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## ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH AND CUSTOMER PURCHASE INTENTION FOR HOTEL SERVICES IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

The study examined the effect of electronic word-of-mouth on customer purchase intention for hotel services in Delta state. The investigation used the cross-sectional survey research design. The study concentrated on customers of specific luxury hotels rated four and five stars in Asaba and Warri, Delta State. The total number of hotel customers in these two cities is unknown. The study used the snowball sampling technique. The sample size of 384 respondents was determined using the Cochran formula. Primary data were collected using a standardised questionnaire. Both face and content validity were used in this study to assess the validity of the research instrument. The investigation used internal consistency reliability. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, namely frequencies and percentages. Pearson correlation analysis and regression analysis were used for inferential analysis. Findings showed that online reviews, brand information quality and message source credibility has significant positive relationship with customer purchase intention for hotel services. The study concluded

that electronic word-of-mouth has significant positive effect on customer purchase intention for hotel services in Delta state. It was recommended amongst others that hotel managers should consistently check online review platforms for comments, respond swiftly and openly to any concerns presented by guests. Showing responsiveness can improve how the hotel is perceived. **Keywords:** Customer Purchase Intention, Electronic Word of Mouth, Hotel Services.

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## INTRODUCTION

The current market is significantly impacted by the internet, altering consumers' decision-making processes regarding their purchases. Most prospective customers do not depend exclusively on company advertisements or through brand messages created by salesmen. They review current customers' comments on company websites and consider their recommendations. Put simply, they rely on electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). Electronic word-of-mouth is a potent market influence due to consumers perceiving it as an impartial and reliable source of product details. E-WOM refers to consumers sharing and exchanging information about a product or company through the Internet, social media, and mobile communication. Electronic word-of-mouth is known to increase the likelihood of consumers sharing information online due to its ease of usage. Potential customers often refer to online reviews provided by existing customers when making purchasing decisions. Companies can influence customers' buying decision-making process by supporting and amplifying e-WOM. The internet has significantly impacted our daily lives by increasing the amount of information available, which has influenced the online retail environment, transactions, and the economy (Olmedilla et al., 2019).

E-WOM information on the Internet significantly influences the decision-making process of consumers when selecting and purchasing products or services from economic platform carriers and service providers (Guoyin et al., 2021). Factors including internet reviews, brand messaging quality, and information source authenticity can influence customers buying decisions in the hospitality industry. Purchase intention is a crucial notion for marketers as it offers valuable insights into customer behaviour and aids in the development of successful marketing campaigns. Purchase intention refers to a customer's inclination to buy a product or service (Agyapong et al., 2018). Positive internet reviews offer social proof by demonstrating that other individuals have had a favourable encounter with a product or service. Social validation can have a favourable impact on potential customers. Ensuring high-quality brand information provides clients with precise and dependable knowledge regarding a product or service. False or incorrect information can diminish trust and have a detrimental effect on the decision-making process. Customers' perception of information is influenced by the reliability of the source. Reputable sources help create a favourable impression of the company and its products.

Previously, product quality and value were communicated through merchant advertising and consumer interactions, either in person or through media, throughout the offline purchasing process. Currently, customers' online comments about specific items or services on the internet are the primary source of electronic word-of-mouth information. Consumers seek product or service information and feedback from other users before making purchasing decisions (Utz et al., 2012). Online reviews are a key source of information for consumers when making purchasing decisions (Jiang et al., 2016). Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) emphasised the

