Social Influence and e-WOM in Digital Environments: Examining Purchase and Recommendation Intentions through Social Media

Marija Bečić, Katija Vojvodić, Matea Matić Šošić
University of Dubrovnik, Faculty of Economics and Business
Lapadska obala Nojka Marinovića 7, 20000 Dubrovnik, Croatia
{marija.becic, katija.vojvodic, matea.matic}@unidu.hr

Abstract. *In contemporary digital environments, consumer decision-making is increasingly influenced by interactive information flows, social influence, and peer-generated content. Using factor analysis and a seemingly unrelated bivariate probit model, this study examines how social influence and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) affect purchase and recommendation intentions in social media contexts. Based on a purposive sample of 477 respondents, four factors were identified: Recognition, Interaction, Involvement, and Participation. The results indicate that brand recognition, interaction, engagement, and e-WOM have a statistically significant and positive effect on purchase intention, while women and members of Generation Z exhibit a significantly higher propensity to make recommendations.*

Keywords. social media, purchase intention, recommendation intention, e-WOM, social influence, digital environments

1 Introduction

Social media have evolved from communication channels into complex digital environments where users seek information, compare alternatives, develop perceptions, and make purchase decisions through ongoing interactions with brands and other users. In these contexts, digital platforms operate not only as promotional media but also as socio-technical systems that build trust, reduce uncertainty, and influence behavioural outcomes through information exchange, interaction, and peer visibility (Ma, 2024). This perspective is particularly relevant in the broader context of information systems and digital transformation research, where decision-making increasingly takes place in interactive and data-rich environments. Consequently, social media can be understood as digital ecosystems in which information, communication, and social influence jointly guide behaviour.

Previous research indicates that social media significantly transforms brand-related processes by enabling users to participate in the creation, circulation, and evaluation of brand meaning. In digital environments, users are no longer simply passive recipients of brand communication but active participants in the co-creation of brand meanings and perceptions, with important implications for brand management and consumer behaviour (Gensler et al., 2013). At the same time, social media content quality and brand interactivity have been shown to strengthen brand awareness and purchase intention, suggesting that digital platforms influence both cognitive and behavioural responses, and that brand recognition in online environments is formed not only by firm-generated messages but also by the structure and quality of interaction itself (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020). The literature also highlights the importance of interaction, engagement, informational value, and peer-generated influence in explaining behavioural intentions on social media. Higher information quality and brand familiarity are associated with greater involvement in a brand's social media presence and, consequently, higher purchase intention (McClure & Seock, 2020).

User engagement in social media environments has been understood as a multidimensional construct with cognitive, emotional, and behavioural consequences, reinforcing the centrality of user interaction in digital consumer behaviour (Lim et al., 2022). Additionally, users often rely on recommendations, comments, and shared experiences from others when evaluating products, particularly under conditions of uncertainty, and the quality, credibility, usefulness, and adoption of e-WOM information have all been shown to significantly affect purchase intentions (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Overall, these findings indicate that social media function as interactive influence systems in which engagement, involvement, and peer communication contribute to purchase-related decision-making.

Although previous social media research has primarily focused on purchase intention as the main

behavioural outcome, recommendation-related responses have more often been captured indirectly through constructs such as e-WOM, brand advocacy, and brand-support behaviour, rather than examined alongside purchase intention within a common analytical framework. However, the broader engagement and advocacy literature suggests that both intentions may be driven by overlapping mechanisms, including interaction, social influence, and affective brand-related responses. This creates a gap in understanding their joint formation in digital environments (Barger et al., 2016; Choi et al., 2021). The main aim of this paper is to examine how social media-related factors influence purchase intention and recommendation intention among members of Generations Y and Z, with particular emphasis on the role of brand-related perceptions, user interaction, informational involvement, and participation through e-WOM in the digital environment. The paper contributes to the literature by offering an integrated perspective on social media use, combining brand-related, interactional, informational, and participatory elements to explain purchase intention and recommendation intention. It also makes a methodological contribution by applying a seemingly unrelated bivariate probit model, enabling a more nuanced understanding of the interdependence between these two behavioural outcomes.

