



## A RESEARCH ON THE IMPACT OF EWOM SOURCE CREDIBILITY AND PERSONAL INNOVATIVENESS ON ONLINE SHOPPING INTENTION IN TURKISH CUSTOMERS

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose** - The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between eWOM credibility, which consisted of expertness, trustworthiness, objectivity and homophily, and perceived customer risk during the purchase process. Moreover, in order to get an indication of customer behavior, the effect of personal innovativeness and customer perceived risk on online shopping intention has been investigated. Turkish customers' concern about online purchasing and their risk perception level enhances the importance of the research while there isn't any research observed in this area before.

**Methodology** - Data is gathered by survey as a quantitative method. Population of the research contains individuals that buy goods and services online in Turkey. Convenience sampling is used and the sample size is 280. Analysis methods used in this research are descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis and structural equation model test.

**Findings**- Results of current survey indicate that, personal innovativeness has a positive effect on online purchase intention, however, risk perception affects it negatively. Furthermore, eWOM and personal innovativeness reduces customer perceived risk.

**Conclusion**- Although many factors affect online purchase intention, personal innovativeness, eWOM credibility and customer perceived risk are among the most important factors. The results of current study clearly support all hypotheses. Developing tools to make online purchase more secure and creating a positive eWom among customers decrease customers' perceived risk and increase online buying intention among Turkish customers.

**Keywords:** Customer perceived risk, eWOM credibility, personal innovativeness, online shopping intention.

**JEL Codes:** M30, M31, M39

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Internet usage and online retailing in Turkey is emerging very fast. As many other topics, purchase process is also adapted to electronic platform. An increasing number of consumers use more than one channel in shopping. Customers want themselves to be satisfied during the whole process. They go online and offline (brick and mortar) stores and compare the price before shopping. This strong competition in the retail sector lead both online and offline retailers to choose an effective pricing strategy. Furthermore, customers search for information about products or services mostly on websites and social media. Online social networks have turned into an essential part of customer's daily purchase decision making process. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has a significant impact on customers' choices because it gives goods and services online suppositions (Litvin and et al. 2008). People tend to search other customers comments and reviews about the products and services on the internet to reduce uncertainty and perceived risks. On the other hand people that share their comments and reviews on the internet have their own reasons. For example vacationers which have been defined as people who read use and post information on internet during their holiday choice process have different motivation for contributing to review sites; they are looking for impressing others based on the financial consequence of their own experience (win or lose), they want to help either customers to have better decision or companies because of their good

service and finally they want to share their holiday experience with others and empower customer voice (Bronner and Hoog, 2011).

The current research seeks to determine the relationship between eWOM credibility and perceived customer risk during the purchase process. eWOM credibility refers to the expertness, trustworthiness, objectivity and homophily that shape the trust on receivers. Reliable sources seem to reduce Customer Perceived Risk. Moreover, in order to get an indication of customer behavior, the effect of Customer Innovativeness and Customer Perceived Risk on Online Shopping Intention has been investigated.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In current section we will review current theoretical knowledge and substantive findings about our topic by looking at the most relevant literature on different social sciences and consumer behavior. Customer Perceived Risk, eWOM Credibility, Customer Innovativeness and Online Shopping Intention will be the highlights of the review.

### **2.1 Customer Perceived Risk**

Risk and risk taking are crucial concepts in the social sciences. There is a critical difference between risk and perceived risk. Risk or objective risk is based on the outcomes of alternatives and their probabilities. In lottery and card games, for example, risk can be objectively calculated, based on known possible outcomes and their probabilities (Das and Teng, 2001). On the other hand, perceived risk or subjective risk refers to customer's estimate of objective risk (Dowling 1986; Fischhoff 1985). So customers may have different estimates of risk in different situations. Dealing with risky situation, risk perception appears to be an integral part of people's cognitive processes (Sitkin and Pablo, 1992).

Risk and risk perception are acknowledged as critical in buying decision-making process. Risk perception provides a particularly revealing perspective for studying online retailing. We use the term risk perception to refer to those ambiguities, as perceived by online customers about the future events that may negatively impact on the performance of the products bought online. Researchers have established that consumers' perception of risk is central to their evaluation and purchase behaviors (Dowling and Staelin, 1994; Dowling, 1986). In consumer behavior literature, risk perception has been defined as the expectation of losses associated with purchase of goods or services and it has a restrainer function in purchase behavior (Peter and Ryan, 1976). Bauer (1960) introduced the concept of clients' perceived risk for the first time.