significance of recognising the potential of user-generated content (UGC) to spread positive messages and enhance brand value. Many studies have confirmed that customer-generated content influences customer purchase intention. Contrary to Llodra-Riera et al., (2015) assertion that user-generated content (UGC) plays a crucial role in shaping hotel image, a newer study suggests that UGC impacts hotel brand recognition (Stojanovic et al., 2018; Dedeoglu et al., 2020). Research has investigated the impact of User-Generated Content (UGC) or eWOM on customer travel reservations and hotel marketing perspectives (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013; Black & Kelley, 2009). Moreover, there is a lack of research on the impact of electronic word-of-mouth on travel decisions and lodgment reservation (Sicilia, Perez, & Heffernan, 2008). Unhappy customers and negative word of mouth can damage a company's reputation as customers tend to voice their dissatisfaction when they experience poor service or when the company fails to fulfil its commitments (Chang et al., 2015; Dixit et al., 2019). Complaints expressed through eWOM can significantly damage a hotel's reputation. Therefore, there is need to examine the effect of electronic word of mouth on customer purchase intention for hotel services.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Electronic word of mouth has become a significant factor in determining the success and reputation of hotels in the modern hospitality sector. Ignoring aspects of e-WOM such online reviews, brand information quality, and message source authenticity can greatly impact hotels as more guests rely on online platforms for information. These factors are important because they can influence consumer perceptions, affect booking decisions, and shape overall visitor experiences. Consumers often rely on online reviews and credible message sources to inform their purchase decisions. Neglecting these dimensions may result in a decrease in positive e-WOM, influencing potential customers to choose competitors instead. Negative online reviews and poor brand information quality can erode customer trust and loyalty. Customers who encounter negative e-WOM may be less likely to make repeat purchases or recommend the brand to others. This emphasises the importance of prioritising and managing various aspects of electronic word-of-mouth to avoid negative consequences for businesses in the digital age.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study is to evaluate the effect of electronic word of mouth on customer purchase intention for hotel services in Delta state. The specific objectives are to:

- i. determine the effect of online reviews on customer purchase intention for hotel services in Delta state;
- ii. explore the effect of brand information quality on customer purchase intention for hotel services in Delta state;
- iii. ascertain the effect of message source credibility on customer purchase intention for hotel services in Delta state.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM)**

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (E-WOM) or user-generated content (UGC) involves individuals contributing their ideas, experiences, and recommendations about a product or service via electronic platforms such online review sites, blogs, and forums. Electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) is gaining significance for businesses due to consumers' growing dependence on online

reviews and suggestions for their purchasing choices. Manap and Adzharudin (2013) stated that user-generated content (UGC), also known as E-WOM, operates akin to conventional word-of-mouth, except it spreads information through the internet. Video has emerged as a crucial marketing approach for many companies and marketing professionals, demonstrated by YouTube's evolution from a platform solely for user-generated video (Kee & Yazdanifard, 2015). UGC is a broad term that encompasses several types of media, making it challenging to compare different UGC research (Müller & Christandl, 2019). Testimonials are a form of user-generated content that has been analysed. The study shows that positive evaluations lead to more bookings on a travel website and that people are more likely to trust testimonials from sources they feel reliable (Ayeh et al., 2013). E-WOM stands for informal online discussions amongst customers regarding the advantages of certain products, their vendors, or the products' usage (Litvin et al., 2008). E-WOM is an ongoing and fluid exchange of information among potential, current, and past customers regarding a brand, service, or business that is accessible to a wide audience online (Ismagilova, et al. 2017). Word-of-mouth marketing occurs when promotional content influences the conduct and attitudes of existing and potential customers towards a brand.

Travellers enjoy sharing their experiences as part of e-WOM (Rosenbloom, 2013). Researchers are increasingly studying the influence of e-WOM on passengers' planning and decision-making processes (Mellinas & Reino, 2019). The problem has been thoroughly investigated from several perspectives, such as e-WOM sources, e-WOM communication channels, and e-WOM causes (Mellinas & Reino, 2019). Tourism marketers have recognised the benefits of e-WOM communication, as stated by Huang (2012). Travel sector marketers use e-WOM as a strategy to promote products and services on the internet. Electronic word-of-mouth is a cost-effective approach to reaching potential customers. E-WOM is widely regarded as a trustworthy and valued information source (Septiari, 2018). Electronic word-of-mouth valuation can impact buyer perceptions, attitudes, purchasing decisions, and post-use reviews (Al-Debei, et al. 2015). Ngoma and Ntale (2019) stated that word-of-mouth serves as a connection between relationship marketing and consumer loyalty. Septiari (2018) has shown the impact of electronic word-of-mouth on the relationship between website quality and trust.

