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The influence of eWOM in social media on consumers' purchase intentions: An extended approach to information adoption

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ABSTRACT

Social media websites have created valuable opportunities for electronic word of mouth (eWOM) conversations. People are now able to discuss products and services of brands with their friends and acquaintances. The aim of this study is to examine the influence of these conversations in social media on consumers' purchase intentions. For this purpose, a conceptual model was developed based on the integration of Information Adoption Model (IAM) and related components of Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). The new model, which is named as Information Acceptance Model (IACM), was validated through structural equation modelling (SEM) based on surveys of 384 university students who use social media websites. The results confirm that quality, credibility, usefulness and adoption of information, needs of information and attitude towards information are the key factors of eWOM in social media that influence consumers' purchase intentions. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed as well as recommendations for further research.

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1. Introduction

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has long been considered an influential marketing instrument (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Kumar & Benbasat, 2006; Zhang, Craciun, & Shin, 2010). Consumers search for information posted by previous customers, in order to make themselves comfortable before purchasing products or services (Pitta & Fowler, 2005). The Internet has provided several appropriate platforms for eWOM such as blogs, discussion forums, review websites, shopping websites and lastly social media websites (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Previous studies have found the influence of eWOM in these sources on consumers' purchase intentions (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Chan & Ngai, 2011; Park, Lee, & Han, 2007; See-To & Ho, 2014).

However, social media websites, which are relatively new eWOM platforms, have brought a new aspect to eWOM, through enabling users to communicate with their existing networks. People are now able to exchange opinions and experiences about products or services with their friends and acquaintances on social media (Chu & Kim, 2011; Kozinets, de Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner,

2010). This reduced anonymity has the potential to make eWOM information more trustworthy and reliable (Chu & Choi, 2011; Wallace, Walker, Lopez, & Jones, 2009). Indeed, since the conversations in social media frequently refer to brands (Wolny & Mueller, 2013), they are naturally influential on consumers purchase intentions (Wang, Yu, & Wei, 2012). However, it is difficult to envisage all eWOM information as being influential on consumers' purchase intentions. Owing to the vast amount of information which consumers are exposed to, they need to critique and screen the information before using it. This mechanism between eWOM and consumers' purchase intention has not yet been explained even though the studies previously mentioned discovered the impact of eWOM in social media.

According to Knoll's latest research (2015), which reviews the recent eWOM studies undertaken in the social media context, the influence of eWOM depends on both the information and the consumer. Although this is only an argument based on recent studies and has not been empirically tested, we also agreed with the idea that consumer behaviour towards information should be evaluated together with the characteristics of information. Therefore, we considered both aspects whilst developing our research model. We integrated the Information Adoption Model (IAM) and related components of Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). The IAM explains the characteristics of the eWOM information, while the related components of TRA express the behaviour of consumers

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towards eWOM information.

The objective of this study is to examine the influence of eWOM in social media on consumers' purchase intentions. For this purpose, we empirically test our research model which we named as Information Acceptance Model (IACM). More specifically, the proposed model tests quality, credibility, usefulness and adoption of information, needs of information and attitude towards information as main precursors of purchase intention. The results provide theoretical insights regarding eWOM in social media; and contribute to the literature through the presented model. On the managerial side, understanding the determinants of eWOM information on social media which affect consumers' purchase intentions could help marketers to utilise eWOM in their digital marketing activities.

2. EWOM in social media

Social media websites are considered as truly appropriate platforms for eWOM (Canhoto & Clark, 2013; Erkan & Evans, 2014; Kim, Sung, & Kang, 2014). In addition to daily conversations between customers, these websites also allow opinion leaders to create and promote profiles relating to products and services of brands. People can share their comments via written texts, pictures, videos or even applications. Visually enriched contents make eWOM more enjoyable and appealing. Furthermore, social media websites facilitate the dissemination of eWOM information among the huge amount of people (Sohn, 2014); and users can even share their thoughts by only forwarding the posts they agree with (Chu & Kim, 2011). For these reasons, consumers increasingly resort to social media to obtain information about brands (Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Barreda, Bilgihan, Nusair, & Okumus, 2015; Naylor, Lamberton, & West, 2012).

