultures (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995). This has some important implications about the relationships between consumers and companies. Research shows that commercials in individualist cultures would accentuate the independence theme in the form of individual predestination, autonomy, independence, competition and non-conformity (Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996). While commercials in collectivist communities focus on group-consensus appeals, safety of family, and family ties (Han & Shavitt, 1994). More specifically, the websites of firms that are located in individualist societies have been shown to describe higher levels of individualism-oriented features such as privacy, independence, and uniqueness. In contrary, the websites of companies from or located in collectivist societies depict higher levels of collectivism-oriented factors such as community, family, and loyalty (Singh, Kumar, & Baack, 2005). In the light of those findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4: Collectivism positively affects eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H_{4a}: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between collectivism and eWOM communication.

H5: Individualism negatively affects eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H_{5a}: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between individualism and eWOM communication.

Trust:

In this study, another research variable is the trust. Trust can be defined as the reliability of the source of data (East & Uncles, 2008). The definition of trust is directly related to the trust and objectivity of the sender of information (Dimitrakos, 2012). In WOM literature trust has mostly been linked to the trustworthiness of the source or the sender. When consumers are contacting with each other and companies on social networking platforms, they are trying to develop trusted communications and they spread the messages of trusted companies (Zainal, Harun and Lily (2017) That is why

the generalized trust is built between the consumers due to its role in building eWOM (Hsu & Tran, 2013). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Trust positively affects eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H_{6a}: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between trust and eWOM communication.

Tie Strength:

Tie strength refers to the power of the bond between members of a network (Mittal, Huppertz, & Khare, 2008). Money et al. (1998) mentioned tie strength as a multidimensional concept that represents the strength of the dyadic (smallest social group which is formed from only two persons) interpersonal relationship in the context of social networks. Strong tie can be found in the family, friendship, or relative relationships. They all are about connections which are intimate and the core of substantive and emotional support to different people (Pigg & Crank, 2004). On the contrary, weak tie strengths have fewer intimate relations which can be seen among colleagues or other known individuals (Chu & Kim, 2011). Weak tie strengths act as a significant source of data and knowledge for those who are seeking opinion at the SNSs (Pigg & Crank, 2004). Although strong ties impact eWOM at the individual level, the hybrid features of SNSs would let weak ties develop their potential effect through developing consumers' personal networks to external online communities (Chu & Kim, 2011). More specifically, Yang and Matilla (2012) found that tie strength which is associated with complaint behavior positively affected consumer satisfaction. In addition, the effect of culture on tie strength and eWOM was investigated and proved in different studies (Granovetter, 1983; Li, Liu and Zang, 2020; Kate et al. 2010) Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7: Tie strength positively affects eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H_{7a}: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between tie strength and eWOM communication.

Social capital:

The relationship between social capital and SNS usage have been investigated by different researchers. For example, (Chu & Choi, 2011) found that users who are involved in eWOM enjoy high social capital. Social capital is gained when people wish to participate in reciprocal tasks and obligations to collectively own social capital (Al-Duhaish, Alshurideh, & Al-Zu'bi, 2014). Accordingly, research concluded that social capital positively affects opinion-giving and searching for behaviors which in turn would influence eWOM communication (Wang et al., 2016). Social outcome expectations have powerful and positive impact on the behavioral intentions of eWOM (Hau, Kim, Lee, & Kim, 2013). Thus, this study has considered tie strength and trust in SNSs as the key elements of social capital. However, based on the research model, it is considered independent factors that influence eWOM behavior, and the following hypothesis is proposed:

H8: Social capital positively affects eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H_{8a}: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between social capital and eWOM communication.

Homophily:

Homophily is described as level in which people share same specifications such as gender, age, education and income, to the extent that individuals communicate when they have common specifications. Consumers who share high degree of homophily, would contribute more in eWOM with each other which in the end would shape their buying's decisions (Chu & Kim, 2011). The Elaboration Model shows that individuals make a decision on the specifications of the message provider, if the reader finds out that person is somehow like him, then the message would become more convincing to the reader (Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981). In a recent study, found that "For SNS homophily, users who saw their SNS network as being more heterogeneous (low homophily) have risen their bridging social capital, but reduced their bonding social capital with increased SNS use" (Phua et al., 2017). A study which has been done by also explained that information from Hemophilus sources are preferred compared to heterophilies, and information from Hemophilus is more effective for consumer to make

decision (M. Steffes & E. Burgee, 2009). Many studies found an important effect of homophily on eWOM communication about social media and virtual marketing (Jalees, Tariq, Zaman, & Alam Kazmi, 2015). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H9: Homophily positively affect eWOM behavior in SNSs.

H$_{9a}$: Culture has moderating role in the relationship between collectivism and eWOM communication.

3.1.2.1. A Cross-Cultural Values and WOM:

It is well recorded that culture can have a strong effect on consumers' point of view and actions (McCort & Malhotra, 1993). Cultural values would provide wide guidelines for acceptable ways of behaving and acting in specific situations (Feather, 1995). Cultural values are a powerful force that shapes motivations, lifestyles, and product choices (Tse et al., 1989). In fact, cultural valences show the most basic and major beliefs of a society and these beliefs would significantly affect communication patterns. Therefore, culture can potentially have a significant impact on consumers' eWOM behavior through its influence on person's values and group norms. Although previous studies have already addressed that eWOM as a popular information source for consumer decisions making process arounds the world (Goodrich & De Mooij, 2014), it is still unclear that how the use and evaluation of different types of eWOM are shaped by cross-cultural differences. As a result, the researcher proposes:

H10: Socio-cultural variables differ by culture.

H$_{10a}$. Interpersonal influence differs by culture.

H$_{10b}$. conformity differs by culture.

H$_{10c}$. Innovativeness differs by culture.

H$_{10d}$. Collectivism differs by culture.

H$_{10e}$ Individualism differs by culture.

H$_{10f}$. Tie strength differs by culture.

H$_{10g}$ Trust differs by culture.

H$_{10h}$. Social capital differs by culture.

H$_{10i}$. Homophily differs by culture.
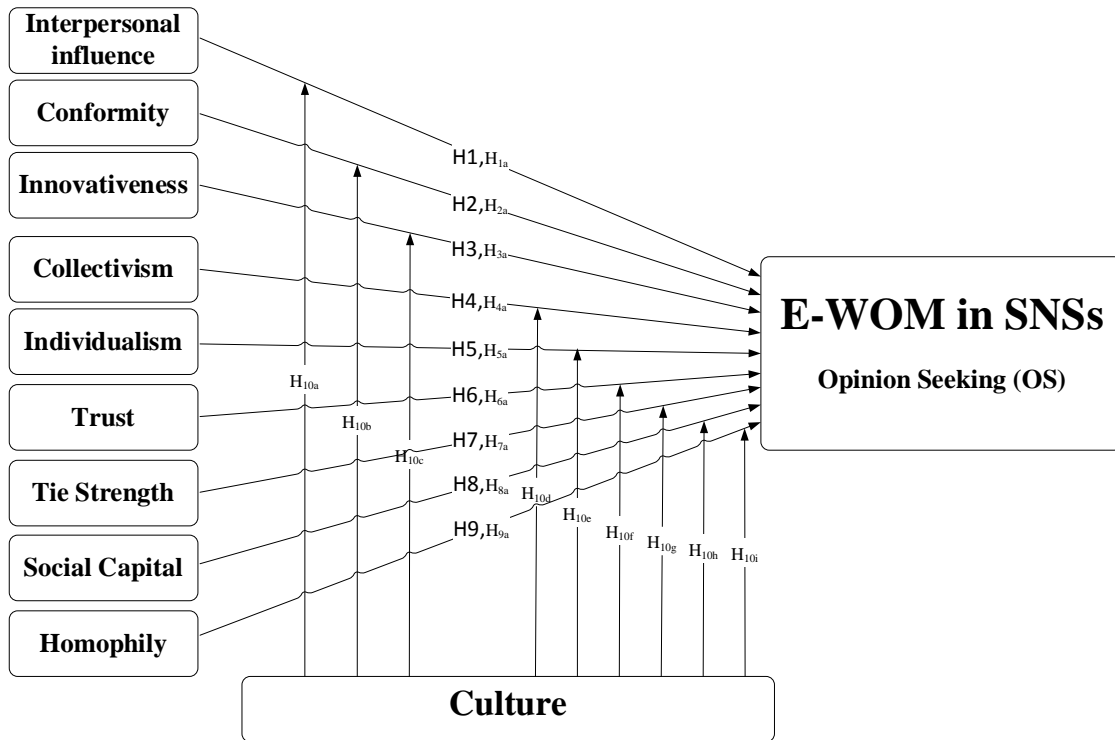
Figure 7. The Research Model.