2 Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Consumers consistently encounter the problem of information asymmetry (Akerlof, 1970), which Dimoka, Hong and Pavlou (2012) extended to online markets demonstrating how consumers in digital environments experience uncertainty about product quality and how various signals, such as descriptions and ratings, reduce this uncertainty. Consequently, consumer decisions in digital environments rely heavily on indirect information signals (Spence, 1973; Dong, 2022) where individuals use observable quality indicators to reduce uncertainty among less informed market participants. On modern digital platforms, these signals include online reviews, ratings, and e.WOM content, which serve as key mechanisms for conveying information about product quality. Although such mechanisms significantly reduce uncertainty, they do not fully resolve the problem of information asymmetry, which persists in digital environments (Dong, 2022; Dimoka, Hong & Pavlou, 2012). To some extent, it can be mitigated by reputation systems and social signals that influence perceptions of quality and consumer trust.

Social media research increasingly regards digital platforms not just as communication tools, but as interactive marketing and information environments where users co-create value, engage with brands, and translate exposure into marketplace responses. Recent syntheses indicate that social media marketing has adopted a more integrated approach, in which engagement, persuasion, and sales outcomes are jointly influenced by content design, user participation, and platform-specific dynamics. In particular, meta-analytic evidence shows that brands owned social media activity affects not only engagement but also sales-related outcomes, challenging the earlier assumption that social media primarily generate visibility rather than conversion-oriented effects (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Liadeli et al., 2023).

Within this broader context, social media have transformed brand-related processes by enabling consumers to participate in the creation, circulation, and reinterpretation of brand meaning, rather than passively receiving firm-generated communication (Gensler et al., 2013). This shift is reflected in empirical evidence showing that perceived social media marketing elements influence consumer-brand engagement and brand knowledge, while content quality and interactivity enhance brand awareness and purchase intention (Cheung et al., 2020; Dabbous & Barakat, 2020). The effectiveness of social media also depends greatly on the extent to which users interact with content and actively engage with brands and other users. In line with this view, studies of platform communication show that post characteristics such as vividness, user-generated content, and presentation cues significantly influence likes, shares, comments, and other forms of online participation (Xu et al., 2023). Together, these insights suggest that behavioural outcomes in social media environments are strongly influenced by the intensity and quality of users' active engagement within the platform.

Informational value is equally important in explaining behavioural intentions in social media environments. Users evaluate content not only for its attractiveness but also for its usefulness, relevance, and ability to support product evaluation and decision-making. Evidence suggests that information quality and brand familiarity strengthen users' involvement with a brand's social media presence and subsequently contribute to more favourable attitudes and stronger purchase intention (McClure & Seock, 2020). Similarly, social media interactions have been shown to affect perceived content quality and purchase intention, indicating that informational relevance and quality are central to the formation of more deliberate users' responses in digital environments (Onofrei et al., 2022).

More recent evidence confirms that information credibility and information adoption remain central pathways through which e-WOM influences online purchase decisions, reinforcing the view that peer-generated communication is not a peripheral feature of social media use but a core mechanism of digital influence and decision support (Ngo et al., 2024). Similarly, recent work suggests that e-WOM continues to evolve as a major force in digital consumer behaviour, with growing importance for how users

interpret, evaluate, and act on online information in social media settings (Liu et al., 2024).

Younger users' cohorts are particularly relevant to research on social media-related behavioural intentions, as their product evaluation and decision-making processes are deeply embedded in digital and platform-based environments. Generation Z, in particular, is widely characterised as a digitally native segment whose responses to social media marketing are strongly influenced by interaction, customisation, trendiness, and e-WOM. Recent studies show that these factors significantly affect purchase intention and related responses among Generation Z users, either directly or through mediating mechanisms such as perceived quality and perceived value (Deepika & Massand, 2025; An & Ngo, 2025). Comparative evidence also indicates that Millennials and Generation Z constitute two major social-media-oriented market segments but may differ in how they process social media content and translate it into behavioural intentions (Ong et al., 2024). This makes younger cohorts especially important for understanding how social media influence both evaluative and behavioural users' responses.