EWOM information in social media can arise in several different ways. Users can intentionally post about brands and their products or services. Furthermore, users can unintentionally display their preferences to their network, such as becoming a fan of brands, interacting with brands posts through liking and commenting, or posting a brand included content without any advertising purpose. Lastly, marketers can also post information through their official accounts on social media websites (Alboqami et al., 2015). Therefore, people who encounter eWOM in social media need to comprehensively critique the information in order to adopt them for ideal purchase intentions. Previous studies have used several models and theories to examine information adoption of consumers. However, based on IAM, this study has developed its own research model, which is named as IACM.

3. Theoretical background of the research model

This study develops a theoretical model to identify the determinants of eWOM information on social media which influence consumers' purchase intentions. To do so, the IAM (Sussman & Siegal, 2003) was extended with related components of TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The introduced model in this study, which is named as information acceptance model (IACM), shows that the influence of eWOM on social media not only depends on the characteristics of eWOM information, such as quality and credibility of information, but it also depends on the consumers' behaviour towards eWOM information.

This study proposes a specific and unique conceptual model which extends and enhances IAM, instead of using the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis, 1989). This section, therefore, initially will discuss the reasons for not using the TAM. The IAM, which is being extended to IACM, will then be introduced along with the required justifications. Thereafter, the adopted constructs of TRA

will be explained, before introducing our research model: IACM.

3.1. Technology acceptance model (TAM)

TAM is a widely accepted theory, proposed by Davis (1989), which identifies any behavioural issues of users in the acceptance of new technologies (Lee, Kim, & Hackney, 2011; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000; Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003; Yiu, Grant, & Edgar, 2007). TAM was derived from the TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975); however, TAM is more 'information systems' specific, while TRA focuses on behavioural theories (Özkan, Bindusara, & Hackney, 2010). TAM is underpinned by two main constructs, which are 'perceived usefulness' and 'perceived ease of use' (Davis, 1989), for predicting an individual attitude towards accepting certain technology (Tarhini, Arachchilage, Masa'deh, & Abbasi, 2015). It is therefore widely used by researchers within the different contexts such as the Internet usage (Porter & Donthu, 2006), social media usage (Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, & Johnson, 2014), online banking (Yiu et al., 2007), e-learning (Tarhini, Hone, & Liu, 2013), e-government (Alenezi, Tarhini, & Sharma, 2015). In addition, TAM has also been employed to explain the adoption of information in the context of eWOM (Aye, 2015; Elwalda, Lu, & Ali, 2016; Yang, 2013).

However, on the other hand, although the TAM is considered as a very important model, it has also been widely criticised for its limited explanatory power (Bagozzi, 2007; Bhattacharjee & Premkumar, 2004; Riffai, Grant, & Edgar, 2012; Tarhini et al., 2015). TAM mostly focuses on the individual usage of a computer, with the concept of 'perceived usefulness', and disregards the essential social processes of information development and implementation (Riffai et al., 2012). Particularly in the context of eWOM, where the information is generated by separate individuals, TAM might not deliver adequate understanding of users' attitudes and intentions (Aye, 2015). Furthermore, TAM is also criticised by researchers since it neglects the relationship between intention and actual behaviour, while focusing on the usage (Bagozzi, 2007). As there is a time gap between the intention and behaviour, the behaviour is open to be influenced by external factors such as psychological and instrumental procedures (Bagozzi, 2007; Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998).

Based on the criticisms mentioned above, the use of TAM is not found appropriate for this study although some of its key components were employed. This study therefore has preferred to develop its own research model, IACM, in order to explore how the information obtained in computer-mediated communication platforms is internalised and accepted by consumers. To do so, the IAM (Sussman & Siegal, 2003) was extended with the related components of TRA.