There are many factors that affect the impact of perceived risk on online purchase behavior such as frequency of purchase, level of involvement in the purchase decision and satisfaction with previous purchase experience (Pires et al., 2004). Lutz and Reilly (1974) suggested that word-of-mouth is a crucial information source for reducing risk perception. Due to technology developments face to face traditional word-of-mouth has been changed into electronic word-of-mouth and its impact has been grown as well. Source credibility which refers to how much receivers trust on source information and its effect on risk perception has been examined in several researches (Hussain et al, 2016). However, in few studies e-WOM source credibility and online shopping intention have been examined. Current study focuses on the effect of expertness, trustworthiness, objectivity and homophile as e-WOM source credibility and customer innovativeness on customers' risk perception and online shopping intention in Turkey.

### **2.2 E-WOM Credibility**

Word-of-mouth refers to exchange of information among customers. Since it is a customer generated source of information, it affects customer's product choice significantly. E-WOM, however, has been defined as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet" (Hennig-Thurau et al, 2004). The influence of e-WOM in building powerful brands and developing brand loyalty make it for marketers an interesting topic to focus on. Viral marketing and Buzz marketing, for example, are many companies' substantial efforts to encourage unpaid peer-to-peer communications and positive e-WOM among customers.

The emergence of social media and online social networking trends facilitate development of user generated online contents such as blogs and pages. Therefore, consumers have more control over their media behavior and play an active role in their purchase decision making process (Riegner, 2007). The wide range of online social interactions among customers has created an intensive informational environment where customers can easily and quickly disseminate their experiments, recommendations and opinions (Chu S. and Kim Y., 2011).

There are several antecedents concerning to e-WOM effect; direction of messages, either positive or negative, affects reader's (customer) trust on the message. Customers rely on e-WOM messages that have almost the same direction. The higher degree of consensus in e-WOM messages represents higher degree of agreement among customers regarding to the product or service that has been purchased online. Customer related factors such as prior knowledge about the product

also influence word-of-mouth effect. Customers tend to elaborate their information as their knowledge on the product or service is increased (Doh and Hwang, 2009). Moreover, characteristic of social ties, tie strength and perceptual affinity have positive influence on WOM behaviors, interests and awareness of recipients. (De Bruyn and Lilien, 2008).

Source credibility can be examined from four different dimensions; expertness, trustworthiness, objectivity and homophile. Expertness refers to helpful information, knowledge, believe, and experience which signify the source credibility. Information, website reputation and reviewers are indicators of a credible source; Website is a platform for e-WOM distribution, comments of previous customers influence new customers' decision making process and create reputation for the website and increase the trustworthiness of provided information. The impact of customer generated opinions help to clarify truthfulness and deceptiveness of the message (Pan and Chiou, 2011). Objectivity refers to the reviewers' emotions, unusual events and biasness. Written comments or reviews might reduce risk perception and affect truthfulness positively. Homophile refers to the quality of inter relationship. It decrease vulnerability and strengths well beings of personal correspondence (Hussain et al, 2016). Therefore;

*Hypothesis 1: There is a negative relationship between eWOM Credibility and Customer Perceived Risk*

### **2.3 Personal Innovativeness**

Research on individual adoption of technology drives its roots from Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) that explains perceived usefulness and usage intentions in terms of social influence and cognitive instrumental process. According to TAM an individual's behavior intention to use technology is based on two beliefs; perceived usefulness which has been defined as the extent to which a person believes that the use of technology will enhance his or her job performance. Perceived ease of use, however, has been defined as the extent to which a person believes that using the technology will be easy and effortless. Three interrelated social forces that affect individuals to adopt or reject a new technology have been reflected by the model; subjective norm, voluntariness and image. Subjective norm has been defined as individual's perception of his or her most important people's thoughts about doing or not doing something. Voluntariness has been defined as the extent to which adoption perception is perceived as non-mandatory by potential adopters. Image has been defined as the degree to which using innovation is perceived to enhance individuals' status in his/her social network (Venkatesh and Davis, 2000).