3.2. Constructing Data Collection Instrument

Based on the objective and the nature of this study a questionnaire was prepared using previously validated scales. The final version of the survey consisted of three parts. The first part included the demographic characteristics of the participants. The second part contained four (4) items related to the participants' general use of SNSs as Facebook, Instagram or Sin Weibo, and six (6) items linked to the dependent variable, opinion seeking. The third part consisted of nine scales (See the Table 3 for each scale). Seven point-Likert type scale was used to measure participants' responses. The questionnaire was translated by a licensed translation office into the Arabic and Turkish languages. Two bilingual translators were participated in translating process. The questionnaire was checked by both the supervisor of the dissertation and a professor in the business administration department of Karabuk University.

Table 3. Scales Used in This Study.

Parts of Questionnaire	Number of Items	Source
Demographic	8	
General use of social networking sites	4	Thoumrungroje, A. (2014)
Opinion Seeking (eWOM)	6	Chu & Choi. (2011)
interpersonal influence	8	Chu & Choi. (2011)
Conformity	7	Santor, Messervey, & Kusumakar. (2000)
Innovativeness	6	Park et al. (2007)
Collectivism/ Individualism	14	Sivadas et al.(2008)
Trust	7	Chu & Choi. (2011)
Tie strength	3	Chu & Choi. (2011)
Social capital	10	Chu & Choi. (2011)
Homophily	8	McCroskey. (2013)

3.3. Pilot Study

Before conducting the main study, in order to see whether the questionnaire was clear and understandable a pilot study was performed. Thirty-eight (38) Libyan and Turkish participants were chosen. Some of the participants were given the e-copy of the questionnaire and the others were given the paper copies. The researcher asked the pilot sample if they have any remarks or questions concerning simplicity of the terms, and easiness of responding. After three (3) days, the researcher obtained thirty-three (33) questionnaires. Thirty (30) questionnaires were fully answered. The researcher used them to investigate the internal validity of the instrument.

3.4. Participant Selection and Procedure

The survey form was shared by the researcher on Facebook using the convenience sampling method. The questionnaire was initially prepared using Google form, an online survey development tool, given that the platform's usefulness such as lower costs, quick responses and a geographically unrestricted sample. Six hundred (600) invitation messages were sent randomly to Facebook members (Turkish & Libyan). They were asked to share this message with their own social networks. Only the participants who were planning to buy a car in near future were included in the study. Participants were also told that the term "product" used in the survey was referred to car

only. Please see the Appendix 1 for the survey form and information to participants section.

The target sample composed of those who were active online in August 2019. Data were collected in a three-weeks period beginning on first of September 2019. The total received and completed questionnaire were four hundred sixty-two (462). They were two hundred and fifty-two (252) Libyan and two hundred and ten (210) Turkish participants. Sample size was enough considering the z-value.

3.5. Demographical Characteristics of Participants

Table 4 shows that demographical characteristics of the participants - four hundred sixty-two (462) who participated in the study. The Libyan participants were two hundred and fifty-two (252). The male sample was one hundred thirty-eight (138), while the females were one hundred and fourteen (114). The Turkish sample was two hundred and ten (210) among them was ninety (90) male and one hundred and forty female participants. The distribution of participants on age, marital status, annual income, job, majors, educational level, culture and age are also shown in the same table below.

Table 4. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Demographic characteristics		*Frequency*	*%*
Age	18 to 24 years	60	13.0
	25 to 34 years	90	19.5
	35 to 44 years	84	18.2
	45 to 54 years	180	39.0
	55 to 64 years	36	7.8
	Age 65 or older	12	2.6
Marital Status	Single (never married)	126	27.3
	Married	264	57.1
	Widowed	60	13.0
	Divorced	12	2.6
Annual Income	Less than $10,000	72	15.6
	$10,000 to $50,000	174	37.7
	$50,000 and above	216	46.8
Job Title	Intern / student	66	14.3
	Worker	216	46.8
	Owner	126	27.3
	Retired	36	7.8
	Housewife	18	3.9
	Computer Science	42	9.1

Major	Science	60	13
	Management	108	23.4
	Marketing	60	13
	Accounting	42	9.1
	Finance	36	7.8
	Nursing	30	6.5
	Engineering	72	15.6
	Other	12	2.6
Education Level	Know how to read and write	6	1.3
	Secondary education	84	18.2
	Bachelor's degree	288	62.3
	Master and above	84	18.2
Culture	Libyan	252	54.55 %
	Turkish	210	45.45%
Age	Female	234	50.65%
	Male	238	49.35%

3.6. Data Analysis

After collecting the questionnaires several processes are implemented namely, encoding, uploading data to the SPSS software, and data analysis. Different statistical analyses were used including descriptive statistics, t-test for independent samples, exploratory factor analysis, z-test for the equality of regression Coefficients, Pearson correlation, liner and multi linear regression.

3.7. Reliability and Validity Analyses

Reliability Analysis indicates to what extent a measuring scale produces the same results for each time the process repeated (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 1998). Therefore, whenever, a research instrument is reapplied to similar population, it is expected to have similar results. This shows whether the instrument is reliable or not. In addition, a measurement tool should measure an intended construct and this is called validity (Hair et al., 1998). In a brief, the consistency of any scale is reflected through its reliability and validity evaluate to what extent the items reflect the scale accurately. In this study, the researcher tested the reliability of the scales based on Cronbach's alpha. Table 3.3 reveals Cronbach's Alpha values for each measurement used in the study.

Table 5. Reliability Analysis Results for Scales.

	Parts of Questionnaire	Cronbach's alpha
1	Opinion Seeking (**Dependent Variable**)	.757
2	Degree of interpersonal influence	.795
3	Degree of Conformity	.829
4	Degree of Innovativeness	.759
5	Degree of Collectivism	.757
6	Degree of Individualism	.697
7	Level of Trust	.735
8	Tie strength	.754
9	Bonding social capital	.833
10	Degree of Homophily	.755
11	Total of instrument	.890

The alpha coefficients are shown in Table 5 Concerning the threshold values for alpha Cronbach reliability coefficients, George and Mallery (2003) provide the following rules of thumb: "$\geq$ .9 – Excellent, $\geq$ .8 – Good, $\geq$ .7 – Acceptable, $\geq$ .6 – Questionable, $\geq$.5 – Poor, and $\leq$ .5 – Unacceptable" (p. 231). Table shows that Cronbach alpha values for each measurement are acceptable.

3.7.1. Descriptive Statistics of the Scales Used in the Study

3.7.1.1. Interpersonal Influence

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for Items of Interpersonal Influences.

Statements	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
1. I rarely purchase the latest fashion styles until I am sure my friends approve of them.	3.99	1.85
2.It is important that others like the products and brands I buy.	4.12	1.774
3.When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of.	4.37	1.88
4.If other people can see me using a product, I often purchase the brand they expect me to buy.	4.21	1.957
5.I like to know what brands and products make good impressions on others.	4.38	1.895
6.I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase.	4.06	1.974
7.If I want to be like someone, I often try to buy the same brands that they buy.	3.77	2.008
8.I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase.	5.13	1.921
Total of statements describe sample's personality traits.	34.274	11.853

There are eight statements that covers this independent variable, personal interaction. To investigate the sample' responses on these statements, results in Table 6 reveal that high mean scores are notched on the eighth, fifth, and third statements. Concerning the other statements, the mean scores are closed to the midpoint (4.0) of the scale. However, the lowest mean scores are noticed on the seventh and first statements. In regard to the differences between the total mean score on the eight statements (34.274) and the range of possible mean scores (8-56) for these statements, therefore, the general mean score of the sample is higher than the midpoint (32.0) of the range of the eight statements. Thus, the degree of interpersonal influence on the behavior of eWOM on SNSs is high.

3.7.1.2. Degree of Conformity

There are seven statements that reflected the relationship between degree of conformity of social networking users and eWOM (opinion seeking).