Although the literature provides substantial evidence on the links between social media marketing, engagement, e-WOM, and purchase intention, recommendation-oriented outcomes are still more often addressed indirectly through related constructs such as advocacy and supportive brand behaviour, rather than examined alongside purchase intention within the same analytical framework. Research on brand advocacy shows that credible content delivery, co-creation, and responsiveness can stimulate advocacy-related outcomes in social media environments (Choi et al., 2021). More recent review work further suggests that brand advocacy has become an increasingly important, yet still conceptually fragmented, construct in consumer-brand relationship research, leaving room for studies that examine recommendation-oriented responses more explicitly and in closer connection with purchase-related outcomes (Shimul et al., 2025). Related evidence also indicates that social-media-based community mechanisms can promote advocacy through engagement and brand passion, reinforcing the view that recommendation-oriented behaviour deserves more direct analytical attention in digital environments (Wong et al., 2023).

3 Methodology

Existing literature has primarily examined purchase intention as a key factor in patterns of purchase behaviour, while recommendation intention is often analysed indirectly through constructs such as e-WOM. This creates a gap in understanding how these two behavioural intentions are jointly formed and interconnected within the digital environment. Furthermore, although social media is recognised as an interactive ecosystem shaped by social influence, user engagement, and user-generated content, there remains a lack of empirical evidence on how these factors simultaneously influence both purchase and recommendation intentions, particularly among younger generations. The specific objectives are:

- To examine the influence of selected factors on recommendation intention, with particular focus on social influence and e-WOM.
- To explore the role of sociodemographic variables in shaping the relationship between purchase intention and recommendation intention.
- To assess the interdependence between purchase intention and recommendation intention using a seemingly unrelated bivariate probit model.
- To provide a more comprehensive understanding of how digital interaction, information exchange, and peer influence together shape consumer behaviour in social media environments.

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes and behaviours of social media users regarding their purchase intentions and recommendations on social media, as well as the role of brands in influencing users' behaviour. In addition, this study aims to determine the relationship between users' purchase intentions and their activities on social media.

The research was conducted using a survey questionnaire created with Google Forms, distributed between May and October 2025. A total of 506 completed questionnaires were received. As the research focused on generations Y and Z, respondents born before 1981 and after 2007 were excluded from the sample. After these exclusions, 477 validly completed questionnaires were included in the analysis, forming the final sample. The sample was purposive, with respondents selected based on their year of birth, specifically belonging to the targeted generations. The questionnaire consisted of 31 closed-ended questions. Three collected basic demographic data (age, gender, and level of education), while the remaining 28 presented statements to assess attitudes and experiences related to social media. Respondents indicated their level of agreement with the statements using a five-point ordinal scale (1 – completely disagree; 5 – completely agree).

The statements used in the study were based on previously validated questionnaire, organised into several groups. The first group concerns the tendency to share and interact (BE – Brand engagement), examining respondents' willingness to share opinions, feelings, and information about products and services via social media (Thanasi-Boçe et al., 2022). Product brand recognition (BA – Brand awareness) aims to determine the contribution of social media to the recognition of products and brands (Dabbous & Barakat, 2020; Faisal & Ekawanto, 2021). The final group concerns product brand perception and image (BI – Brand image), assessing how social media influence the creation and reinforcement of a positive

image of the product and its brand (Barreda et al., 2020; Faisal & Ekawanto, 2022).

The next group of statements (SMAC – Social media marketing) concerns activities such as posted content and its attractiveness, focusing on perceptions of the interest in product-related content and the ease of expressing opinions about it (Ismail, 2017). The following four statements, related to CS (Communication strategy), measure the informational and cognitive impact of social media on users, specifically how much social media facilitate communication with a company, stimulate interest, and help users understand the features and benefits of a product (Senalasani et al., 2024; Evania et al., 2023; Idris et al., 2017). In addition, three statements on E-WOM concern user activities involving actively following and using other users' posts on social media to gather information, form impressions of products or brands, and make purchase decisions (Ayuni, 2020; Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017; Reza Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012).

