The Influence of e-WOM using TikTok Application among Gen-Z

Noreen Noor Abd Aziz [1], Mohd Hafizan Musa[2,*], Shaherah Abdul Malik [1,3]

1 Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA Johor, Malaysia
2 Computing Sciences Studies, College of Computing, Informatics and Media, Universiti Teknologi MARA Johor, Malaysia
3 Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 50300 Wilayah Persekutuan, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
  	Rapid growth of technology has changed most of our daily activities start waking up from bed to build a mega building. Marketers have made e-WOM as a marketing strategy to market and broadcast their products or services. The e-WOM or viral marketing can reach a broad audience since everyone uses the device daily. People start to connect to each other using device and the device has changed our daily routine. Before marketers or a firm launch such a strategy, we need to learn and understand how consumers react towards e-WOM. The content of the message should be interesting to make customers spread the message to others. If the source of the content from unknowns, the message is highly not to be spread from the person. People will spread the message if the content of the message is fun, joyful, or interesting for them. This study is persistence to investigate the factors namely content, source credibility, distribution platform and entertainment that influence Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM. Findings indicated that source credibility, distribution platform and entertainment were significant while content have no significant relationship with Gen-Z attitude. Thus, it is important to understand the factors that influence Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM. The right platform can give big impact to marketers and firms because it reached the target audience.

1. Introduction

Creating, communicating, delivering, and trading products and services in a way that benefits the organisation, its stakeholders, and society at large is marketing. [1]. From it, we can realise that marketing is beyond than just advertising, buying and selling, the focus of marketing nowadays is maintaining relationship with people. As the world changing, marketing also evolves from stage to stage started from production era, sales era, marketing concept era and consumer relationship era.

Traditional marketing communication utilizes to older media for example billboards, television, radio, face-to-face and point of purchase (POP) [2]. Traditional marketing offer more visually appealing, nostalgic and creditable aspect. Before we depend on digital platform, traditional marketing has greatly expanded in the past few decades. Given that we live in a technologically advanced world, digital marketing has helped event marketers take advantage of numerous new

---

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: mohdh233@uitm.edu.my (Mohd Hafizan Musa)

opportunities and tools, including social media, email marketing, blogs, SEO, and video marketing [2]. Both digital marketing and traditional marketing objective is to reach audience but in different platforms. In digital marketing, advertising is done through internet and reach customers via device.

Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) also recognised as viral marketing, has become an important promotional tool for communicating products and services [3]. Using viral marketing or e-WOM as a strategy can reduce cost to the company. Over the last two decades, viral marketing has evolved. The e-WOM is not just a buzz; marketers can take viral marketing as an advantage to try in the business. Development of internet has transformed the concept of word of mouth (WOM), so the term "viral marketing" was make up by venture capitalist Steve Jurvetson in 1997 [4]. The analogy for viral marketing is start with message a person gets, that person will become "infected" and then go on to infect another person. That is how the message is going viral from one person to another person.

E-WOM can spread the information or messages quickly from one person to another through various tools. Businesses and marketers will develop as a result of a successful viral marketing campaign, particularly in terms of sales and brand recognition. Marketers can create an effective brand awareness strategy when people pass on the product information through social network [3]. Through e-WOM, customer not only gathers the information but also making purchase decision. Utilising viral marketing strategies has many advantages for businesses and marketers, including cost effectiveness, interactive promotional methods, convenient media, ability to reach large audiences, delivery of personalised messages, high message transmission speeds, and minimal effort required to transmit the message [5]. Now it turns into one of the success story to marketers to develop and deliver message to target audience.

Gen Z capture individuals born in the middle of the 1990's until the year 2010 (30-10) area most of them use Tiktok as a social media platform to contact with their friends. The Generation is a highly skilled at using computers, smartphones and tablets [6]. Even though there are so many firms use e-WOM or viral marketing as strategy, we hardly see a study on e-WOM uniquely focusing on Gen-Z attitudes. The advance in technology has changed on people behavior. We can reach broad of audience and spread the information through the online platform. The rapid growth of e-commerce has made viral marketing an attractive marketing method for most marketers to promote and advertise their products or services [7]. Marketers should learn and know whether using viral marketing strategy can influence their attitude or not. As the advance in technology help many people nowadays, marketers and firms should take this advantage to reach as many audiences as they can.

This study aims to discover the elements affecting Gen-Z's perception of e-WOM. This study can give businesses and marketers crucial information [7]. The researcher must therefore look at the factors influencing Gen-Z's perception of e-WOM. In accordance with the problem statement and review of past literature, the research question is what are the factors that can influence Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM?