3.2. Information adoption model (IAM)

EWOM conversations consist of basic information transfer between people who send and receive the information (Bansal & Voyer, 2000). However, the influence of the information might change from person to person; the same content can evoke differing notions among receivers (Chaiken & Eagly, 1976; Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008). In order to understand how people internalise the information they receive, previous researchers have focused on the information adoption process (Nonaka, 1994). In the information systems literature, researchers have applied TRA/TAM-based models to define how people are affected in adopting ideas or information (Ajzen, 1985; Davis, 1989; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). However, Sussman and Siegal (2003) take this knowledge further by integrating them with dual process theories. IAM is proposed by integrating TAM (Davis, 1989) with the elaboration

likelihood model (ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981) which posits that people can be affected by a message in two routes, which are central and peripheral (Shen, Cheung, & Lee, 2013; Sussman & Siegal, 2003). The central route refers to the core of the message, while the peripheral route refers to the issues which are indirectly related to core of the message (Cheung et al., 2008; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Shu & Scott, 2014). The IAM has four components: argument quality (which represents the central route), source credibility (which represents the peripheral route), information usefulness and information adoption. With this integration, the IAM offers to explain how people are affected by the information on computer mediated communication platforms. Fig. 1 shows the IAM.

As this model explains the information on computer-mediated communication platforms, it is strongly applicable for eWOM studies (Cheung et al., 2008; Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009; Shu & Scott, 2014). In particular, Cheung et al. (2008) has applied this model within the online discussion forums context, while it is employed by Shu and Scott (2014) within the social media context. As this research focuses on eWOM on social media, the use of IAM is found appropriate for this study. The components of IAM are applied into this study as information quality, information credibility, information usefulness and information adoption.

Nonetheless, although IAM is a commonly used model, this study criticises it since it only focuses on the characteristics of information, which are quality, credibility and usefulness. The influence of information, however, should not be limited to characteristics of information; consumers' behaviours towards information should also be considered. More specifically, this study argues that the influence of eWOM on social media not only depends on the characteristics of eWOM information but it also depends on the consumers' behaviours towards eWOM information. Although this argument has not yet been empirically tested, it is also supported by Knoll (2015), who reviews the recent eWOM studies conducted in the social media context. The developed model in this study, IACM, therefore extends the IAM through considering behaviours of consumers towards information. The components relating to consumers' behaviour towards eWOM information are derived from TRA.

3.3. Theory of reasoned action (TRA)

The TRA postulates that behavioural intentions, which are the antecedents of behaviour, are decided by attitude and subjective norms (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992; Zhang, Cheung, & Lee, 2014). This theory has been frequently used by the previous research regarding the relationship between eWOM and purchase intention (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Prendergast, Ko, & Yuen, 2010; Reichelt, Sievert, & Jacob, 2014). However, this study uses only two components of TRA which are attitude and behavioural intention. Behavioural intention is selected instead of behaviour as the aim of this study is to explore the influence of eWOM on purchase intention. Behavioural intention is considered as the antecedent of actual behaviour by a significant number of theories, such as TRA, theory of planned behaviour (TPB), and TAM (Ajzen, 1985; Davis, 1989; Fishbein &

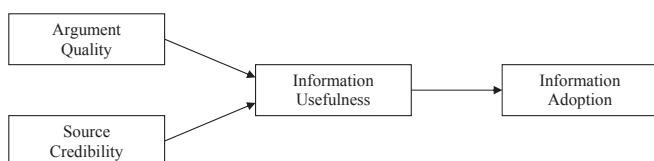


Fig. 1. Information adoption model.
Source: Sussman & Siegal (2003).