Statements on purchase intentions (PI) were adapted from Dabbous and Barakat (2020) to measure users' intention to purchase products via social media, that is, how inclined users are to buy through social media when they need a specific product. To examine the determinants of purchase intent via social media and recommendation intent, the seemingly unrelated bivariate probit model was applied to address two binary dependent variables simultaneously. Both variables are conceptually related, as they arise from a similar set of attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of users, but represent different forms of behavioural intentions. As these are dichotomous outcomes (0/1), classical linear regression is not appropriate, while separate probit models would ignore the possible correlation of unobserved factors affecting both dependent variables simultaneously. The seemingly unrelated bivariate probit model enables joint estimation, with two probit equations estimated simultaneously, assuming that the errors of these equations are mutually correlated and follow a bivariate normal distribution.

The model consists of two equations describing respondents' propensity to buy through a social network (eq. 1) and their propensity to recommend (eq. 2), with the observed binary variables determined by whether the latent propensity exceeds a specified threshold. Each equation includes the sociodemographic variables gender, generation (Generation Y or Z), and education level. Additionally, a set of factor variables derived from the previously described factor analysis, representing concise dimensions of attitudes and perceptions related to social media and shopping experience, is included. The parameters were estimated using the maximum likelihood method, which provides consistent and efficient estimates under conditions of correlated errors.

$$PI_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Gender} + \beta_3 \text{GenerationZ} + \beta_4 \text{Education} + \beta_5 \text{Recognition} + \beta_6 \text{Interaction} + \beta_7 \text{Involvement} + \beta_8 \text{Participation} + \varepsilon_1 \quad (1)$$

$$RI_i = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 \text{Gender} + \gamma_3 \text{GenerationZ} + \gamma_4 \text{Education} + \gamma_5 \text{Recognition} + \gamma_6 \text{Interaction} + \varepsilon_2 \quad (2)$$

The proposed approach enables a deeper understanding of the relationship between purchase intention and recommendation intention, while providing a methodologically robust basis for interpreting empirical findings and applying them in further theoretical and practical analyses. The research employed appropriate statistical methods to process and present the collected data, using the computer programmes SPSS 29.0 and STATA. The following paper will describe the sample on which the research was conducted.

4 Research Results

In this section, two multivariate factor analyses (EFA) were conducted using the statements from the measuring instrument, specifically the survey questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the measurement scales for social media brand impact and social media activities. According to the reliability coefficient test, the first measurement scale, which includes the dimensions of Brand Image (BI), Brand Engagement (BE), and Brand Awareness (BA), was found to be highly reliable, with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.886. The second set of statements, which includes the variables Communication Strategy (CS), Social Media Marketing (SMAC), and e-WOM, also demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.909, confirming the significant reliability of the social media activities measurement scale. The Bartlett test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test were used to validate the measurement scales. The results for the KMO and Bartlett tests of sphericity for the two measurement scales were high: for the social media brand impact measurement scale, the KMO was 0.887, and for the social media activities measurement scale, the KMO was 0.894. For both measurement scales, the Bartlett test of sphericity was statistically significant ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), indicating that factor analysis is appropriate for both measurement scales. Table 1 presents the total variance explained for the social media brand impact measurement scale.

Table 1. Total variance explained for the social media brand impact measurement scale

	Initial eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %
1	5.32	48.4	48.4	4.85	44.1	44.1
2	2.31	69.4	69.4	2.78	25.3	69.4

Extraction Method: Method Principal Component Analysis. Source: Research findings (N=477)

The total variance explained for the social media activities measurement scale is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Total variance explained for the social media activities measurement scale

	Initial eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %	Total	Variance %	Cumulative %
1	5.94	54.0	54.0	3.87	35.2	35.2
2	1.31	11.9	66.0	3.38	30.8	66.0

Extraction Method: Method Principal Component Analysis. Source: Research findings (N=477)

As shown in the tables for both measurement scales, a high total variance explained by the factors indicates that the extracted factors effectively summarise the main structure of the data, represent the latent constructs well, and support the validity of the measurement instrument. To simplify interpretation of the factors, Varimax rotation was applied, resulting in a clearer structure of factor loadings. For the social media brand impact measurement scale, the total variance explained was 69.39%, and for the social media brand experience measurement scale, it was 65.97%. Based on the Rotated Component Matrix for the social media brand impact measurement scale, two factors were identified with eigenvalues above 1, explaining the fundamental dimensions of social media influence: Recognition and Interaction. The first factor, Recognition (explaining 44.09% of the total variance), reflects users' ability to recognise, recall, and understand product-related information provided on social media. The second factor, Interaction (explaining 25.29% of the total variance), captures users' active participation and social engagement with brand-related content on social media.