Perceived ease of use has a prominent role in adoption of innovations (Davis, 1989). Arnould et al. (2004) defined innovation resistance as "a preference for existing, familiar product and behaviors over novel ones". Hirschman (1980) defined innovators as "novelty seekers". According to the author "innovators need a smaller cognitive effort to comprehend the new product concept and have a higher competence to evaluate alternative products and select the superior one". Innovativeness could be applied generally or for a specific domain such as technology innovativeness. According to Goldsmith (2000) general innovativeness, online buying-specific innovativeness and role of customer innovativeness involvement with the internet can predict frequency and intent to buy online in future. Thakur and Srivastava (2014) revealed customer innovativeness as a key construct which improve the intention of online retail adoption directly and by its effective role in reducing consumers' risk perception in using internet channels for making physical goods' purchase.

Innovations and new products encompass different type of risk perception which enhances costumer's resistance to adoption. Online shopping as an innovative way of traditional retailing is associated with various risk perceptions such as performance risk, time risk, social risk, privacy risk and security risk. Performance risk perception refers to product performance relative to customer expectation. Customers hesitate to buy a product shown online (Kim and Forsythe, 2010) and they are afraid of difficulty of returning or exchanging products bought online (Tong, 2010). Time risk perception refers to the time of learning of how to buy on a certain e-retailing web site, the time to wait for it to respond and the additional cognitive effort expended in search process (Kunze and Li-Wei, 2007; Littler and Melanthiou, 2006). Information search is a way for better purchasing decision making to reduce the perceived risk (Hussain and et al, 2016). Social risk perception explains the potential loss of status in a person's social network because of adopting an untrendy product or service (Featherman and Pavlou, 2003). Security risk perception refers to the perception about security of means of payment. Customers tend to increase online shopping if they feel that their credit card number and other sensitive information are safe. Privacy risk perception refers to unwanted disclosure of customer's private information or misusing this information by the company collecting it. As already mentioned various shopping risk perceptions influence the selection of shopping channels and act as barrier in online transactions (Thakur and Srivastava , 2015). Therefore;

*Hypothesis 2: Personal innovativeness has a favorable influence on online shopping intention*

*Hypothesis 3: Personal innovativeness reduces online buying risk perception*

## 2.4 Online Shopping Intention

According to Theory of Planned behavior (TPB) behavioral intention is the most influential predictor of behavior. Behavioral intention has been defined as a person's intention to perform different behaviors (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977). There is correlation between behavioral intention and actual behavior (Engel et al., 1986; Sheppard et al., 1988; Venkatesh et al., 2003) therefore; measuring intention to shop online can give acceptable indication of consumer's actual behavior (Thakur and Srivastava, 2015). When customers are contemplating a repeated purchase decision it could be considered as evidence of some kind of intention or desire to make the purchase. In online purchasing being familiar with online commerce will lead to a higher degree of involvement in the purchase process (San et al., 2011).

Internet users have been classified as internet shoppers and internet browsers. Internet browsers simply browse online for products or services but do not make any purchase. Internet shoppers, however, purchase products and services online (Forsythe and Shi, 2003).

Risk is a particularly important aspect of online shopping. Risk perception in online shopping is expectation of loss in a given electronic transaction (Kim and Forsythe, 2010). Perceived risk related to internet transactions is a key factor that must be addressed in e-commerce because it has been found to have a significant influence on the behavioral intentions to use online services such as online banking (Thakur and Srivastava, 2015). Researches indicate that customers tend to avoid purchasing goods or services on internet when they perceive various types of risks associated to internet behavior purchase. Therefore;

*Hypothesis 4: Consumer perceived risk in online retailing negatively influences online shopping intention*

## 3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research is designed in order to determine the relationship between eWOM credibility and perceived customer risk during the purchase process. Data has been gathered by conducting survey as a quantitative method. The survey consists of three parts; in the first part, participants have been asked to determine their online purchase behavior by answering to questions such as their earlier online purchase experience, their online buying frequency and the item(s) that they have already bought from internet. In the second part, eWOM credibility, personal innovativeness, perceived risk and online purchase intention have been measured by 28 questions. Scales used in this research have been adopted from literature (Table 1). Last part of the survey is about participants' descriptive information such as age, gender, marital status, education level, employment status and income per month.