### **Customer Purchase Intention for Hotel Services**

Customer purchase intention refers to the customer attitude towards a given product and the readiness to pay for the product. Hotel services encompass the amenities, facilities, and support offered by a hotel to cater to the requirements and preferences of visitors while they are staying at the hotel. These services extend beyond providing lodging and include many components aimed at improving the entire guest experience. Stefan (2019) stated that modern consumers have brand preferences and carefully consider elements like product or service quality before deciding to make a purchase. The importance of purchase intention is in firms' aspiration to boost sales of a specific brand or product, aiming to create a one-time surge in profit (Abrar, 2020). Purchase intention refers to the consumer's intention or readiness to acquire a specific product or service in the immediate future. It is a crucial marketing concept that can anticipate real purchasing behaviour. Buying decisions are affected by multiple factors such as product characteristics, brand reputation, advertising, cost, personal beliefs, and current circumstances. Businesses can use purchase intention metrics to forecast future demand for their offerings and

evaluate the efficiency of their marketing tactics. They can use this information to recognise potential clients and tailor unique marketing messages to them.

Consumers evaluate the quality of services provided by a hotel, such as lodging, food, facilities, and customer service. Positive experiences and a strong reputation for high-quality service lead to higher purchase intent. Establishing a robust and favourable brand reputation fosters trust with consumers. Positive reviews, ratings, and word-of-mouth recommendations enhance a positive perception. Reputable brands are more likely to appeal to consumers, resulting in increased purchase intent. Consumers evaluate the facilities and amenities provided by a hotel, including pools, fitness centres, spa services, and meeting spaces. Emphasising distinctive and attractive features can set the hotel apart and enhance the likelihood of making a transaction.



Figure 1 Conceptual Model

Figure 1 is an illustration of how the dimensions of eWOM affect customer purchase intention for hotel services.

### Online Reviews

An online review is a written assessment or critique of a product, service, or experience that is posted on the internet. Online reviews allow businesses to display their products or services and offer clients evidence of their quality through social proof. Positive evaluations can enhance a business's reputation and draw in new consumers. Guo *et al.*, (2020) discovered that positive online customer reviews increase the probability of buying more than negative reviews. Online product reviews have an impact on consumer behaviour, although the final outcome is determined by various circumstances. Studies have examined comprehensive online product information (OPI), which includes online reviews and vendor-supplied product information (VSPI), to explore how OPI impacts customers. Kang *et al.*, (2020) shown that the implementation of VSPI has an impact on the adoption of online reviews. Chen and Ku (2021)

discovered a favourable correlation between varied online review platforms acting as catalysts for impulsive online purchases. Additionally, various studies have examined different facets of online product reviews, such as the influence of online reviews on product satisfaction, the significance of review credibility and relevance on overall impact, the role of reviewer characteristics like gender, reputation, and emotion on the credibility of negative reviews, and the impact of vendor cues like brand reputation on purchasing intention.

Research by Wu *et al.*, (2021) found that the interaction between product newness and online review variance affects customers' adoption intentions of new items. Indulgent customers like incrementally new products (INPs) with high variation reviews, while restrained consumers are more inclined to choose new products (RNPs) with low variance. A study by Zhong-Gang *et al.*, (2015) found that over 60% of customers read online product evaluations weekly. Of those, 93% say that these reviews enhance the accuracy of their buying decisions, minimise risk, and influence their shopping choices. When engaging in commercial activities on B2B and B2C platforms, 82% of e-consumers read product reviews before making purchasing decisions, and 60% of them consult comments on a weekly basis. Bae and Lee (2011) found that online community reviews are the most credible source of information for buyers interested in established products, after studying the impact of review sources and product types. Reviews provide insights from users' viewpoints and detail their product experiences, making them more credible and helpful for other consumers in making decisions (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010).

Therefore, it was stated that:

**H1a:** Online reviews have significant relationship with customer purchase intention for hotel services in Delta state.