2. Literature Review
2.1 Attitude

In marketing concept, attitudes relate to approaches, beliefs and the behavioral intentions regarding product or services [8]. Different person will react differently towards e-WOM according to their beliefs and feelings. Attitudes are discovered over direct experience or through observation. As the person gets exposed by the viral message, that person will become more

informed and educated about the product or services [9]. This is how firms or marketers want to deliver the message to the target audience by e-WOM.

2.2 Content

Contents play a big role in e-WOM. The content that firms and marketers delivered can satisfy consumers' needs [10]. The most focal question is how content should be modeled to promote high virality. The content must be interesting and up to date with current issue to attract consumer attention [11]. What kind of content must be put in the e-WOM are emotions and images? Emotions caused by content will give different effects on the virality compared to different channel [11]. If the message can create positive emotions to consumers, they have increase intention to share the message. Images can be what real situation for the message looks like is. It is easy for consumer to understand and can influence their attitude towards the e-WOM.

2.3 Source Credibility

Source credibility also plays a vital part in numerous marketing contexts and online environments. Source credibility is defined as the level of respect that is given to the originator of the context [5]. It relates to trust of receiver of the information towards the source of it. If the resource of the message can be trusted, chance for consumers to spread the message is high. Building a great reputation for the firms is important because it can give positive effect towards the viral message.

2.4 Distribution Platform

There are various forms of e-WOM campaigns and platforms used for their execution. Different platform needs to be design differently depends on what is the platform capable of. For example, through email messages and video websites, firms and marketers should note that the message spark strong emotion [12]. In today's world, social media for example Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are offered for everyone [13]. Social networking platforms have helped people to have communication in their daily life [14]. We start to connect to each other using technology and all our daily activities start to use technologies.

2.5 Entertainment

The message has the elements of surprise, joy and entertainment can have great influence on customer's attitude [7]. The e-WOM results in effective targeting due to the customers interested about the message and willingly to share. Marketers and firms should invest highly to the enjoyment and entertainment to enhance the effectiveness of the message [8]. Most consumers preferred a message that full of entertainment elements and can lead to the major impact on consumer's response towards e-WOM. It is important to include entertainment elements in the message for viral marketing.

Thus, the hypotheses are as follow:

H1:   There is a significant relationship between the content and Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM

H2:   There is a significant relationship between the source credibility and Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM

H3:   There is a significant relationship between the distribution platform and Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM

H4:   There is a significant relationship between the entertainment and Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM

3. Methodology

The data was accumulated from the sample using the simple random sampling under probability technique. The target populations of this study are 101 Gen-Z around Johor and were collected from 1 January 2023 until 31 January 2023 and they are selected based on users that use TikTok application. Since the study focused on the factors that influence Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM, a quantitative approach is employed, and hypotheses are tested based on the developed questionnaire. A pilot test was conducted after the questionnaire was drafted, targeting 30 respondents.

The actual finalized questionnaire, which was refined following the result of the pilot test, consists of two sections and other several parts. Section A contains demographic background of the respondents. It consists of gender, age, level of education, occupation, and marital status. Section B is aimed to examine and evaluate the dependent and independent variable. The data were analyzed using the SPSS statistics; descriptive, correlation and regression analysis.

4. Results
4.1 Demographic Distribution

Descriptive analysis was performed to obtain frequency distribution of demographic variables which were gender, age, level of education, occupation, and marital status. The frequency and percentage distribution of the demographic characteristics are illustrated in Table 1.

Of the 101 respondents, 45.5 per cent were male while 54.5 per cent were female. Thus, most respondents in this study were female. Table 1 illustrates this distribution. As given in Table 1, only 3 per cent of respondents were below the age of 15 years old, while 7.9 per cent were between 15 and 19 years old, while 84.1 percent were 20 – 25 years old and lastly, 5 per cent were of the age 26 - 30 years old. Statistics reflect that most customers were within the age group 20 and 25 years.

Regarding the level of education, 19.7 per cent of the respondents were found to be possessing a qualification below diploma/matric level, 14.9 per cent had diploma/matric level, 62.4 per cent had bachelor's degree and only 1 per cent had master's degree, 5 percent were with SPM level of education and 2 percent of respondents were found to be possessing a PhD. For the occupational, majority were students with 79.2 per cent. Private sector and government sector both 15.8 percent and 4 per cent. Majority of the respondents were single with 94.1 percent and only 5.9 percent of the respondents were married.