Ajzen, 1975). However, when it comes to the buying behaviour, it is criticised by both old and recent studies, since the buying behaviour is open to be influenced by external factors such as unanticipated income shifts and unexpected promotions (De Cannière, De Pelsmacker, & Geuens, 2009; Foxall, 2005; Infosino, 1986; Morrison, 1979; Sun & Morwitz, 2010). In other words, consumers might not buy the product or service although they have purchase intentions. As the aim of this study is to understand the influence of eWOM information, only the purchase intention is used rather than the actual purchase behaviour.

On the other hand, the component of subjective norms is disregarded, as it is also criticised by some researchers (Miller, 2002). Subjective norms refer to how people consider other people would view them if they performed the behaviour. However, Miller (2002) argues that if a person's personality is not influenced by the thoughts of others, then subjective norms would carry little weight in predicting the intention or behaviour. Therefore, only the aforementioned two constructs are borrowed and applied as attitude towards information and purchase intention. Additionally, this study adds needs of information to the research model as another, further construct. Needs of information is found as consumer behaviour towards eWOM information, during the review of the literature (Chu & Kim, 2011; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004; Wolny & Mueller, 2013).

4. The research model (IACM) and hypotheses development

Fig. 2 shows the research model of this study, explaining the determinants of eWOM information on social media which affect consumers' purchase intentions. This study claims that the characteristics of eWOM information are not sufficient to examine the influence of eWOM on consumers' purchase intentions; the behaviour of consumers towards the eWOM information should be included in the evaluation. Therefore, it creates a new model, which is named IACM. Both characteristics of eWOM information and consumers' behaviour towards eWOM information are considered together whilst developing the IACM.

As explained above, this model is extending the IAM (Sussman & Siegal, 2003) through integrating the related parts of TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The IAM explains the characteristics of eWOM information, while the related components of TRA represents the behaviour of consumers towards eWOM information. With this integration, the research model of this study offers to carry the IAM one step further. The current version of IAM only explains the adoption of information, whereas the IACM expands the notion of information adoption through the inclusion of the behaviour of the consumer; and it explains how this process influences behavioural intention. Eventually, the IACM examines the relationships between following variables: information quality, information credibility, needs of information, attitude towards information, information usefulness, information adoption and purchase intention.

4.1. Information adoption and purchase intention

Social media users, either intentionally or unintentionally, are exposed to a huge amount of eWOM information and previous studies have found such eWOM information as influential on consumers' purchase intentions (See-To & Ho, 2014; Wang et al., 2012). However, not all eWOM information posted on social media has the same effect on consumers' purchase intentions; the level of impact can vary (Yang, 2012). In this study, through linking IAM and TRA, we predict that the consumers who adopt eWOM information are more likely to have purchase intentions.

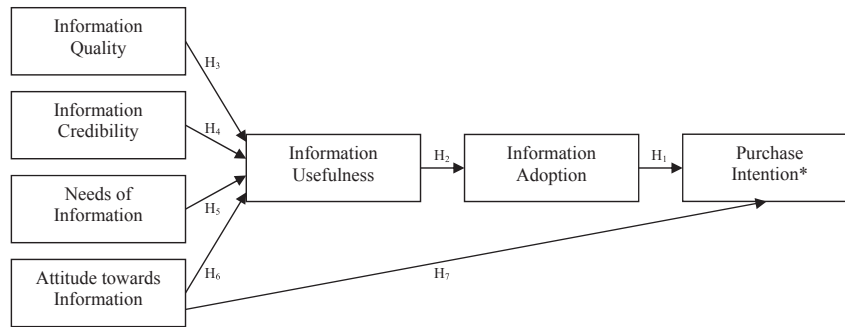


Fig. 2. The proposed research model. * We display this construct as a 'Purchase Intention' due to context of this study. However, as a component of proposed Information Acceptance Model (IACM), we offer the usage of 'Behavioural Intention' for future studies.

H1. Adoption of eWOM information is positively related to consumers' purchase intention.