**Table 1: Scales Used in the Research**

Scale	Reference
eWOM Credibility	Hussain et al. (2017)
Perceived Customer Risk	Bauer (1960), Cox and Cox (2001), Cox, Cox and Zimet (2006), Cox (1967), Dowling and Staelin (1964), Roselius (1971)
Online Shopping Intention	(Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977)
Personal Innovativeness	Agarwal and Prasad (1998)

Population of the research contains individuals that buy goods and services online in Turkey. A sample of 280 university students in Turkey has been selected by Convenience sampling method. All variables have been measured by 5 item Likert scale.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first part of the data has been analyzed by looking at frequency of introduction and demographic items. As seen on Table 2, all respondents have already had online buying experience. Results indicate that majority of participants (81.7 percent) occasionally purchase goods and services online, so online buying frequency is not high and intense among Turkish customers. Results also show that the most online bought products or services are Transport-Tickets (40.7 percent), Books (28.9 percent) and Cosmetics (13.2 percent). Entertainment tickets and cloths are less favorable items for online purchasing.

**Table 2: Introduction Items**

		Frequency	%
<b>Have you ever shopped online before?</b>	Yes	280	100
	No	0	0
<b>Online buying frequency</b>	Daily	1	0.4
	Several times per week	9	3.2
	Once a week	15	5.4
	Fortnightly	26	9.3
	Occasionally	229	81.7
<b>Mostly online bought products</b>	Books	81	28.9
	Transport-Tickets	114	40.7
	Entertainment-Tickets	13	4.6
	Clothes	9	3.2
	Cosmetics	37	13.2
	Others	26	9.4

In current survey, all of the respondents are students between 18 and 30 years old. 52.9 percent of the respondents are female and 47.1 percent of them are male. Almost all of the participants are single (99.6 percent) and 91.4 percent of them earn less than 2000 TL per month. Education level of more than 50 percent of respondents is high school, 39.3 percent have Bachelor degree and 2.5 percent have MBA. Descriptive statistics of this survey can be seen on Table 3:

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics**

		Frequency	%
<b>Age Group</b>	18-30	280	100
<b>Gender</b>	Female	148	52.9
	Male	132	47.1
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	1	0.4
	Single	279	99.6
<b>Education Level</b>	High School	163	58.2
	BA	110	39.3
	MBA	7	2.5
<b>Employment Status</b>	Student	280	100
<b>Income per Month</b>	0-2000 TLs	256	91.4
	2001-4000 TLs	19	6.8
	4001-6000 TLs	2	0.7
	6001-8000 TLs	2	0.7
	8001-10000 TLs	0	0
	10001 TLs+...	1	0.4
N= 280			

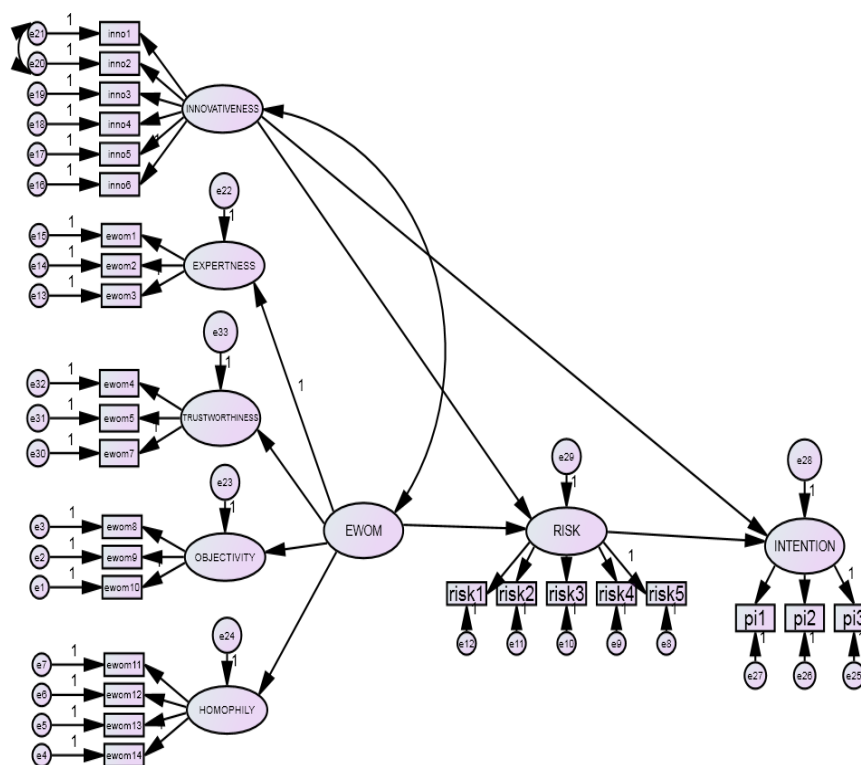
In order to analyze the second part of the data, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, measurement model test and structural Equation model test have been conducted. Exploratory factor analyses results are summarized on Table 4.