Table 1
Demographic profile of respondent

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	55	54.5
Male	46	45.5
Total	101	100
Age		
10-14 years old	3	3.0
15-19 years old	8	7.9
20-25 years old	85	84.1
26-30 years old	5	5.0
Total	101	100
Level of education		
Primary school	1	1.0
Secondary school	14	13.7
SPM	5	5.0
Diploma/matriculation	15	14.9
Bachelor's degree	63	62.4
Master's degree	1	1.0
Ph.D.	2	2.0
Total	101	100.0
Occupational		
Government sector	4	4.0
Private sector	16	15.8
Student	80	79.2
Others	1	1.0
Total	101	100.0
Marital status		
Single	95	94.1
Married	6	5.9
Total	101	100.0

4.2 *Gen-Z Attitude towards e-WOM*

Table 2 presents findings relating to factors and Gen-Z attitude. A five-point Likert scale with 1 = 'Strongly disagree' and 5 = 'Strongly agree' was used to measure each item relating to Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM. Attitude on each of the four factors were calculated as a summated average of the items used under each dimension. Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM was calculated using SPSS Analysis. It is important to note that in this study, a scale of 1.0 to 2.49 was used to negative attitude on viral marketing strategies, while 2.51 to 5.0 indicate positive attitude.

Table 2
Perceived factors on all respondents – descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Attitude (AT)	101	1.00	5.00	3.6559	.88801
Entertainment (E)	101	1.00	5.00	3.8812	.80124
Source Credibility (SC)	101	1.00	5.00	3.0718	1.03522
Content (C)	101	1.00	5.00	3.7743	.73303
Distribution Platform (DP)	101	1.00	5.00	3.8589	.77170

At the sub dimensional level, Table 2 reflects that four variables representing viral marketing strategies that are source credibility (SC), entertainment (E), content(C) and distribution platform (DP). The factors were perceived as good or positive. This was deduced from the mean values (SC = 3.07), (E = 3.88), (C = 3.77) and (DP = 3.85) that were above the mean value 2.5. Results show that factors affected Generation Z attitude was appropriate as evidenced by the Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM.

4.3 The Correlation and Regression Analysis

Correlation and regression are most suitable for a study which seeks to test a relationship between variables such as this current study that tested the relationship between factors and Generation Z attitude. Correlation and regression are also usually used for a larger sample size, for example 101 used in this study. A Likert scale also used for responses, which is another required condition for correlation and regression analyses utilized to test the relationship in this study. To test the hypothesized relationship between the factors (content, entertainment, distribution platform and source credibility) and Gen-Z attitude, correlation and regression analyses were performed.

4.3.1 Correlation analysis among factors that affected Gen-Z attitudes towards e-WOM

Results on the correlation analysis that was used to test the strength of the relationship between independent variables and Gen-Z attitude are shown in Table 3. Pearson correlation also indicates the strength of the relationship between variables by using correlation strength based on Guilford's Law; (0 to 1.9) almost negligible relationship, (0.2 to 0.4) low correlation, (0.4 to 0.7) moderate correlation, (0.7 to 0.9) high correlation and (>0.9) very high correlation.

Table 3
Correlation analysis

		Entertainmen	Source Credibility	Content	Distribution Platform	Attitude
Entertainment	Pearson Correlation	1	.500**	.655**	.556**	.599**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	101	101	101	101	101
Source Credibility	Pearson Correlation	.500**	1	.729**	.467**	.532**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	.000		.000	.000	.000
Content	Pearson Correlation	.655**	.729**	1	.666**	.595**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	.000	.000		.000	.000
Distribution Platform	Pearson Correlation	.556**	.467**	.666**	1	.674**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	101	101	101	101	101
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.599**	.532**	.595**	.674**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	101	101	101	101	101

** denotes Pearson Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results on the correlation analysis that was used to test the strength of the relationship between factors (independent variables) and Gen-Z attitude (dependent variable) are shown in Table 3. The table shows that all variables were moderate correlation except for content and source credibility is high correlation. Results in Table 3 shows that all factors' variables (content, entertainment, distribution platform and source credibility) were moderate related to Generation Z attitude.

4.3.2 Regression analysis

The next section presents result of the regression analysis that was conducted to test the hypothesized relationship in this study.

Based on Table 4, the R square of 0.555 implies that all the independent variables (distribution platform, source credibility, entertainment, and content) explain 55 percent of the variance in dependent variable (Gen-Z attitude). 45 percent of the variance in the dependent variable is not explained by the independent variables in this study. Adjustment of R-squared penalized the additional of 53 percent of independent variables to the model.