4.2. Information usefulness and information adoption

Information usefulness refers to people's perception that using new information will enhance his/her performance (Bailey & Pearson, 1983; Cheung et al., 2008). Information usefulness is considered as a main predictor of information adoption (Davis, 1989; Sussman & Siegal, 2003) and purchase intention (Lee & Koo, 2015), because people tend to engage with the information when they think it is useful. Particularly in social media, people encounter a great amount of eWOM information (Chu & Kim, 2011); therefore they might have greater intention to adopt, when they find the information useful.

H2. Usefulness of eWOM information is positively related to adoption of eWOM information.

4.3. Information quality & information credibility

EWOM information can be generated by almost every user on the Internet; therefore, quality and credibility of information has now become more critical (Xu, 2014). Consumers approach products and services more eagerly when the information satisfies their demands (Olshavsky, 1985). In fact, previous researchers found that the quality of online reviews have positive effects on consumers' purchase intentions (Lee & Shin, 2014; Park et al., 2007). Therefore, we predict the quality of eWOM information in social media can be one of the determinants of consumers' purchase intentions. Furthermore, previous research has also demonstrated the relationship between information credibility on consumers' purchase intentions (Nabi & Hendriks, 2003; Prendergast et al., 2010) and information adoption (McKnight & Kacmar, 2006). However, according to Wathen and Burkell (2002), information credibility is the initial factor in the individuals' persuasion process. Therefore, based on IAM, we predict that the credibility of eWOM information is positively related to its usefulness in addition to information adoption and purchase intention.

H3. Quality of eWOM information is positively related to usefulness of eWOM information.

H4. Credibility of eWOM information is positively related to usefulness of eWOM information.

4.4. Needs of information & attitude towards information

Needs of information have primarily been studied as a motivator for word of mouth (WOM) engagement (Sundaram, Kaushik, &

Webster, 1998). Subsequent studies have used this notion as 'advice seeking' (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Wolny & Mueller, 2013) and 'opinion seeking' (Chu & Kim, 2011) with different research questions. However, in this study we added 'needs of information' into our model as a dependent variable as we anticipate that people seeking information in social media, are more likely to find usable ones and adopt them; and eventually 'needs of information' can effect purchase intention.

H5. Needs of eWOM information is positively related to usefulness of eWOM information.

'Attitude towards information' is another dependent variable that we added through considering TRA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Attitudes of consumers have been examined by researchers in several studies with regards to eWOM (Park et al., 2007; Prendergast et al., 2010). Moreover, two more theories, which are Theory of Planned Behaviour TPB (Ajzen, 1991) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Bagozzi, Davis, & Warshaw, 1992), also indicate the relationship between attitude and behavioural intention, in addition to TRA. Therefore we hypothesise that attitudes of social media users toward the eWOM information can have a positive effect on usefulness of eWOM information and consumers' purchase intentions.

H6. Attitude towards eWOM information is positively related to usefulness of eWOM information.

H7. Attitude towards eWOM information is positively related to consumers' purchase intention.

5. Method

5.1. Sampling

In order to test the hypothesised relationships among variables in the proposed research model, a survey was conducted. University students were deemed appropriate for this study due to latest statistics which show adults between the ages 18–29 as being the majority of social media users. As of January 2014; 89% of this age group who use the Internet, also use social media websites (PRC, 2014). A total of 384 students registered in UK universities participated in the study. The sample size of 384 is considered appropriate when the population constitutes millions (at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error) (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970; Sekaran, 2006). Sample characteristics are presented in Table 1.

5.2. Measures

The survey was designed using a multi-item approach; each construct was measured by several items to improve validity and

Table 1
Sample characteristics ($n = 384$).