### **Brand Information Quality**

Brand information quality pertains to consumers' subjective evaluation of whether the brand message features align with their demands and intended application (Guoyin *et al.*, 2021). A reliable source is impartial and supported by evidence. Information quality is the degree to which brand message is accurate, reliable, relevant, timely, complete, and easy to understand (Onobrakpeya, & Ugwuonah, 2023). Research on online reviews defines information quality as the qualities of the content quality in consumers' reviews (Park *et al.*, 2007). Lin *et al.*, (2014) asserted that content reliability is a critical component in assessing the value of communication. Information quality has been extensively studied as a multi-dimensional variable and segmented into different aspects across diverse situations. Wang *et al.*, (1995) assessed information quality based on accessibility, usefulness, comprehensibility, and believability. Wang *et al.*, (1998) introduced a paradigm that categorises information quality based on four factors: intrinsic, accessible, contextual, and expressive, each including different aspects of information characteristics. Cheung *et al.*, (2009) highlighted relativities, timeliness, accuracy, and comprehensiveness as essential metrics of information quality in the online opinion adoption model.

Filieri (2015) assessed the information quality of e-WOM based on depth, factuality, breadth, relevance, and credibility. Information quality is determined by how well the information aligns with the objective facts. High content quality accurately represents items or services, allowing users to profit from identifying objective facts, resulting in a high perception of information quality. Utility quality pertains to the extent to which information fulfils its intended purpose. Low-quality information that is inaccurate, imprecise, or unrealistic might impact consumers'

perceptions and decisions, thereby leading to detrimental outcomes (Song *et al.*, 2021). High-quality information is accurate, timely, and comprehensive, aiming to help consumers understand product quality and service levels, boosting their confidence in making informed purchase decisions. This can be achieved through online comments on social media platforms, leading to potential financial gains. Therefore, it was stated that:

**H2a:** Brand information quality has significant relationship with customer purchase intention for hotel services in Delta state.

### **Message Source Credibility**

Credibility refers to the veracity of the information (Hussin, *et al.*, 2020). Society's assessment of credibility is based on various concepts such as objectivity, accuracy, dependability, and timeliness. Individuals seek information for various purposes, often to acquire control, achieve comfort, acquire new knowledge, and address and resolve issues. However, not all online data is reliable and advantageous to users. Wertgen and Richter (2020) showed that the trustworthiness of a source of information is frequently utilised to imply positive characteristics of a communicator that impact the recipient's approval of a message.

The source credibility theory of Hovland and Weiss (1951) is associated with the persuasive impact of marketing communications as discussed by Colicev *et al.* (2018). Message credibility consists of two crucial components: source dependability and competence, which are believed to influence the level of persuasion (Müller & Christandl, 2019). Expertise determines a speaker's credibility based on their topic knowledge, whereas trustworthiness is linked to the source's reliability (Ho-Dac *et al.*, 2013). If a customer receives a message from a highly trustworthy source, they will have a more favourable attitude compared to receiving a message from a less trustworthy source. User Generated Content (UGC) is considered more credible than Firm Generated Content (FGC) since it is not influenced by commercial motives (Huang, *et al.*, 2012). FGC originates from a reputable and expert source with extensive information about the brand, as indicated by Colicev, *et al.*, (2018), which may reduce its credibility to customers compared to UGC.

FGC is perceived as an official communication, while UGC is unconfirmed and not from an official source (Hong & Zhang, 2017). FGC may enhance its customer-brand relationship by emphasising the expertise aspect of its messaging, which will increase the value customers place on it. When people prioritise trustworthiness, user-generated content becomes a more powerful tool for enhancing the relationship between customers and brands. Customers who receive a message from a reputable source they appreciate are more inclined to safeguard a brand compared to those exposed to false general claims. Customers tend to show greater brand protection when they receive a message from a respected professional source compared to user-generated content. It was therefore stated that:

**H3a:** Message source credibility has significant relationship with customer purchase intention for hotel services in Delta state.