For the second measurement scale, two factors were extracted and named: Involvement and Participation. The first factor explained 35.02% of the total variance and describes how social media influences customers' perceptions and engagement with products, including interest, understanding of product features and benefits, and active participation in consuming content. The second factor, which explained 30.76% of the total variance, defines social influence and the sharing of information on social media, such as following other users' posts, making decisions based on their experiences, and sharing recommendations and information with friends. The factors Recognition, Interaction, Involvement, and Participation are included in the analysis of determinants of users' behaviour using seemingly unrelated probit regressions, the results of which are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Seemingly unrelated probit regressions results

	Coeff.	**Std. err.**	**Z**	**Sig.**
Dependent variable - PI				
Gender	-0,0910	0,1556	-0,58	0,559
GenZ	-0,0412	0,1599	-0,26	0,797
Education – ref. cat. High school				
College	-0,0102	0,2248	-0,05	0,964
Graduate	-0,1455	0,1633	-0,89	0,373
Master	-0,474	0,2451	-1,94	0,053
PhD	-1,2854	0,6192	-2,08	0,038
Recogn	0,6312	0,1205	5,24	0,000
Interact	0,3210	0,0771	4,16	0,000
Involv	0,265	0,1062	2,53	0,011
Particip	0,4080	0,1080	3,78	0,000
_cons	0,0875	0,2767	0,32	0,752
Dependent variable - RI				
Gender	0,3873	0,1404	2,76	0,006
GenZ	0,3460	0,1442	2,40	0,016
Education – ref. cat. High school				
College	0,0487	0,2156	0,23	0,821
Graduate	0,1235	0,1620	0,76	0,446
Master	-0,0526	0,2184	-0,24	0,810
PhD	0,0887	0,4199	0,21	0,833
Recogn	0,6085	0,0780	7,80	0,000
Interact	0,2966	0,710	4,18	0,000
_cons	-0,3738	0,2493	-1,50	0,134
/athrho	0,4527	0,1048	4,32	0,000
rho	0,424	0,0859		
Wald test of rho=0: chi2(1) =18.6564 Prob>chi2=0.0000				

Source: Authors' calculation

The key parameter of the model is the rho coefficient, which measures the correlation between the errors of the two equations, that is, the extent to which unobserved factors jointly influence purchase intent and recommendation intent. The statistical significance of the rho parameter was tested using the Wald test of the hypothesis that rho is zero. Rejecting this hypothesis indicates that evaluating the two probit models separately would result in a loss of information and potentially biased conclusions, further supporting the use of the bivariate approach. The results of the model suggest that the intention to purchase via a social

network and the intention to recommend are statistically significantly correlated but are also influenced by partially different groups of factors. This enables the model to identify the effects of individual independent variables more reliably, while accounting for the interdependence of the two behavioural intentions.

Socio-demographic variables generally do not have a statistically significant effect on the intention to buy through social media, suggesting that willingness to buy via social media is relatively homogeneous across genders and generations. However, both gender and generation have statistically significant and positive effects on the intention to recommend. This indicates that Gen Z users and women are more likely to share recommendations and positive experiences in the digital environment.

Education coefficients are statistically significant and negative in the first equation which may indicate greater criticism or caution among highly educated individuals towards shopping through social media. Education has no statistically significant effect in second equation, suggesting that the propensity to recommend is not systematically influenced by the level of education.

Factors included in both equations are statistically significant and positive, which can be explained by their effects on users' information processing, perceived value, trust, and emotional involvement, all of which are central to decision-making in digital environments.

Recognition, based on brand awareness and image, reduces cognitive effort in decision-making and increases the likelihood of product selection. Frequent and multidimensional exposure (visual, informational, and emotional) on social media enhances the mental availability of brands and their perceived value. Additionally, users' willingness to comment and share opinions strengthens purchase intention through psychological involvement, as public expression reinforces identification with the brand and consistency between attitudes and behaviour.