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for Statements About Degree of Conformity.

Statements	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
1.If a teacher asks me to do something, I usually do it.	4.57	1.718
2. I usually do what I am told.	5.29	1.729
3.I usually obey my parents.	5.08	1.713
4. I follow my parents' wishes even when it means not doing something I want to do.	5.13	1.542
5. Even when I disagree with my parents' wishes, I usually do −what I am told.	4.39	1.408
6. I break rules frequently.	4.62	1.875
7. I rarely follow the rules.	4.03	2.085
Total degree of Conformity	33.103	6.9293

There are seven statements covers this independent variable degree of conformity. To investigate the sample' responses on these statements, the descriptive statistics in Table 7 reveal that high mean scores are noticed on the all the seven statement except the seventh statement where the mean score (4.03) is near to the possible mean scores (1-7). response of the sample on the seventh statement was moderate.

3.7.1.3. Degree of Innovativeness

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics for Statements About Degree of Innovativeness.

Statements	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
1. In general, I am among the last in my circle of friends to visit a company's new web site when it appears on the WWW.	4.55	1.749
2. If I heard that a new retail site was available on the web, I would not be interested enough to shop from it.	4.42	1.835
3. Compared to my friends, I seek out relatively little information over the WWW.	4.45	1.696
4. In general, I am the last in my circle of friends to know of any new retail web sites.	4.23	1.781
5. I will visit a new company's web site even if I have not heard of it before.	4.12	1.745
6. I know about new retail web sites before most other people in my circle do.	5.47	1.61
Total degree of innovativeness.	27.233	5.39196

There are six statements related to this independent variable, degree of innovativeness. Only the first four statements are written in negative expressions. Therefore, scores of them will be opposite than the fifth and sixth statements. All the participants mean scores are higher slightly than the midpoint of the seven points scale (4) except the first and the sixth statements. Therefore, the sample response high negative agreement of the first and the sixth statement.

3.7.1.4. Degree of Collectivism

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics for Statements About Degree of Collectivism.

Statements	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
1. My happiness depends very much on the happiness of those around me.	5.16	1.685
2. I would do what would please my family, even if I detested that activity.	4.97	1.637
3. I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group.	4.79	1.785
4. The well-being of my co-workers is important to me.	4.51	1.794
5. Children should feel honored if their parents receive a distinguished award.	5.09	1.601
6. If a co-worker gets a prize, I would feel proud.	4.58	2.049
7. I would sacrifice an activity that I enjoy very much If my family did not approve of it.	4.77	1.901
8. I feel good when I cooperate with others.	5.22	1.779
Total degree of collectivism	39.064	9.32052

Eight statements have listed in Table 9 The statements represented different believes and kinds of behavior related with collectivism. The participants' responses on these eight statements vary. High mean scores are scored on the first, fifth, and eight statements.

Regarding the total sample mean score on the eight statements (39.064), it is higher than the midpoint (32) of the possible range of the score (8-56). Hence the degree of collectivism is very high among the participants.

3.7.1.5. Degree of Individualism

Table 10. Descriptive Statistics for Statements About Degree of Individualism.

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I enjoy working in situations involving competition with others.	5.14	1.656
2. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many ways.	5.77	1.495
3. I often "do my own thing".	5.49	1.544
4. Competition is the law of nature.	5.21	1.443
5. I am a unique individual.	4.98	1.81
6.Without competition it is not possible to have a good society.	5.45	1.439
Total of individualism	32.0	6.23196

Six statements have listed in Table 10 The statements represent different believes and kinds of behavior related to individualism. To explore the sample' responses on these statements, the mean scores show high agreement on the six statements.

Regarding the differences between the total sample mean score on the six statements (32.00) and the midpoint (24) of the possible range of the score (6-42), the degree of individualism is very high among the participants.

3.7.1.6. Trust

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics for Statements About Level of Trust Among SNSs Users.

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Generally speaking, most contacts on my "friends" list on Facebook can be trusted.	4.7	1.811
2. I feel confident about having discussions with the contacts on my "friends" list on Facebook.	4.61	1.615
3. The contacts on my "friends" list on Facebook will do everything within their capacity to help others.	4.53	1.801
4. I trust most contacts on my "friends" list on Facebook.	4.75	1.716
5. I have confidence in the contacts on my "friends" list on Facebook.	4.66	1.794
6. My contacts on my "friends" list on Facebook offer honest opinions.	4.95	1.66
7. I can believe in the contacts on my "friends" list on Facebook.	4.43	1.821
Total level of trust social networking site.	32.636	10.30415

There are seven statements representing level of trust social networking site users perceives in their contacts. To investigate the sample's level of responses on these statements the mean scores are calculated and show participants' agreement on the seven statements as per shown in Table 11.

Regarding the differences between the total sample mean score on the seven statements (32.636) and the midpoint (28) of the possible range of the score (7- 49), the degree of individualism is very high among the participants.

3.7.1.7. Tie Strength

Table 12. Descriptive Statistics for Statements About Effecting of the tie Strength on the Behavior of eWOM in SNSs.

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Approximately how frequently do you communicate with the contacts on your "friends" list on Facebook?	4.61	1.731
2. Overall, how important do you feel about the contacts on your "friends" list on Facebook?	5.01	1.815
3. Overall, how close do you feel to the contacts on your "friends" list on Facebook?	4.77	1.652
Total tie strength	14.389	4.47162

Results in Table 12 showed mean scores of the sample on statements related to the independent variable, tie strength between SNSs users. The three mean scores are higher midpoint (4.0) of the scale. Regarding the total sample mean score on the three statements (14.389) and the midpoint (12) of the possible range of the score (3- 21), Therefore, tie strength in SNSs that users have is higher than the average score point.

3.7.1.8. Social Capital

Table 13. Descriptive Statistics for Statements About Social Capital of SNSs Users.

Statements	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
1.Interacting with people on Facebook makes me interested in things that happen outside my town.	4.52	1.823
2.Interacting with people on Facebook makes me want to try new things.	4.64	1.789
3.Interacting with people on Facebook makes me interested in what people different from me are thinking.	4.58	1.71
4.Talking with people on Facebook makes me curious about other places in the world.	4.77	1.744
5.Interacting with people on Facebook makes me feel like part of a larger community.	4.86	1.743
6.Interacting with people on Facebook makes me feel connected to the bigger picture.	4.38	1.833
7.Interacting with people on Facebook reminds me that everyone in the world is connected.	4.31	1.984
8.I am willing to spend time to support general community activities on Facebook.	4.52	1.851
9.Interacting with people on Facebook gives me new people to talk to.	4.12	2.17
10.I come in contact with new people on Facebook all the time.	4.8	1.939
Total social capital of SNSs users.	45.467	14.995

Results in Table 13 show mean scores of the sample on statements related about social capital of SNSs users. The ten mean scores are higher than the midpoint (4.0) of the scale (1-7). Regarding the differences between the total sample mean score on the ten statements (45.476) and the midpoint (40) of the possible range of the score (10- 70), the sample's mean scores is higher than the midpoint. This indicates positive responses on the total of the statements.

3.7.1.9. Degree of Homophily

Table 14. Descriptive Statistics for Statements About Degree of Homophily.

Statements	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
1. Doesn't behave like me / Behaves like me	5.03	1.76
2. Is different from me / Is similar to me	5.31	1.702
3. 1 Is from a different social class / Is from the same social class 7.	5.27	1.966
4. Is culturally different / Is culturally similar	4.9	1.642
5. Thinks like me / Does not think like me	4.94	1.664
6. Is like me / Is unlike me	5.38	1.379
7. Has status like mine / Has status different from mine	5.26	1.718
8. Has an economic situation like mine / Does not have an economic situation like mine	4.896	1.642
Total social networking users have the degree of homophily	40.961	10.925

Results in Table 14 show mean scores of the sample on statements related to social networking users have the degree of homophily. The score for each statement is written at the end of the statements. The eight mean scores are higher than the possible range of mean score (1-7). Therefore, participants show agreement on the statements. Regarding the differences between the total sample mean score on the eight statements (40.961) and the midpoint (32) of the possible range of the score (8-56), the sample's mean scores on social networking users have the degree of homophily is higher than the average score point.