Measure	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	185	48.2
Female	199	51.8
Education Level		
Bachelor's	164	42.7
Master's	88	22.9
PhD	132	34.4
Social Media Usage		
Everyday	312	81.3
4–5 days per week	34	8.9
Once or twice a week	27	7.0
Very rare	11	2.9
Internet Familiarity		
Less than 1 year	1	0.3
1–3 years	3	0.8
4–6 years	39	10.2
More than 6 years	341	88.8

reliability. All variables were carried out by a five-point Likert-scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Items were borrowed from previous literature and modified for the context of this study. Specifically, 'Attitude towards Information' and 'Information Quality' were measured by three-item scales which were adapted from the study of Park et al. (2007). 'Information Quality' was assessed by adapting four items used by Prendergast et al. (2010). Two-item scales were used in order to measure 'Needs of Information', 'Information Usefulness' and 'Information Adoption' which were adapted by following studies: (respectively) Chu and Kim (2011), Bailey and Pearson (1983) and Cheung et al. (2009). Finally, to examine purchase intention, three statements adopted from Coyle and Thorson (2001) and one statement adapted by the study of Prendergast et al. (2010). Appendix A presents all the measures used for this study.

6. Results

6.1. Measurement model evaluation

The research model was tested using AMOS 20, a structural modelling technique which is well suited for predictive models (Bentler & Chou, 1987). Before testing the hypothesised relationships, we analysed the reliability and validity of the scales. Convergent validity, which was examined by using the composite reliability (CR) and the average variance extracted (AVE), demonstrates how the items are related to each other; and, simply, whether they can be in the same measurement or not. The lower acceptable value is 0.70 for CR and 0.50 for AVE (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As presented in Table 2, CR of each variable are more than 0.8 (0.815–0.890) and AVE of each variable are more than 0.50 (0.591–0.745) which means the convergent validity is achieved. The recommended level for the factor loadings is 0.70 and all the factor loadings of this study are greater than 0.70 (See Table 2).

Additionally, discriminant validity was analysed in order to examine whether a measurement is not a reflection of any other measurement or not. In this analysis, each of the square roots of AVE should be higher than the other correlation coefficients for adequate discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). As presented in Table 3, the square root of AVE for each variable is greater than the other correlation coefficients which indicate the discriminant validity is achieved.

6.2. Structural model evaluation

The results of tested structural model are presented in Table 4.

Table 2
Factor loadings, CR and AVE values.

Variable	Item	Factor loading	CR	AVE
Attitude towards information ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.99$, $\alpha = 0.84$)	ATI1	0.74	0.851	0.657
	ATI2	0.86		
	ATI3	0.82		
Information quality ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.83$, $\alpha = 0.83$)	IQ1	0.79	0.837	0.632
	IQ2	0.83		
	IQ3	0.76		
Information credibility ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.87$, $\alpha = 0.89$)	IC1	0.86	0.890	0.668
	IC2	0.85		
	IC3	0.78		
	IC4	0.73		
Needs of information ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.00$, $\alpha = 0.81$)	NOI1	0.86	0.815	0.687
	NOI2	0.80		
Information usefulness ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.95$, $\alpha = 0.83$)	IU1	0.88	0.837	0.720
	IU2	0.79		
Information adoption ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.95$, $\alpha = 0.85$)	IA1	0.89	0.854	0.745
	IA2	0.83		
Purchase intention ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.60$, $\alpha = 0.85$)	PI1	0.73	0.852	0.591
	PI2	0.74		
	PI3	0.84		
	PI4	0.77		

Note: CR – Composite Reliability, AVE - Average Variance Extracted.

Six hypothesised relationships between variables were found statistically significant while one hypothesis was not significant. More specifically, H_1 , which predicts the positive influence of information adoption on purchase intention, was supported ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, information usefulness was found to have a positive influence on information adoption; H_2 was supported ($\beta = 0.88$, $p < 0.001$). Further, information quality, information credibility and needs of information appeared to have a significant, positive impact on information usefulness; (respectively) H_3 ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$), H_4 ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$), H_5 ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$). However, attitude towards information was not found to be influential on information usefulness ($\beta = 0.11$); H_6 was not supported. Finally, H_7 , which predicts the positive influence of attitude towards information on purchase intention, was supported ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, the goodness-of-fit indices indicates the model did fit the data very well; $\chi^2/df = 1.854$; $p < 0.001$; GFI = 0.930; AGFI = 0.906; CFI = 0.972; RMSEA = 0.047 (See Table 4).