Table 4
Regression analysis

Model Summary[b]				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.745[a]	.555	.536	.60466

[a.] Predictors: (Constant), Distribution Platform, Source Credibility, Entertainment, Content

[b.] Dependent Variable: Attitude

Since this study had four hypotheses and a Likert scale research instrument with answers in continuous form, conducting regression analyses was necessary. Thus, the results of regression analysis shows in Table 5

Table 5
Overall Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM

Coefficients[a]					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.116	.361		.321	.749
Entertainment	.293	.102	.264	2.863	.005
Source Credibility	.185	.085	.216	2.164	.033
Content	-.042	.152	-.035	-.278	.781
Distribution	.517	.108	.449	4.803	.000

[a.] Dependent Variable: Attitude

Following the results from regression analyses (p<0.05, R=0.78), hypothesis H1 states that there is no relationship between content and Gen- Z attitude. Therefore, content is not significant. This implies that bad content from marketers can give negative perception towards the information and the source of the message. The content should straight forward and concentrated to the objective of the message [15].

Following the results from regression analyses (p<0.05, R=0.33), hypothesis H2 states that there is no relationship between source credibility and Gen-Z attitude. The source credibility variable is not significant. That implies that source of the message needs to be come from the right person and source. The person who had been choosing as a spoke person must have knowledge about the message.

Following the results from regression analyses (p<0.05, R=0.00), hypothesis H3 states that there is a positive relationship between distribution platform and Gen-Z attitude. Therefore, distribution platform is significant. That implies that the right distribution choose by marketers can give positive attitude to Gen-Z towards viral marketing. The distribution platform not only focusing on where the message was distributed, but when and how the message was distributed play a major role in effecting Gen-Z attitude towards viral marketing.

Following the results from regression analyses (p<0.05, R=0.005), hypothesis H4 that states there is a positive relationship between entertainment and Generation Z attitude. The entertainment variable is significant. That implies that an increase in the level of entertainment in viral marketing strategies utilized, for example, use of humour within the message's leads can affect Gen-Z attitudes. Interactive brand posts were responded more frequently than informative message content [16].

In Table 5, the regression coefficients are displayed. The Pearson coefficient (r) and standard error coefficient (SEC) both display the direction and intensity of a relationship, either positively or negatively. The likelihood that R is merely observed by chance is known as Sig (p value). The likelihood that the R-value will always be present increases with decreasing significant value, increasing the reliability of outcomes.

Gen-Z attitude = 0.116 + 0.293 entertainment + 0.185 source credibility - 0.42 content + 0.517 distribution platform. For each one unit increase in entertainment, Generation Z attitude will increase by 0.239 units with holding other independent variable constant. For each one unit increase in source credibility, Gen-Z attitude will increase by 0.185 units with holding other independent variable constant. For each one unit increase in content, Generation Z attitude will decrease 0.42 units with holding other independent variable constant. For each one unit increase in distribution platform, Gen-Z attitude will increase 0.517 units with holding other independent variable constant.

As entertainment increase by one standard deviation, Gen-Z attitude increase by 0.264 of a standard deviation. As source credibility increase by one standard deviation, Gen-Z attitude increase by 0.216 of a standard deviation. As content increase by one standard deviation, Gen-Z attitude decrease by 0.35 of a standard deviation. As distribution platform increase by one standard deviation, Gen- Z attitude increase by 0.449 of a standard deviation. Therefore, the strongest would be distribution platform variable with beta weight of 0.449. The second would be the content variable with beta weight of 0.35. The weakest variable would be source credibility with beta weight of 0.216.

5. Conclusions

This study was conducted to investigate the factor that influence Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM The objective of this study was to investigate the factor that influence Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM. Existing research revealed information gaps, many of which related to the utilisation of variables influencing Gen-Z attitudes towards viral marketing. The research problem, goals, and several hypotheses were developed and presented. The operationalization of the study's research technique has been covered. Analyses of the data have been given, and conclusions and

suggestions have been explored to fulfil the study objective that was: "What are the factors that can influence Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM?"

It is therefore concluded that factors that affected Gen-Z attitude (content, source credibility, distribution platform and entertainment) utilized to be moderate. Findings also indicate the factors are moderate correlated to Gen-Z attitude towards viral marketing.