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Attachment Theory**

According to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1978), the degree of emotional attachment a person has to an object might forecast their interactions with it. Marketing literature has used attachment theory to determine the connection and the approach for linking customers to brands (Carlson, *et al.*, 2018; Albert & Horowitz, 2009). Therefore, a client must establish an emotional

connection with a brand to engage with it on social media (Taiminen & Ranaweera, 2019). Attachment is the strong emotional connection consumers have with specific brands that prevents them from moving to other products and creates more enduring relationships between consumers and companies (Taiminen & Ranaweera, 2019; Dalal & Aljarah, 2021). There are three types of attachment: social structure, relationship, and identity attachment (Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh, 2021). Individual attachments within the online brand community are formed via bond and identity-based connections (Riger & Lavrakas, 1981). Bond connection is the word used for long-term relationships, whereas integrating a brand into one's identity is known as identity and an effect of consumer engagement, as stated in tourism and hospitality literature by Ingram, Caruana, and McCabe (2017) and Bryce, *et al.*, (2015). Attachment theory highlights the significance of a strong foundation in partnerships. Guests who have positive emotional connections with a hotel are more inclined to trust and confidently endorse it online. Positive attachment experiences, like exceptional customer service or regular positive contacts, can build trust and lead to positive electronic word-of-mouth.

### **Social Impact Theory**

Researchers have used social impact theory to understand how the opinions of others influence the emotions, attitudes, and actions of potential customers (Cheung *et al.*, 2015). Normative Social Impact (NSI) and Informational Social Impact (ISI) are two elements of Social Impact Theory as proposed by Bearden *et al.* in 1989. ISI involves internalising social pressure and accepting others' attitudes and ideologies, while NSI involves aligning with the group's goals and using peer pressure to influence behaviour to avoid societal exclusion. These two aspects can impact a customer's intentions either together or individually (Cheung *et al.*, 2015). Some social media users form opinions depending on content they come across, while others align their views with prevailing group perspectives (Kwahk & Kim, 2017; Kuan, *et al.*, 2014). Social Impact Theory evaluates the credibility and reliability of sources. Reviews from seasoned travellers, influencers, or industry professionals might have a greater impact on potential guests in the hotel sector. Social Impact Theory recognises that a minority group has the ability to affect a majority group. In the hotel sector, a specific set of travellers or a particular demography could greatly influence the perceptions of others.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This investigation used the cross-sectional survey research technique. Cross-sectional surveys provide researchers with the chance to uncover the real occurrences within a population, as opposed to solely relying on reported information. The study concentrated on customers of specific four and five-star hotels in Asaba and Warri, Delta State. The total number of hotel customers in these two cities is unknown. The sample size for the investigation was determined using the Cochran (1977) formula due to the unknown population size. The sample size of 384 respondents was calculated using the formula. The process includes making assumptions about the necessary level of precision, the preferred level of confidence, and an anticipated fraction of the population with a specific attribute or behaviour.

The formula for the Cochran sample size calculation is as follows:

$$n = z^2pq / e^2$$

Where:

n = sample size



$z$  = z-score corresponding to the desired level of confidence

$p$  = estimated proportion of the population with the characteristic or behavior of interest

$q = 1 - p$

$e$  = level of precision desired (margin of error)

The study used the snow ball sampling technique. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method commonly used in research, especially in social sciences, to locate and enrol people for a study. Snowball sampling differs from random or probability sampling approaches by relying on current participants to refer or nominate additional individuals. This method is commonly used when it is challenging to access the target group or when a particular characteristic or attribute is crucial for participation in the research.

Primary data was collected by using standardised questionnaire. Collecting data through a survey enabled the standardisation of data from multiple respondents in a cost-effective manner, facilitating straightforward comparison of variables (Saunders, *et al.*, 2019). The questionnaire was split into two parts: the first part requested demographic data from respondents, while the second part focused on electronic word of mouth dimensions and customer purchase intention. Both face and content validity were used in this study to assess the validity of the research instrument. A panel of marketing specialists validated content validity by examining and rating the instrument for relevance and representativeness of each item using a Likert-type scale of multiple-choice questions. A pre-test of the questionnaire was undertaken for this study.