3.7.2. General Use of SNSs

The main objective of this study is to analyze how consumers are influenced by eWOM in SNSs. Therefore, it is signified to investigate how active are participants in using the different kinds of SNSs. Table 15 showed mean scores, standard deviations, mean differences between sample's mean and the theoretical mean (4.0) of the seven points (1-7) Likert scale that was used in estimating the degree of utilizing social media. To investigate the statistical differences between the two mean scores on each type of social media, the One- sample t-test was used.

Table 15. Descriptive Statistics for Participants' General use of Social Networking Sites.

How active are you in using the following types of social media?	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
Social Networking Sites (Facebook, MySpace, and Linkedin)	4.56	2.003
Microblogging sites (Twitter)	3.44	2.153
Photosharing sites (Instagram, Flickr, snapchat and Snapfish)	3.62	2.141
Video sharing sites (YouTube)	4.16	2.026

** significant $p > 0.01$ and * significant $p > 0.05$

Results of Table 15 showed that the highest sample's mean score (4.56) was on social networking sites as Facebook, LinkedIn and Myspace. While the lowest mean score (3.44) was on Microblogging sites as Twitter. Based on the seven points scale that is used the range of the mean score should be between (1-7). The result indicated that the sample used Facebook, Myspace, and LinkedIn, more than the midpoint or the average of the scale. The mean values on Microblogging sites as Twitter and Photosharing sites as Instagram, Flickr, snapchat and Snapfish are less than the midpoint (4.0) of the scale. Therefore, the participants are not using these two types frequently. In regard to the fourth type of social network, Video sharing sites as YouTube, the sample's mean score is (4.16) which is within the average. In general, the participants use two types of social media Facebook and YouTube more frequently than the other social media.

3.8. Evaluating the Factor Structure Through Exploratory Factor Analysis

According to Fabrigar and Wegener (2011), Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is usually used to check the factor structure of the scales that are used in a study. In this study EFA was performed just before analyzing the hypothesized relationships between the research variables to assure the validity of the measurements. EFA is conducted in order to identify factor loadings and eliminate any item which does not represent the related factor (Fabrigar & Wegener, 2011). Accordingly, EFA was conducted for each scale and both samples in this study. Before conducting EFA, Kaiser Meyer Olkin value was computed. This value shows how the data is suitable for factor analysis. According to Kaiser (1975), KMO test value which is higher than 0.9 is acceptable. However, Hair

et al. (2006) suggested that KMO value between 0.7 and 0.8 is considered good fit and acceptable. Values below 0.7 till 0.5 are considered mediocre. The closer KMO value to 1 the better. Some scholars suggest that the minimum acceptable value for KMO is 0.6. However, some other researchers reported the ideal is above 0.8. KMO values. Factor loadings and explained variances of each scale are represented in the tables (See Table 3.14 – Table 3.22) for both cultures. EFA was performed on Turkish and Libyan samples separately. EFA results are shown in the related tables.

3.8.1. EFA Results for Opinion Seeking Items (Dependent Variable)

Table 16. EFA Results for Opinion Seeking Items (Dependent Variable).

Items	Turkish	Items	Libyan
OpSkg5	0.887	OpSkg4	.867
OpSkg2	0.886	OpSkg5	.860
OpSkg4	0.867	OpSkg2	.838
OpSkg3	0.858	OpSkg1	.834
OpSkg1	0.846	OpSkg3	.823
OpSkg6	0.716	OpSkg6	.520
Total Variance Explained (%)		%71.47	%61.60
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)		.903	.845
Significance of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		0.000	.000

Table 16 shows that Opinion Seeking scale's factor structure. Results show that all factor loadings were loaded over 0.40 for both samples. In addition, none of the items were loaded to different factors above .40. The fact that ordering of some items was different among cultures can be explained through cultural differences between Turkish and Libyan respondents. Total variance explained data indicate this component accounts for 71% and %61 of the variance respectively. KMO values were also above the threshold levels for both samples. Results provide evidence for structural validity of opinion seeking scale in both samples. As a conclusion, the factor loading values seem to be high enough for further analysis or for regression analysis.

3.8.2. EFA Results for Independent Variables:

3.8.2.1. EFA Results for Interpersonal Influence Items

Table 17. EFA Results for Interpersonal Influence Items.

Items	Turkish	Items	Libyan
Intpers6	.901	Intpers5	.851
Intpers2	.879	Intpers3	.783
Intpers5	.845	Intpers1	.758
Intpers4	.837	Intpers4	.748
Intpers8	.830	Intpers7	.728
Intpers3	.820	Intpers5	.716
Intpers7	.806	Intpers6	.661
Intpers1	.743	Intpers8	.493
Total Variance Explained (%)		%62.96	%49.69
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)		.915	.761
Significance of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		0.000	.000

Table 17 shows that Interpersonal Influence scale's factor loadings. Results show that all factor loadings were loaded over 0.40 for both samples and none of the items were loaded to other factors above .40. Explained total variance was 71% and %61 respectively for Turkish and Libyan samples. KMO values were also above the threshold levels for both samples.

3.8.2.2. EFA Results for Conformity Items

Table 18. EFA Results for Results for Conformity Items.

Items	Turkish	Items	Libyan
Conf1	.859	Conf2	.811
Conf2	.856	Conf1	.737
Conf3	.823	Conf3	.693
Conf4	.818	Conf4	.642
Conf5	.675	Conf7	.521
Conf7	.513	Conf5	.504
Conf6	**.374**	Conf6	**.408**
Total Variance Explained (%)		%49.13	%49.69
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)		.737	.743
Significance of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		0.000	.000

Table 18 shows that all factor loadings are above .40 except Conformity 6, which means "I break rules frequently". Since its loading was not too far away from the

threshold level and above .40 in Libyan sample, the researcher decided to keep it for the further analysis.

Total variance explained was %49.13 and %49.69 respectively. KMO values were also above the threshold levels for both samples. Results provide evidence for structural validity of conformity scale in both samples. As a conclusion, the factor loading values seem to be high enough for further analysis or for regression analysis.

3.8.2.3. EFA Results for Innovativeness Items

Table 19. EFA Results for Results for Innovativeness Items.

Items	Turkish	Items	Libyan
Innovat1	.946	Innovat1	.931
Innovat3	.847	Innovat3	.881
Innovat2	.814	Innovat4	.698
Innovat4	.781	Innovat2	.667
Innovat5	.521	Innovat5	.653
Innovat6	**.397**	Innovat6	.619
Total Variance Explained (%)		%58.10	%51.50
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)		.765	.682
Significance of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		%58.10	%51.50

Table 19 shows that all factor loadings are above .40 except Innovat6 in Turkish culture. This item was "I know about new retail web sites before most other people in my circle do.". Although its factor loading was below the threshold levels, the researcher decided to keep it for further analysis because it loaded very high in Libyan sample. Total variance explained data indicate this component accounts for 58.10% and %51.50 of the variance respectively. KMO values were also above the threshold levels for both samples.

3.8.2.4. EFA Results for Collectivism/Individualism Items

Table 20. EFA Results for Results for Collectivism/Individualism Items.

Items	Turkish	Items	Libyan
Colt3	.823	Colt7	.717
Colt2	.813	Colt5	.691
Colt1	.805	Colt3	.685
Colt12	.754	Colt10	.615
Colt5	.684	Colt2	.604
Colt10	.616	Colt12	.595
Colt14	.519	Colt1	.540
Colt7	.438	Colt14	.400
Indiv8	.772	Indiv4	.768
Indiv13	.746	Indiv6	.710
Indiv6	.677	Indiv13	.682
Indiv9	.659	Indiv8	.593
Indiv4	.575	Indiv9	.582
Indiv11	.563	Indiv11	.433
Total Variance Explained (%)		%71.56	%50.59
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)		.878	.731
Significance of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		0.000	.000

Table 20 shows that Collectivism/Individualism scale's unidimensional structure. Results show that all factor loadings were loaded over 0.40 for both samples. Total variance explained data indicate this component accounts for 71.56% and %50.59 of the variance respectively. KMO values were also above the threshold levels for both samples. Results provide evidence for structural validity of the scale in both samples.

3.8.2.5. EFA Results for Trust Items

Table 21. EFA Results for Results for Trust Items.