Based on the result, we can conclude that all variables were moderate correlation except for content and source credibility is high correlation. Results showed that all factors' variables (content, entertainment, distribution platform and source credibility) were moderate related to Gen-Z attitude. Based on the test that have been conducted, the p-value showed that factors that can influence Gen-Z attitude towards e-WOM were source credibility, distribution platform and entertainment while content and have no significant relationship with Gen-Z attitude.

6. Recommendation

The suggestions are made to help marketers make their plans better. Marketers must make sure that communications supplied via e-WOM are being delivered to the appropriate audience. This must be placed on social site (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok) and the message directly sent to the audience. The distribution platform sent to audience needs to be effective and reasonable towards the customers. It is crucial for marketers to make sure that audience-targeted messaging is interesting. This will support maintaining customer interest. Because humour and enjoyment encourage good circulation, it is crucial that messages delivered via email or social media contain both.

Marketers must make sure that messages given to clients contain educational material. Consequently, mails must be virus-free. Customers must find the information supplied to them about products and services useful. It is important that marketers use right person with positive credibility. The credibility sender can be achieved through choosing right person such as expert person, for example, medical products need to be spread by those who have qualification and expert on that area. This will also help to develop the name of the organization widespread.

References

[1] Kerin, Roger A., Geok Theng Lau, Steven W. Hartley, and William Rudelius. *Marketing in Asia*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill, 2013.

[2] Geraghty, Gordon, and Ann T. Conway. "The Study of Traditional and Non-traditional Marketing Communications: Target Marketing in the Events Sector." (2016).

[3] Vasan, M. "Consumers' Perception towards Viral Marketing in Erode City.*" International Journal of Research & Business Innovation* 2, no. 1 (2016): 13-18.

[4] Motwani, Bharti, and Sharda Haryani. "Investigating the relation between factors effecting viral marketing and consumers' buying intention." *European Journal of Applied Business and Management* 4, no. 2 (2018).

[5] Rukuni, Tarisai Fritz, Grant Shaw, Yumesan Chetty, Petunia Kgama, Pebetse Kekana, and Kyle Rogers. "Viral marketing strategies and customer buying behavioural intentions at retail store in Johannesburg." *Business Management and Strategy* 8, no. 1 (2017): 59-83.

[6] Alqvist, Julia, and Erika Klaus. "WATCH OUT FOR GENERATION Z!–A Qualitative Research About Generational Differences and Similarities Towards Influence Marketing within Lifestyle Brands." (2018).

[7] Mohd Nordin, Noorain, Munirah Mohamed, and Ezatul Hasanah Jaidon. "The study of the factor that influence attitude towards viral marketing among Generation Y." *Academic Journal of Business and Social Sciences (AJoBSS)* 3 (2019): 1-9.

[8] Wang, S. L., and Nguyen Thi Ngoc Lan. "A study on the attitude of customer towards viral video advertising on social media: A case study in Viet Nam." *The International Journal of Engineering and Science* 7, no. 6 (2018): 54-60.

[9] Dutt, Rajul, Asma Zaheer, and Mairaj Salim. "Influence of advertising on attitude of young Indian consumers: An empirical study." *International Journal of Contemporary Research and Review* 8, no. 4 (2017): 146-155.

[10]   Lou, Chen, and Shupei Yuan. "Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media." *Journal of interactive advertising* 19, no. 1 (2019): 58-73.

[11]   Reichstein, Thomas, and Ines Brusch. "The decision-making process in viral marketing—A review and suggestions for further research." *Psychology & Marketing* 36, no. 11 (2019): 1062-1081.

[12]   Rodić, Nemanja, and E. Koivisto. "Best practices in viral marketing." *Aalto University School Of Economics* (2012).

[13]   Phing, Agnes Ng May, and Rashad Yazdanifard. "How does ALS Ice Bucket Challenge achieve its viral outcome through marketing via social media." *Global Journal of Management and Business Research* 14, no. 7 (2014): 56-63.

[14]   Alghizzawi, Mahmoud. "A survey of the role of social media platforms in viral marketing: The influence of eWOM." *International Journal of Information Technology* 3, no. 2 (2019): 54-60.

[15]   Gani, SM Osman, Yaser P. Fallah, Gaurav Bansal, and Takayuki Shimizu. "A study of the effectiveness of message content, length, and rate control for improving map accuracy in automated driving systems." *IEEE Transactions on Intelligent Transportation Systems* 20, no. 2 (2018): 405-420.

[16]   Kusumasondjaja, Sony. "The roles of message appeals and orientation on social media brand communication effectiveness: An evidence from Indonesia." *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics* 30, no. 4 (2018): 1135-1158.