Involvement reflects the perceived informational and communicative value of social media. When users regard these platforms as reliable sources of information and interaction, perceived risk decreases and confidence in purchase decisions increases, facilitating the transition from evaluation to purchase. Participation, including electronic word-of-mouth and user interaction, further reduces uncertainty and strengthens trust by drawing on others' experiences. In this way, social media serve as a collective quality filter, with decisions shaped by aggregated community knowledge. Overall, purchase intention arises from the interplay of information, trust, social influence, and emotional-cognitive engagement within an integrated digital ecosystem.

Brand awareness and image also have a strong positive effect on recommendation intention. A clear and positive perception of a product increases users' confidence in their judgement, which is crucial given the reputational responsibility associated with making recommendations. These brand-related factors enhance the effects of social interaction and e-WOM, as trust built through a positive image is spread via recommendations and content sharing. Consequently, strengthening brand image through social media not only increases purchase intention but also stimulates recommendation intention, extending the reach and effectiveness of marketing activities. To provide a more intuitive interpretation of the probit model coefficients, average marginal effects were calculated (Table 4).

Table 4. Average marginal effects

	Marginal effect	**st. err**	**Sig.**
Gender	0.023	0.036	0.511
GenZ	0.028	0.036	0.440
College	0.004	0.049	0.937
Graduate	-0.014	0.039	0.714
Master	-0.095	0.055	0.082
PhD	-0.249	0.079	0.002
Recogn	0.180	0.026	0.000
Interact	0.090	0.017	0.000
Involv	0.050	0.021	0.016
Particip	0.076	0.021	0.000

Source: Authors' calculation

To provide a more intuitive interpretation of the probit model coefficients, average marginal effects were calculated. Among the variables analysed, Recognition has the strongest effect: a one-unit increase raises the probability of simultaneous purchase and recommendation intention by approximately 18 percentage points. This finding underscores the central role of brand awareness and image in enhancing consumers' readiness to both purchase and recommend products via social media, consistent with previous research (Dabbous and Barakat, 2020).

Participation also has a positive and statistically significant effect, increasing this probability by around 9 percentage points. This highlights the importance of electronic word-of-mouth, peer recommendations, and shared user experiences in reducing uncertainty and strengthening trust (Erkan and Evans, 2016; Liu et al., 2024). Involvement contributes an additional 7.6 percentage points, indicating that informative and engaging content facilitates product evaluation and enhances perceived value. Finally, Interaction increases the probability by approximately 5 percentage points, suggesting that active engagement with brand-related content reinforces consumer–brand relationships.

The results can be interpreted within the theoretical framework of information asymmetry (Akerlof, 1970) and signalling (Spence, 1973). In digital markets characterised by incomplete information, social media

reduce uncertainty by providing multiple quality signals. The strong effect of recognition reflects the role of brand awareness and image as credible signals that lower perceived risk and facilitate decision-making. Participation, through electronic word-of-mouth and peer-generated content, acts as a decentralised signalling mechanism that reveals product quality based on collective user experience. Involvement enhances the interpretation of these signals by increasing the perceived informational value of social media, while interaction reinforces trust through active engagement with brand-related content. Overall, the findings suggest that social media function as integrated signalling environments that mitigate information asymmetry, thereby simultaneously strengthening purchase and recommendation intentions.

5 Concluding Remarks

The research provided insight into the complex dynamics between social media activities and the behavioural intentions of Generations Y and Z. The aim of this study was to examine how different dimensions of engagement on digital media shape purchase intent and willingness to recommend products. The research was based on primary data collected in 2025 through a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 477 respondents. Factor analysis was conducted, resulting in the extraction of four factors: Recognition, Interaction, Involvement, and Participation. Recognition includes brand recognition and awareness, while Interaction involves active user engagement on social media. For the second measurement scale, two factors were extracted: Involvement, which encompasses perceived information and communication value, and Participation, which refers to behaviours reflecting social influence and information sharing on social media. Regression analysis showed that purchase intent is positively influenced by all extracted factors. These findings suggest that social media are no longer merely promotional channels, but complete ecosystems that reduce perceived risk and facilitate the transition from the evaluation phase to the purchase phase. Interestingly, sociodemographic variables did not play a significant role in purchase intent, except for level of education; highly educated individuals showed a higher level of caution when shopping through social media. In contrast, the intention to recommend is strongly determined by gender and generation. The results indicate that women and members of Generation Z are the most active promoters of brands in the digital environment, identifying them as key drivers of electronic word of mouth.