7. Discussion

The influence of eWOM on consumers' purchase intentions has long been known by researchers (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Chan & Ngai, 2011; Kumar & Benbasat, 2006; Park et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2010). In fact, the impact of eWOM in social media on consumers' purchase intentions has also been known (See-To & Ho, 2014; Wang et al., 2012). However, this study explains the determinants of eWOM information on social media which influence consumers' purchase intentions through the tested model, IACM. Results from the structural equation model indicate that both characteristics of eWOM information and behaviours of consumers towards eWOM information have a positive impact on consumers' purchase intentions. All hypotheses between information quality, information credibility, needs of information, attitude towards information, information usefulness, information adoption and purchase intention were supported except the one between attitude towards information and information usefulness.

Although the model was found significant, the relationship in the rejected hypothesis is open to discussion. We followed the theories provided by literature while we were building our model, as explained within the paper. However, no significant relationship was found between attitude towards information and information usefulness. One possible factor which may cause this result is the

Table 3
Correlation matrix of key variables.

	ATI	IQ	IC	NOI	IU	IA	PI
Attitude towards information (ATI)	<i>0.811</i>						
Information quality (IQ)	0.627	<i>0.795</i>					
Information credibility (IC)	0.655	0.770	<i>0.818</i>				
Needs of information (NOI)	0.711	0.618	0.703	<i>0.829</i>			
Information usefulness (IU)	0.671	0.718	0.745	0.776	<i>0.848</i>		
Information adoption (IA)	0.667	0.672	0.688	0.710	0.846	<i>0.863</i>	
Purchase intention (PI)	0.459	0.417	0.543	0.521	0.516	0.520	<i>0.769</i>

Note: Italicised elements are the square root of AVE for each variable.

Table 4
Results and goodness-of-fit indices.

	Relationship	Std R.W	C.R	P Value
H ₁	Information Adoption → Purchase Intention	0.39	5.314	***
H ₂	Information Usefulness → Information Adoption	0.88	16.571	***
H ₃	Information Quality → Information Usefulness	0.26	3.589	***
H ₄	Information Credibility → Information Usefulness	0.22	2.688	**
H ₅	Needs of Information → Information Usefulness	0.41	5.350	***
H ₆	Attitude towards Information → Information Usefulness	0.11	1.661	0.097
H ₇	Attitude towards Information → Purchase Intention	0.22	3.059	**
Goodness-of-fit indices				
	X ² /d.f.			1.854
	Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)			0.930
	Adjusted GFI (AGFI)			0.906
	Comparative fit index (CFI)			0.972
	RMSEA			0.047

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Std R.W – Standardized Regression Weights, C.R – Critical Ratio.

context of this study, social media. Due to the fact that people usually receive the eWOM information from their friends and acquaintances in social media, they may already think that the information will be useful. Thus, the mentioned relationship might be affected; however, varying contexts may bring alternative results for this hypothesis.

Results relating to characteristics of eWOM information correlate with previous literature. Information quality and credibility have a positive impact on information usefulness, and information usefulness is positively related with information adoption as suggested by IAM (Sussman & Siegal, 2003). Our results prove that the model suggested by Sussman and Siegal (2003) is applicable for eWOM studies. This result was also proved in previous eWOM studies (Cheung et al., 2008, 2009; Shu & Scott, 2014); however, in this study, we add consumers' purchase intentions into the evaluation as a dependent variable. Therefore, through the results, we present that the information adoption process suggested by IAM, influences the consumers' purchase intentions.