Items	Turkish	Items	Libyan
Trust5	.899	Trust1	.870
Trust1	.895	Trust4	.856
Trust6	.872	Trust5	.847
Trust3	.863	Trust6	.821
Trust2	.846	Trust3	.806
Trust4	.835	Trust2	.651
Trust7	.694	Trust7	.442
Total Variance Explained (%)		%68.33	%57.87
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)		.878	.796
Significance of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		0.000	.000

Table 21 shows factor loadings of each items of Trust scale are given in the Table 3.8. Results show that all factor loadings were above 0.40 and none of the items was loaded to other factors with higher values for both samples. Total variance explained indicated that this one factor solution accounts for 68.33% and %57.87 of the variance respectively. KMO values were also above the threshold levels for both samples.

3.8.2.6. EFA Results for Tie Strength Items

Table 22. EFA Results for Results for Tie Strength Items.

Items	Turkish	Items	Libyan
TieStr2	.903	TieStr2	.896
TieStr1	.844	TieStr3	.797
TieStr3	.831	TieStr1	.783
Total Variance Explained (%)		%71.47	%61.60
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)		.903	.845
Significance of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		0.000	.000

Table 22 shows that Tie Strength scale's unidimensional structure. Results show that all factor loadings were loaded over 0.40 for both samples. The fact that ordering of some items was different among cultures can be explained through cultural differences between Turkish and Libyan respondents. Total variance explained data indicate this component accounts for 71.47% and %61.60 of the variance respectively. KMO values were also above the threshold levels for both samples. Results provide evidence for structural validity of opinion seeking scale in both samples. As a conclusion, the factor loading values seem to be high enough for further analysis or for regression analysis.

3.8.2.7. EFA Results for Social Capital Items

Table 23. EFA Results for Results for Social Capital Items.

Items	Turkish	Items	Libyan
SocCap7	.884	SocCap8	.848
SocCap8	.862	SocCap7	.834
SocCap1	.859	SocCap9	.813
SocCap2	.831	SocCap1	.796
SocCap3	.827	SocCap6	.775
SocCap6	.824	SocCap2	.762
SocCap4	.824	SocCap4	.755
SocCap9	.821	SocCap5	.720
SocCap5	.814	SocCap3	.678
SocCap10	.528	SocCap10	.395
Total Variance Explained (%)		%73.89	%54.39
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)		.687	.826
Significance of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		0.000	.000

Table 23 shows that all factor loadings are above .40 except SocialCapital10 in Libyan sample which means "I come in contact with new people on Facebook all the time". Since its loading was not too far away from the threshold level and above .40 in Libyan sample, the researcher decided to keep it in the scale. Because it loaded above than the threshold levels in Turkish culture. The fact that ordering of some items was different among cultures can be explained through cultural differences between Turkish and Libyan respondents. Total variance explained indicated that one factor solution was accounted for 73.89% and %54.39 of the variance respectively. KMO values were also above the threshold levels for both samples.

3.8.2.8. EFA Results for Homophily Items

Table 24. EFA Results for Results for Homophily Items.

Items	Turkish	Items	Libyan
Homophily8	.890	Homophily4	.933
Homophily4	.890	Homophily8	.933
Homophily1	.848	Homophily1	.869
Homophily7	.841	Homophily3	.866
Homophily5	.839	Homophily7	.811
Homophily2	.826	Homophily5	.809
Homophily3	.818	Homophily2	.780
Homophily6	.472	Homophily6	.413
Total Variance Explained (%)		%66.13	%64.78
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO)		.687	.630
Significance of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		0.000	.000

Table 24 shows that Homophily scale's unidimensional structure. Results show that all factor loadings were loaded over 0.40 for both samples. The fact that ordering of some items was different among cultures can be explained through cultural differences between Turkish and Libyan respondents. Total variance explained data indicate this component accounts for 66.13% and %64.78 of the variance respectively. KMO values were also above the threshold levels for both samples. Results provide evidence for structural validity of opinion seeking scale in both samples. As a conclusion, the factor loading values seem to be high enough for further analysis or for regression analysis.

3.9. Testing Hypotheses

In order to test the hypotheses from 1 to 9 multiple linear regression was performed in SPSS. All statistical analyses were applied to whole data (N=462).

Multilinear Regression

Table 25. Results of multiple linear regression regarding the effect of the nine independent variables on eWOM (opinion seeking) in SNSs.

Source	B	$SE\ B$	Standardized Coefficients	T	p
Constant	-8.013	3.348		-2.393	.017
Interpersonal	.167	.040	.223	4.201	.000
Conformity	**-.076**	**.067**	**-.059**	**-1.141**	**.255**
Innovativeness	**.049**	**.068**	**.034**	**.718**	**.473**
Collectivism	.211	.059	.221	3.569	.000
Individualism	.239	.060	.167	3.971	.000
Trust	-.288	.064	-.334	-4.525	.000
Tie strength	.674	.093	.339	7.279	.000
Social Capital	**.013**	**.035**	**.021**	**.363**	**.716**
Homophily	.316	.039	.388	8.106	.000
R=.545 R^2 =.297, F=21.240, p<.001					

Multiple regression model is used to investigate how a single response variable Y (the behavior of eWOM in SNSs) depends linearly on a number of predictor variables. It's a form of linear regression that is used when there are two or more predictors. The regression model for opinion seeking was found to be significant ($R2$= .297), F (9, 452) = 21.240, p < .001, with six significant predictors. As Table 3.23 indicates, interpersonal (β = .167, t = 4.201, p < .000), Collectivism (β = .211, t = 3.569, p < .000), Individualism (β = .239, t = 3.971, p < .000), Trust (β = -.288, t = 4.525, p < .000), Tie of strength (β = .674, t = 7.279, p < .000) and Homophily (β = .316, t = 8.106, p < .000) significantly predicted an increased engagement in opinion seeking behavior in social networking sites. However, conformity, Innovativeness, and Social Capital have no significant effect on the behavior of eWOM in SNSs.

Based on the statistical analysis the relationship between variables mathematically will be as bellow;

$$y\ (eWOM) = -8.013 + 0.167 * interpersonal + 0.211 * Collectivisim + 0.239 * Individualism - 0.288 * Trust + 0.674 * Tie\ strength + 0.316 * Homophilious$$

Six variables had positive effect on eWOM, while three variables had no significant effect on eWOM. Results showed that H2, H3 and H8 were rejected, while H1, H4, H5, H6, H7 and H9 were supported. The moderator effect of culture is tested in the following sections.

3.9.1. Analyzing Cultural Differences

Table 26. Results of t-test for independent samples on social relationship variables based on Turkish and Libyan.

Independent Variables	Culture	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-test	Sig
Interpersonal Influence	Libyan	252	33.642	9.154	-1.256	.210
	Turkish	210	35.033	14.429		
Conformity	Libyan	252	33.119	4.038	0.051	.959
	Turkish	210	33.085	9.290		
Innovativeness	Libyan	252	28.357	4.678	**5.033	.000
	Turkish	210	25.885	5.873		
Collectivism	Libyan	252	39.881	6.824	*2.069	.039
	Turkish	210	38.085	11.572		
Individualism	Libyan	252	33.071	4.711	**4.118	.000
	Turkish	210	30.714	7.480		
Trust	Libyan	252	33.190	7.288	1.267	.206
	Turkish	210	31.971	13.022		
Tie strength	Libyan	252	12.642	4.266	**-10.168	.000
	Turkish	210	16.485	3.761		
Social capital	Libyan	252	44.095	11.953	*-2.163	.031
	Turkish	210	47.114	17.871		
Homophily	Libyan	252	39.690	10.384	**-2.758	.006
	Turkish	210	42.485	11.379		
Dependent variable (opinion seeking)	Libyan	252	24.321	7.637	**18.995	.000
	Turkish	210	28.185	9.826		

** significant $p<0.01$ and   * significant $p<0.05$

In order to test whether Libyan and Turkish participants have different perceptions concerning the effect of social relationship variables in engaging in word of mouth (opinion seeking), independent sample t-Test was used. Table 26 shows that statistical differences were found between Libyan and Turkish participants on six variables namely, innovativeness, collectivism, individualism, tie strength, social capital, and homophily. The Libyan participants' mean scores were significantly higher than that of Turkish participants on the following three variables (innovativeness,

collectivism, individualism) but the Turkish participants had higher mean scores on the last three variables (tie strength, social capital, and homophily). Nevertheless, insignificant differences were found between participants regarding the independent variables, interpersonal influence, conformity, and trust. Regarding opinion seeking, the Turkish participants had higher meanings (28.185) compared to the Libyan participants (24.321), (t = 18.995, p < .01). It can be concluded that the cultural variable creates differences on the effect of social relationship variables in engaging in word of mouth (opinion seeking).