Despite the robust methodology, this research has certain limitations. The sample was purposive, focusing exclusively on Generations Y and Z, which limits the generalisation of conclusions to other population groups. Additionally, the data were collected within a specific period (May to October 2025), which may reflect market trends subject to rapid changes in the digital environment. The use of only closed questions on the Likert scale limits a more comprehensive understanding of users' subjective motives, which qualitative research could provide. These limitations suggest that future studies could include qualitative and longitudinal research to track the evolution of trust in social media as sales channels. It would also be useful to expand the model by including variables such as product type or the influence of specific platforms (e.g., TikTok versus Instagram) on decision-making, providing a more detailed understanding of modern users' digital behaviour.

This paper makes a methodological contribution by applying a seemingly unrelated bivariate probit model, enabling the simultaneous analysis of purchase and recommendation intentions while accounting for the correlation between them. The results confirm that these two intentions are statistically significantly correlated. The findings are particularly useful for marketers and brand managers in optimising strategies targeting Generations Y and Z, as factors such as interaction and e-WOM directly stimulate purchase intention.

References

George A. Akerlof, 1970. "The Market for "Lemons": Quality Uncertainty and the Market Mechanism," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, President and Fellows of Harvard College*, vol. 84(3), pages 488-500. https://doi.org/10.2307/1879431

An, G.K., Ngo, T.T.A. (2025). Uncovering the influence of social media marketing activities on Generation Z's purchase intentions and eWOM for organic cosmetics. *PLoS One*, 20(6), e0325953, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0325953

Ayuni, R.F. (2020). Bringing virtual communities into a marketing strategy to create purchase intentions in the social media era. *Journal of Indonesian Economy and Business*, 35(2), 112-128. https://doi.org/10.22146/jieb.53261

Barger, V., Peltier, J.W., Schultz, D.E. (2016). Social media and consumer engagement: a review and research agenda. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 10(4), 268-287, https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-06-2016-0065

Barreda, A.A., Nusair, K., Wang, Y., Okumus, F., Bilgihan, A. (2020). The impact of social media activities on brand image and emotional attachment: A case in the travel context. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 11(1), 109-135, https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTT-02-2018-0016

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

Choi, Y., Kroff, M.W., Kim, J. (2021). Developing brand advocacy through brand activities on Facebook. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 38(3), 328-338, https://doi.org/10.1108/JCM-10-2019-3460

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

Deepika, K.S., Massand, A. (2025). A study on reflective factors of social media marketing activities and its influence on purchase intention of gen z. *Acta Psychologica*, 259, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105459

Dimoka, A., Hong, Y., & Pavlou, P. A. (2012). On Product Uncertainty in Online Markets: Theory and Evidence. *MIS quarterly*, *36*(2), 395-426. https://doi.org/10.2307/41703461

Dong, F. (2022). Evaluation of Product Uncertainty in Online Shopping. *Information Systems and Economics*, 16-21. https://doi.org/10.23977/infse.2022.030603

Dwivedi, Y.K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D.L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., Jain, V., Karjaluoto, H., Kefi, H., Krishen, A.S., Kumar, V., Rahman, M.M., Raman, R., Rauschnabel, P. A., Rowley, J., Salo, J., Tran, G.A., Wang, Y. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions. *International Journal of Information Management*, 59, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168

Erkan, I., Evans, C. (2016). The influence of eWOM in social media on consumers' purchase intentions: An extended approach to information adoption. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 61, 47-55, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.03.003

Evania, S., Listiana, E., Rosnani, T., Fahruna, Y. (2023). The Effect of Influencer Marketing and Content Marketing on Customer Engagement and Purchase Decisions on Followers. *Asian Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting* 23(2), 12-20. https://doi.org/10.9734/ajeba/2023/v23i2917