Table 4: EFA Results

Variable	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Significance	Number of Factors	Name of the Factors	Number of Items
Personal Innovativeness	0.829	0.001	1	Personal Innovativeness	6
eWOM Credibility	0.892	0.001	4	Expertness Trustworthiness Objectivity Homophily	3 3 3 4
Perceived Risk	0.842	0.001	1	Perceived Risk	5
Online Purchase Intention	0.714	0.001	1	Online Purchase Intention	3

To assess measurement reliability and validity of the final model, confirmatory factor analysis has been carried out for all the latent constructs. The fit indices show a good fit between model and observed data (Chi-square/Degree of Freedom= 2.113, RMSEA= 0.063, GFI= 0.847, AGFI= 0.816, IFI= 0.888, CFI= 0.886).

Figure 1: Structural Model



\* Chi-square/Degree of Freedom= 2.113, RMSEA= 0.063, GFI= 0.847, AGFI= 0.816, IFI= 0.888, CFI= 0.886

The structural model and corresponding hypothesis have been tested (Figure 1). The results clearly support all hypotheses (Table 5).

**Table 5: Hypotheses**

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	Result
<i>Hypothesis 1: There is a negative relationship between eWOM Credibility and Customer Perceived Risk</i>	-0.03	Supported
<i>Hypothesis 2: Personal innovativeness has a favorable influence on online shopping intention</i>	0.40	Supported
<i>Hypothesis 3: Personal innovativeness reduces online buying risk perception</i>	-0.22	Supported
<i>Hypothesis 4: Consumer perceived risk in online retailing negatively influences online shopping intention</i>	-0.21	Supported

## 5. CONCLUSION

There are many factors affecting online purchase intention. Personal innovativeness, eWOM credibility and customer perceived risk seem to be some of the most important ones. Innovative people tend to purchase online more. Adding to this, it can be effective on purchase intention via perceived risk. eWOM credibility also can influence perceived customer risk and online purchase intention.

People hesitate over online purchasing because of some factors. Firstly, online shopping is growing newly in Turkey, so consumers can think that it isn't a reliable way. This situation ends with perceiving online shopping as risky. Consumers have questions about paying online; especially they aren't willing to share their payment information. Recently some guarantee methods such as 3D have been developed to reduce these risk perceptions. Moreover, delivery of goods or services which has been bought online is a huge problem in online shopping in Turkey. Most of the consumers worry if their products will be delivered on time without any defect. Cooperating with reliable cargo firms could be an effective way for online retailers in order to reduce the risk perceptions about delivery.

Innovative people tend to be calm about online purchasing, while they like to try new purchasing methods earlier. Therefore, their risk perceptions are lower. This situation increases the intention about purchasing online.

In today's electronically connected world, electronic factors are shaping consumer behavior. People want to comfort themselves about online purchasing by reading others customers' comments and reviews. Before an individual make a decision to purchase a good or service online, he/she firstly check out other customers' opinion in the internet. Nowadays, comments and reviews on social media such as Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and etc. are the most important source of information for customers. They provide significant and useful information about products' quality and performance.

In conclusion, firms have to get good feedbacks on the electronic platforms. In order to achieve this, they work really hard. They provide their products free to the influencers or opinion leaders, they spend more for social ads, and sometimes they make agreements with the influencers. However it mustn't be forgotten that being honest in this process is essential. It is thought that firms aren't able to make any difference about personal innovativeness but they can play role by different promotion strategies.

This research is focused on the Turkish customers. This is the main limitation of this research. In further studies different cultures can be examined. eWOM and perceived customer risk were studied only on 18 to 30 years old student groups. Different age groups also can be studied later. Furthermore, online purchase behavior of married individuals and families might be interesting as well. Finally any significant association between income and online buying behavior can be investigated.

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