To test the moderating effect of culture in the relationship between the independent variables and opinion seeking multiple regression analysis was performed for each sample separately. Table 27 shows that interpersonal influence, collectivism, trust, and social capital, had significant effect within the Libyan culture only, whereas, innovativeness, and homophily had significant within the Turkish culture only. In addition, individualism and tie strength were the common variables which had significant effect on eWOM and conformity had no significant effect on eWOM in both cultures.

Table 27. Regression analyses about the effect of the nine independent variables on eWOM (opinion seeking) in SNSs for eWOM based on Libyan-Turkey.

Independent variables	Libyans				Turkish			
	B	R^2_{adj}	t-test	f	B	R^2_{adj}	t-test	F
Interpersonal Influence	.212	.04	**3.426	**11.736	.068	.005	.983	.966
Conformity	**.008**	**-.004**	**.133**	**.019**	**.041**	**-.003**	**.594**	**.353**
Innovativeness	-.047	-.002	-.750	.562	.318	.097	**4.846	**23.480
Collectivism	.345	.115	**5.810	**33.761	-.107	.007	-1.547	2.394
Individualism	**.321**	**.099**	****5.350**	****28.625**	**.167**	**.023**	***2.450**	***6.004**
Trust	.225	.047	**3.658	**13.382	.066	.000	.952	.907
Tie strength	**.452**	**.201**	****8.006**	****64.091**	**.264**	**.065**	****3.941**	****15.532**
Social capital	.180	.028	**2.886	**8.327	.003	.085	1.237	1.530
Homophily	.017	-.004	.273	.074	.550	.299	**9.495	**90.159

** significant   p<0.01 and   * significant p<0.05

In order to check the regression coefficients, z-test was also performed. Table 3.26 show the regression analyses results. Analyses results showed that H2a, H5a and H7a were rejected and H_{1a}, H_{3a}, H_{4a}, H_{6a}, H_{8a} and H_{9a} were supported.

$$Z= \beta_1 - \beta_2 / \sqrt{SE\beta_1^2 + SE\beta_2^2} \quad \text{............} \quad \text{Raymond (1998. p862)}$$

Table 28. Values of β and St. Error of the regression equation for each culture and results of Z test.

Variable	Libyan		Turkish		z-test
	B	Std.error	B	Std.error	
Interpersonal Influence	.212	.052	.068	.047	*2.054
Conformity	.008	.120	.041	.073	**-0.235**
Innovativeness	-.047	.075	.318	.112	*-2.713
Collectivism	.345	.066	-.107	.059	*5.090
Individualism	.321	.097	.167	.090	**1.164**
Trust	.225	.065	.066	.052	*1.915
Tie strength	.452	.101	.264	.175	**0.931**
Social capital	.180	.040	.003	.038	*3.235
Homophily	.017	.047	.550	.050	*-7.781

There are significant differences between the two cultures on the effect of the independent variables, Interpersonal Influence, Innovativeness, Collectivism, Trust, Social capital, and Homophily, because the Z values exceeded (1.645). Whereas no differences are found between the two cultures' regression equations regarding the independent variables, conformity, individualism, and tie strength since the Z values are less than the critical value (1.645) of Z.

This means that culture do not have moderating role in the relationship between (conformity, individualism and tie strength) and eWOM communication. Consequently, the tenth hypothesis is partially accepted.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

4.1. Discussion

There are multiple motivations for spreading positive word of mouth about a product or institution. Positive eWOM messages are mostly perceived as more efficient and trustworthy by consumers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). For this reason, investigating the possible predictors of eWOM is necessary for companies and researchers as well. This study examined the predictors of eWOM in social networking sites. Accordingly, nine independent variables, namely interpersonal influence, conformity, innovativeness, collectivism, individualism, trust, tie strength, social capital and homophily, were chosen from the related literature (Chu & Choi, 2011). The possible relationships between opinion seeking and the independent variables were investigated using various statistical analysis (Martin et al., 2007).

Consumers opinion seeking behavior has recently attracted wide attention among marketing research community (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006). However, cultural dimensions such as conformity, innovativeness, collectivism, and individualism, especially between cultures have been neglected by the researchers (D. Güngör, Karasawa, Boiger, Dinçer, & Mesquita, 2014). As noted by several previous studies from marketing and consumer research disciplines (Arnold & Bianchi, 2001), culture affects various forms of consumer behavior. The results of this study support the idea that culture plays a very significant role in opinion seeking on social networking sites.

The structure of individualism and collectivism orientations illustrates the differences between two prevalent cultural orientations that give value to individual versus group harmony, respectively (Kashima et al., 1995). People with individualist values have the tendency to see themselves independent from other people and usually behave based on personal interest and preferences, while people with collectivistic values see themselves as interdependent with others and usually act based on social norms (Triandis, 2001). Personal objectives have priority over group objectives in individualistic communities, while in collectivist societies, in-group goals take priority

over those of individuals (Sivadas et al., 2008). Accordingly, our results showed that there are significant differences between the two cultures regarding the effect of the independent variables on eWOM. In other words, culture plays moderating role in the relationship between the independent variables of interpersonal influence, innovativeness, collectivism, trust, social capital, and homophily, and opinion seeking. Our results also showed that no differences were found between the two cultures' regarding the effect of conformity on eWOM.

Technological breakthroughs on internet and social media platforms provide eWOMs with the ability to spread faster and wider than ever (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). As a result, when consumers have trust on SNSs and their connections, it is more likely that they will be active participants (Valkeinen, 2015). Trust is a key factor in sharing data and quality of eWOM. Trust was another social variable found to be a significant predictor of eWOM in social networking sites in Libyan sample. This result can be explained with the fact that technological advancements and consumer acceptance have been late and slow in Libyan society compared to Turkish society.

The differences and similarities between Libyan and Turkish participants may stem from the characteristics that distinguish each culture. For example, Turkey is physically and culturally closer to the Europe than Libya (Güngör et al., 2014). The fact that individualism had a significant effect on eWOM only in Turkish sample can be explained by the physical and cultural closeness of Turkey to the European culture (Baycar, 2013). Similarly, the fact that conformity had no significant impact within both cultures can be explained by the fact that both cultures share similar religious backgrounds (Baycar, 2013). Generally, conformity pressurizes individuals in their societies to be coherent with their community. This is also supported by a comparative study by who found that conformity strongly predicts the engagement in SNSs in Japanese culture as opposed to Turkish culture. The same applies to Libyan culture which seems to be independent, self-assertive and not willing to conform with others easily (Twati, 2008). Consequently, both cultures show resistance when it comes to conforming to others' values. As it is shown in Table 25 conformity showed no significant effect on participants' engagement in eWOM in SNSs when combined with the other eight variables in the regression equation, thus leading to the rejection of H2 hypothesis.

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In order to thrive in today's highly interconnected world, it is desirable to have an innovative culture that adopts to the latest trends as most business leaders and practitioners want. However, it turns out to be hard to obtain and sustain innovativeness in an un-innovative culture. Also, there are still some cultures that totally avoid the risk associated seeking knowledge from online sources (Bilgen & Zoghi, 2017). Turkish and Libyan consumers share this stand when it comes to shaping consumer behavior toward opinion seeking as shown in Table 25 This is due to consumer perceived risk (Bilgen & Zoghi, 2017). Although eWOM and personal innovativeness are expected to reduce consumer perceived risk, this was not the case in both cultures. Our study showed no significant effect on participants engagement in eWOM in SNSs when combined with other eight variables in the regression equation. This is why H3 was not supported.

Although numerous scholars have stated that social capital might act as an effective driver to increase consumers' usage of social networking sites as a vehicle for eWOM (Chu & Kim, 2011), in this study social capital was found to have no significant effect on the behavior of eWOM in SNSs in both cultures, as shown in Table 3.25 Normally, social capital in micro-level is affected by personal demographics while at meso-level it is affected by school, society, community, ethnic and urban design. Moreover, at macro-level social capital is directly affected by culture, history, social structure and hierarchy. These variables have the same influence on both Turkish and Libyan cultures as social capital seems to have no significant influence eWOM consumer engagement in SNSs. This can be explained through other stronger predictors of eWOM. Consequently, H8 was rejected.