On the other side, as we claim and explain throughout the paper, we consider the behaviour of consumer towards eWOM information together with the characteristics of information; thus we add it as independent variables into the evaluation. Results prove that our model is significant; and needs of information and attitude towards information are also among the determinants of eWOM on social media which influence consumers' purchase intentions. This result is in the same line with previous theories (Ajzen, 1991; Bagozzi et al., 1992; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and other previous studies (Chu & Kim, 2011; Park et al., 2007; Prendergast et al., 2010).

8. Conclusion

This study proposed a research model called Information Acceptance Model (IACM) in order to examine the influence of eWOM in social media on consumers' purchase intentions. The

IACM claims that the influence of eWOM information on social media not only depends on the characteristics of eWOM information, such as quality and credibility of information, but it also depends on the consumers' behaviour towards eWOM information. The model was validated through a survey of 384 university students who use social media websites.

The results revealed several theoretical and managerial implications. However, the major contribution of this study is to develop a comprehensive conceptual model which examines the determinants of eWOM information on social media influencing consumers' purchase intentions. The model was developed based on the integration of IAM and related components of TRA. The IAM explains the characteristics of the eWOM information (Sussman & Siegal, 2003), while the related components of TRA expresses the behaviour of consumers towards eWOM information (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). However, the offered model in this study, named Information Acceptance Model (IACM), offers a more comprehensive approach through considering the behaviour of consumers together with the characteristics of information within the same model. The IACM, thus;

- Brings a new approach to information adoption by extending IAM and provides new insights to researchers who study Information Systems (IS).
- Contributes to the future research by empirically testing an argument of recent eWOM studies (Knoll, 2015), which suggests the joint evaluation of characteristics of eWOM information and consumers' behaviour towards eWOM information.
- Provides a greater understanding of eWOM within social media by highlighting the determinants of eWOM information on social media influencing consumers' purchase intentions.

From a managerial perspective, this study provides marketers with a frame of reference to understand the influence of eWOM in

social media on consumers' purchase intentions. Social media websites are important for marketers owing to the large numbers of users they have; and moreover, these websites are considered very appropriate platforms for eWOM (Canhoto & Clark, 2013). For this reason, the determinants provided by this study are valuable in terms of the practicality. They allow marketers to understand the dynamics of eWOM on social media, and thus to develop better marketing strategies.

9. Limitations and future research directions

The results of this study should be considered with the following limitations. This research has been conducted with university students. Although the age group of university students constitutes the majority of social media users, they may not precisely reflect the whole population. Another limitation of this study is considering all social media websites together, instead of specifically focusing on one website such as Facebook or Twitter. Further research could examine the eWOM in one social media website. Also, a comparison between social media websites in the context of eWOM can bring valuable theoretical and managerial insights. Finally, future research could develop our research model through adding more variables or using the current one within different contexts.

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Appendix A. Measures

Variable	Items
Information quality (Park et al., 2007)	The information about products which are shared by my friends in social media ... IQ1 I think they are understandable. IQ2 I think they are clear. IQ3 In general, I think the quality of them is high.
Information credibility (Prendergast et al., 2010)	IC1 I think they are convincing. IC2 I think they are strong. IC3 I think they are credible. IC4 I think they are accurate.
Needs of information (Chu & Kim, 2011)	NO1 I like to apply them when I consider new products. NO2 If I have little experience with a product, I often use them.
Attitude towards information (Park et al., 2007)	ATI1 I always read them when I buy a product. ATI2 They are helpful for my decision making when I buy a product. ATI3 They make me confident in purchasing product.
Information usefulness (Bailey & Pearson, 1983)	IU1 I think they are generally useful. IU2 I think they are generally informative.
Information adoption (Cheung et al., 2009)	IA1 They make easier for me to make purchase decision. IA2 They enhance my effectiveness in making purchase decision.
Purchase intention (Coyle & Thorson, 2001)	After considering information about products which are shared by my friends in social media ... PI1 It is very likely that I will buy the product. PI2 I will purchase the product next time I need a product. PI3 I will definitely try the product. PI4 I will recommend the product to my friends.

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