Faisal, A., Ekawanto, I. (2021). The role of Social Media Marketing in increasing Brand Awareness, Brand Image and Purchase Intention. *Indonesian Management and Accounting Research*, 20(2), 185-208. https://doi.org/10.25105/imar.v20i2.12554

Gensler, S., Völckner, F., Liu-Thompkins, Y., Wiertz, C. (2013). Managing Brands in the Social Media Environment, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27(4), 242-256, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.09.004

Idris, J., Abd Rahman, S.S. (2017). Aida Model, Social Media Marketing and Decision to Patronize of Muslim Friendly Hotel. *Journal of Management and Muamalah*, 7(2), 3-15. Retrieved from https://jmm.uis.edu.my/index.php/jurnal/article/view/57

Ismail, A.R. (2017). The influence of perceived social media marketing activities on brand loyalty: The mediation effect of brand and value consciousness. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 29(1), 129-144, https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-10-2015-0154

Kudeshia, C., Kumar, A. (2017). Social eWOM: does it affect the brand attitude and purchase intention of brands?. *Management Research Review*, 40(3), 310-330, https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-07-2015-0161

Liadeli, G., Sotgiu, F., Verlegh, P.W.J. (2023). A Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Brands' Owned Social Media on Social Media Engagement and Sales. *Journal of Marketing*, 87(3), 406-427, https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429221123250

Lim, W.M., Rasul, T. (2022). Customer engagement and social media: Revisiting the past to inform the future. *Journal of Business Research*, 148, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.04.068

Liu, H., Jayawardhena, C., Shukla, P., Osburg, V.-S., Yoganathan, V. (2024). Electronic word of mouth 2.0 (eWOM 2.0) – The evolution of eWOM research in the new age. *Journal of Business Research*, 176, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.114587

Ma, Y. (2024). A socio-technical analysis of factors affecting consumer engagement in livestream shopping: Evidence from structural equation modeling and fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis. *Telematics and Informatics*, 87, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2023.102094

McClure, C., Seock, Y.-K. (2020). The role of involvement: Investigating the effect of brand's social media pages on consumer purchase intention. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.101975

Ngo, T.T.A., Bui, C.T., Chau, H.K.L., Tran, N.P.N. (2024). Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on social networking sites (SNS): Roles of information credibility in shaping online purchase

intention. *Heliyon*, 10(11), e32168, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e32168

Ong, Y.X., Sun, T., Ito, N. (2024). Understanding followers' processing and perceptions of social media influencer destination marketing: Differences between #Millennials and #GenZs. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 60, 194-207, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2024.07.003

Onofrei, G., Filieri, R., Kennedy, L. (2022). Social media interactions, purchase intention, and behavioural engagement: The mediating role of source and content factors. *Journal of Business Research*, 142, 100-112, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.12.031

Reza Jalilvand, M., Samiei, N. (2012). The effect of electronic word of mouth on brand image and purchase intention: An empirical study in the automobile industry in Iran. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 30(4), 460-476, https://doi.org/10.1108/02634501211231946

Senalasari, W., Setiaji, M., Khrisnamurti, N., Februadi, A. (2024). Optimizing Brand Awareness and Purchase Intention Travel Agents: Communication Strategy through Social Media Marketing. *Journal of Marketing Innovation* (JMI), 4(1), https://doi.org/10.35313/jmi.v4i1.98

Shimul, A.S., Faroque, A.R., Quader E. (2026). Brand advocacy: a scoping review and future research agenda. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 35(1), 16-32, https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-10-2024-5537

Spence, M. (1973). Job market signaling. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 87(3), 355–374. https://doi.org/10.2307/1882010

Thanasi-Boçe, M., Zeqiri, J., Kurtishi-Kastrati, S. (2022). The Role of Social Media Usage and Engagement on Purchase Intentions for Fashion Brands. *International Journal of E-Services and Mobile Applications (IJESMA*), 14(1), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.4018/IJESMA.300269

Xu, Y., Chen, W., Ow, T.T. (2023). The effects of social media posts' characteristics on customer engagement: Evidence from WeChat. *Information & Management*, 60(7), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2023.103854

Wong, A. (2023). How social capital builds online brand advocacy in luxury social media brand communities. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 70, 103143, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.103143