On other hand, there are significant differences between the two cultures on the effect of the independent variables of Interpersonal Influence, Innovativeness, Collectivism, Trust, Social capital, and Homophily because the Z values exceeded 1.645, as shown in Table 28 On the other hand, no differences were found between the two cultures' regression equations regarding the independent variables of conformity, individualism, and tie strength since the Z values were less than the critical value of 1.645. This means that culture does not have any moderating role in the relationship between conformity, individualism and tie strength, and eWOM communication. This can be explained in individualistic cultures by the loose ties between people where individuals tend to act independently from others within their own societies (Zhang,

Lowry, Zhou, & Fu, 2007). This usually happens when there is conflict between the interests of the individual and the group as conforming with the group norms is usually associated with relinquishing personal autonomy. Some scholars have even stated that individuality and conformity can coexist to certain degrees in every society (Zhang et al., 2007). Participants in Turkish and Libyan samples seemed to make their own choices based on their own consciences without being influenced by their own correspondent cultures. In support of these findings, several studies stated that conformity influences vary from one culture to another. Turkey has witnessed mass migration to big cities, an era of industrialization, strong media influence, self-sufficiency and individual freedom and autonomy, all of them strongly associated with individualist culture. However, according to Zhang, the opposite still exists in agricultural economies, big families, and societies with strong ingroup ties which act in union toward achieving group goals. In the light of this study, Turkish culture seems to be individualistic, thus people are not willing to conform with others.

Similarly, according to News218 (2019); Ramadan and Joseph (2015); TV.net218 (2017) TV., Libyan culture shows individualistic characteristics that have increased rapidly in the last ten year. The Arab uprising could have influenced Libyans to put more emphasis on their individual interests rather than collective and group interests. Like the previous explanation in Turkish culture, culture did not play a moderating effect in relationship between the three variables – conformity, individualism and tie strength, and eWOM engagement in SNSs in Libyan sample as well. Consequently, this conclusion was supported in through rejection of H2a hypothesis. Moreover, since, conformity is low in individualistic cultures, this also support the rejection of H5a.

According to Granovetter (1977) , when a strong tie strength exists in a culture, frequent interactions among its group members occur. This normally happens if those members are related to each other in the form of family members or close friends. In contrary, weak tie strengths are present when social relationships are weak and accompanied with infrequent interactions Granovetter (1977). Turkish environment is rich, active and dynamic, making connections between people infrequent and irregular (Kozan & Akdeniz, 2014). In support of this, (Granovetter) claimed that when a culture has weak ties among its people, this could be due to their access to different sources of

information. This was the case in Turkish participants. However, in Libyan sample, culture did not play any moderating effect on tie-strength. This could be due to the last decade of instability and infighting taking place in the country (Twati, 2008). This is why H7a was rejected.

4.2. Implications

4.2.1. Theoretical and Practical Implications

When cultural studies conducted in consumer research are evaluated, generally it can be claimed that culture has a great impact on consumer behavior. However, in order to determine the limits of this cultural effect, comparisons between many different cultures are required. In this study, the similarities and differences between two cultures were scrutinized and the results showed that the effect of culture can be quite complex. For example, one can argue that Libyan and Turkish culture are similar on religious, political, and cultural aspects. However, it is important to evaluate this similarity in line with consumer behaviors. In particular, the difference in eWOM behavior in two cultures can be evaluated accordingly. It is an interesting result that eWOM means were higher in the Libyan sample in this study. However, this result can be attributed to the research data obtained from Facebook platform as research has shown that the most widely used social media platform in Arab countries is Facebook (Radcliffe & Abuhmaid, 2020). The fact that Turkish people use other social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter more frequently can partly explain why opinion seeking behavior scores were lower in the Turkish sample (Hunter, 2019). This discrepancy is important for both practitioners and researchers as the data obtained from different social media platforms should be evaluated separately to obtain more accurate results.

Marketing managers should focus on more cultural dynamics and variables in today's online commercial world as it continues to expand and consumers are faced with many problems including opaque product quality, price inconsistency and brand image. Cultural dynamics change when cultures are faced by continuous but subtle changes in their variables due to environmental, financial, human and technological forces. These would include relationships, beliefs, traditions, language, dress code, fashion styles, and all related predictors of cultural change. Recently, most cultures worldwide are heavily influenced by SNSs invasion in people's lives. With that in mind, marketing managers

should be ahead of the game to prepare their marketing strategies based on the newest trends. In this study, the findings predicted consumer behavior across two cultures and supported the notion that culture plays a moderating role in impacting socio-cultural variables' influence in eWOM. However, when marketing managers rely only on eWOM they expose their businesses to the risk of reputation cascades which takes place if the first opinions or comments on a product are negative. In other words, in SNSs there are no other chances if first impressions about a product, service or brand image are negative. Thus, marketing managers must pay careful attention to their online brand image and reputation. However, when it comes to car industry, brand image and reputation can evolve over time by firms' investment on research and development. With that in mind, consumers' behaviors and intentions change over time as certain brands become more innovative and reliable. This study demonstrates how critical and important eWOM is for car marketers.

Culture is very important and it is considered the memory to a society. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) stated that there are at least 164 definitions of culture. Culture by its abstract nature is not easy to define and comprehend. defined it as more than a process that is easily recognized by the sum of its predictors. Others, define it as the bond or glue that binds group members together (Hofstede, 2001). Although it has been assumed that people that share the same culture would behave similarly and their intentions would be predicted through understanding their culture predictors, that was not the case in this study. Like our findings, previous studies also have shown that there are evidences of people in similar cultures behaving differently (Ageev, 2001).

4.3.   Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although, this study's methodology was based on the current literature, there were some limitations. A possible limitation was that this study was focused only on participants from Facebook platform. To make it more comprehensive, different social media platforms should have been used because as stated above, people in Arab countries mainly rely on Facebook (Reyaee & Ahmed, 2015) while Turks, in contrary use many other platforms. According to Statista (2020), there is still an increase in users subscriptions in Facebook and twitter but the rate has been slowing down. Meanwhile, there are many other platforms that Turks use including twitter, Instagram, and local

apps. In this regard, Turkey differs from Libya because it is witnessing an explosive growth in many different SNS platforms. For that reason, if this study included users form other platforms, its reliability and validity increase.

Another limitation has to do with quantitative research method implemented as it did not cover the whole population perspective. The study results should be supported using qualitative research methods such as focus groups, netnography and in-depth interviews.

A focus group qualitative study should be conducted to unravel emotions and feelings toward certain car brands in different cultures (Glitz, 1997). Focus group studies are usually conducted to gain in-depth insights about consumers' experiences and beliefs regarding certain issues. Online netnography is another qualitative research method that should be conducted to interpret participants-generated content in different SNSs to provide authentic examples of experience-articulating behavior (Y.-C. Chen, Shang, Shu, & Lin, 2015). Moreover, in-depth interviews are vital to demonstrate the most influential factors affecting consumers' engagement in eWOM activities (L. Yang et al., 2014). Those in-depth interviews are expected to uncover participants attitudes, brand loyalty, affective commitment, and perceived value of any product or brand (L. Yang et al., 2014). Consequently, we suggest using the above-mentioned research methods for more reliable findings.

In this study, the researcher focused on car buyers' opinion seeking behavior. The aim was to find out social relationship factors that affect car buyers' involvement in eWOM in SNSs in Libya and Turkey. Future research should focus on different products. The area of this study was in both Turkish and Libyan cultures. Due to the nature of both cultures, generalization of its findings cannot be made. For that, different studies on the effect of the used variables and other predictors of eWOM are needed. The researcher suggests conducting further comparative studies between eastern and western cultures. This is because eWOM communication influence exceeds traditional WOM in many dimensions. It is considered more scalable, diffuses much faster and it is cheaper than conventional WOM. It is also more measurable, persistent and accessible when compared with the traditional WOM. For that purpose, conducting eWOM based studies would be useful for academics, marketers and practitioners.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the impact of nine socio-cultural variables - interpersonal influence, conformity, innovativeness, collectivism, individualism, trust, tie strength, social capital and homophily on eWOM consumer behaviors in two cultures - Turkish and Libyan. Based on the literature, there is no proof of any similar study on both cultures. However, there were similar studies on the influence of socio-cultural variables on other countries such as USA and China. Moreover, there were no studies focused on the influence these variables have on car buying decisions. Previous studies were focused on fewer variables such interpersonal influence, trust, tie strength, social capital and homophily while this study added four more variables as discussed before.

The research hypotheses testing in this empirical study show that interpersonal influence, collectivism, individualism, trust, tie strength and homophily had significant statistical power in predicting increased engagement in opinion seeking eWOM on consumer behavior in social networking sites in both cultures (Table 25). However, conformity, innovativeness, and social capital variables had no significant effect on the behavior of eWOM in SNSs in both cultures.

In addition, when comparing the two cultures it was found that the independent variables - interpersonal influence, collectivism, trust, and social capital − have significant impact within the Libyan culture only. On the other hand, innovativeness, and homophily have impact within the Turkish culture only (Table 27). Moreover, the variables of individualism and tie strength have impacts on eWOM consumer behavior in both cultures. On the contrary, only conformity has no impact on eWOM consumer behavior within both cultures. Thus, three hypotheses regarding conformity, individualism and tie strength were rejected as these factors showed no significant influence on eWOM in both cultures.

There were significant statistical differences between Turkish and Libyan participants on six variables namely innovativeness, collectivism, individualism, tie strength, social capital, and homophily (Table 26). The Libyan participants' mean scores were significantly higher than that of Turkish participants on innovativeness,

collectivism, individualism, while Turkish participants had higher mean scores on tie strength, social capital, and homophily. Finally, there were no significant differences between participants of two nationalities regarding the independent variables of interpersonal influence, conformity, and trust.

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LIST OF TABLES

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Survey Questionnaire:

The survey was translated and revised accurately to three languages (Arabic, English, and Turkish) to facilitate the reaching to all consumers and to ensure the full understanding of all statements by the respondents. You can find the survey following links based on your language preferences:

English version: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1OualVMxvdtMDcfSK67U1AmQUsaazDzOa7qvGkh6DHMc/edit?usp=drive_web

Turkish version: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1c-UCtCIoJbk25zQWHQrYwPS9v3DNkIsyrW0K1b-UVAg/edit

Arabic version: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1thUhjUNK31jkV0B_ILhO1nCNgJso6lm_h7ZePGkjM5s/edit?usp=drive_web

Appendix 1. Survey form

Thank you for participating in this study. The objective of this study is to understand and know the effect of the use of social networking sites among car buyers in two countries; Libya and Turkey.

This survey should take about 20 minutes of your time, and we appreciate the time and focus you make in answering the survey questions.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw at any point. Your survey responses will be strictly confidential.

Important Note: Please consider that whenever you read the word product is used exchangeable by car. For example: buying a product, is meant as buying a car. Please do not answer this survey unless you plan to buy a car in near future.

If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact the researcher at tubji2010@gmail.coml.

General information	
1	What is your gender?
2	What is your age?
3	What is your marital status?
4	Your annual income category
5	The job title
6	What is your major?
7	What is your education level?
8	Please choose items below that best describe your ethnic background

.

N	Statements	Degree of agreement							Sources
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
(The general use of social networking sites)									
1	Social Networking Sites (Facebook, MySpace, and Linkedin)								(Thoumrungroje, 2014)
2	Microblogging sites (Twitter)								
3	Photo sharing sites (Instagram, Flickr, snapchat and Snapfish)								
4	Video sharing sites (YouTube)								
(Opinion Seeking)									
1	When I consider new products, I ask my contacts on the social networking site for advice.								(Chu & Choi, 2011)
2	I usually talk to my contacts on the social networking site before I buy products.								
3	I like to get the opinions of my contacts on the social networking site before I buy products.								
4	I often ask my contacts on the social networking site about what products to buy.								
5	I feel more comfortable choosing products when I have gotten opinions from my contact on the social networking site.								
6	When choosing products, my contact's opinions on the social networking site are important to me.								
(Interpersonal Influences)									
1	I rarely purchase the latest fashion styles until I am sure my friends approve of them.								(Chu & Kim, 2011)
2	It is important that others like the products and brands I buy.								
3	When buying products, I generally purchase those brands that I think others will approve of.								
4	If other people can see me using a product, I often purchase the brand they expect me to buy.								
5	I like to know what brands and products make good impressions on others.								
6	I achieve a sense of belonging by purchasing the same products and brands that others purchase.								
7	If I want to be like someone, I often try to buy the same brands that they buy.								
8	I often identify with other people by purchasing the same products and brands they purchase.								
(Conformity)									
1	If a teacher asks me to do something, I usually do it.								(Santor, Messservey, &
2	I usually do what I am told.								
3	I usually obey my parents.								

4	I follow my parents' wishes even when it means not doing something I want to do.								
5	Even when I disagree with my parents' wishes, I usually do −what I am told.								
7	I break rules frequently.								
8	I rarely follow the rules.								

(Innovativeness)

1	In general, I am among the last in my circle of friends to visit a company's newweb site when it appears on the WWW								(H. J. Park, Burns, & Rabolt, 2007)
2	If I heard that a new retail site was available on the web, I would not be interested enough to shop from it.								
3	Compared to my friends, I seek out relatively little information over the WWW.								
4	In general, I am the last in my circle of friends to know of any new retail web sites.								
5	I will visit a new company's web site even if I have not heard of it before.								
6	I know about new retail web sites before most other people in my circle do.								

(Collectivism \Individualism)

1	My happiness depends very much on the happiness of those around me.								(Sivadas et al., 2008)
2	I would do what would please my family, even if I detested that activity.								
3	I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group.								
4	I enjoy working in situations involving competition with others.								
5	The well-being of my co-workers is important to me.								
6	I enjoy being unique and different from others in many ways.								
7	Children should feel honored if their parents receive a distinguished award.								
8	I often "do my own thing".								
9	Competition is the law of nature.								
10	If a co-worker gets a prize, I would feel proud.								
11	I am a unique individual.								
12	I would sacrifice an activity that I enjoy very much If my family did not approve of it.								
13	Without competition it is not possible to have a good society.								
14	I feel good when I cooperate with others.								

(Trustworthiness)

1	Generally speaking, most contacts on my "friends" list on Facebook can be trusted.								(Chu & Choi.
2	I feel confident about having discussions with the contacts on my "friends" list on Facebook.								

3	The contacts on my "friends" list on Facebook will do everything within their capacity to help others.								
4	I trust most contacts on my "friends" list on Facebook.								
5	I have confidence in the contacts on my "friends" list on Facebook.								
6	My contacts on my "friends" list on Facebook offer honest opinions.								
7	I can believe in the contacts on my "friends" list on Facebook.								
(Tie Strength)									
1	Approximately how frequently do you communicate with the contacts on your "friends" list on Facebook?								(Chu & Kim, 2011)
2	Overall, how important do you feel about the contacts on your "friends" list on Facebook?								
3	Overall, how close do you feel to the contacts on your "friends" list on Facebook?								
(Social Capital)									
1	Interacting with people on Facebook makes me interested in things that happen outside my town.								
2	Interacting with people on Facebook makes me want to try new things.								
3	Interacting with people on Facebook makes me interested in what people different from me are thinking.								
4	Talking with people on Facebook makes me curious about other places in the world.								
5	Interacting with people on Facebook makes me feel like part of a larger community.								
6	Interacting with people on Facebook makes me feel connected to the bigger picture.								
7	Interacting with people on Facebook reminds me that everyone in the world is connected.								
8	I am willing to spend time to support general community activities on Facebook.								(Chu & Choi, 2011)
9	Interacting with people on Facebook gives me new people to talk to.								
10	I come in contact with new people on Facebook all the time.								
(Homophily)									
1	Doesn't behave like me / Behaves like me								
2	Is different from me / Is similar to me								
3	Is from a different social class / Is from the same social class								
4	Is culturally different / Is culturally similar								
5	Thinks like me / Does not think like me								
6	Is like me / Is unlike me								
7	Has status like mine / Has status different from mine								
8	Has an economic situation like mine / Does not have an economic situation like mine								(McCroskey, 2013)

CURRICULUM VITAE

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