The investigation used internal consistency reliability. To assess the internal consistency of variables, particularly when using Likert scale items, it is advisable to evaluate the reliability of scales by calculating Cronbach's alpha (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). Cronbach's Alpha is used to assess the internal consistency of a scale, with values typically ranging from 0 to 1 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). The reliability of the suggested constructs was examined in this study using Cronbach Alpha. The data gathering tool's reliability was confirmed by a coefficient exceeding 0.7 (Ghozali, 2011). The Cronbach alpha results are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Reliability Test Variables*

S/N	Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
1	Online reviews	4	0.734
2	Brand information quality	4	0.731
3	Message source credibility	4	0.735
4	Customer purchase intention	4	0.732

Source: Field Survey (2024)

The data collection instrument for the study was deemed statistically credible as all Cronbach alpha coefficients above 0.7. The questionnaires were examined for consistency, labelled, and the information was entered into a computer to organise the data for analysis and display. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were utilised for each study aspect to obtain meaningful results from a limited number of indices (Taylor, *et al.*, 2015). Pearson correlation analysis and regression analysis were used for inferential analysis. Studies frequently require determining the presence of relationships among several factors. When there is a requirement to determine a relationship, it can be achieved by the approach of correlation,

which is seen as the fundamental and valuable measure of association between variables (Marczyk *et al.*, 2005). Sadiku-Dushi, *et al.*, (2019) stated that while correlation assesses relationships between variables, it does not predict the value of a dependent variable based on an independent variable. Regression analysis is considered the suitable model for understanding how independent variables affect the dependent variable in a study. The model definition in this paper is derived from the primary hypothesis of the study and is outlined below:

### Model Specification

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$$

Where: **Y**= Customer purchase intention

$\beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \text{ and } \beta_3, = \text{constants}$

**X1** = Online reviews

**X2**= Brand information quality

**X3**= Message source credibility

$\epsilon$  = error term

The study hypothesis predicts that all  $\beta$  coefficients will be positive ( $\beta > 0$ ), indicating that all E-WOM dimensions are likely to positively influence customer purchase intention. The study hypotheses were examined by a multiple regression analysis conducted using SPSS software version 25.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2

### Response Rate

S/N	Questionnaires	Frequency	Percentages
1	Total questionnaires administered	384	100%
2	Questionnaires retrieved	322	84%
3	Questionnaires rejected	28	7%
4	Questionnaires analyzed	294	77%

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Table 2 showed that the response rate was 77%. A response rate of 77% was sufficient for the researcher to conduct the study. Because Kothari (2004) asserted that an analysis requires a response rate of at least 50%.

Table 3

### Analysis of Respondents Profile

S/N	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Gender:		
	Male	200	68
	Female	94	32
	Total	294	100
2	Age Range:		
	18-28	26	9
	29-38	71	24
	39-48	100	34
	Above 49	97	33
	Total	294	100
3	Marital Status:		
	Single	103	35

	Married	156	53
	Divorced	35	12
	Total	294	100
4	Educational Qualification		
	SSCE	12	4
	OND/NCE	85	29
	HND/ B.Sc.	171	58
	Postgraduate degree	26	9
	Total	294	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 indicated that 68% of the sample were males, and 32% were females. 9% of respondents were aged 18-28, 24% were aged 29-38, 34% were aged 39-48, and 33% were over 49 years old. Of the respondents, 35% were single, 53% were married, and 12% were divorcees. The majority of the respondents, 58%, had an educational background of HND/B.Sc.

Table 4  
*Correlation between the Study Variables*

S/N	Variables	1	2	3	4	N
1	Online reviews	1				294
2	Brand information quality	0.399**	1			294
3	Message source credibility	0.291**	0.364**	1		294
4	Customer purchase intention	0.516**	0.518**	0.478**	1	294

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Table 4 showed that online reviews ( $r=0.516$ ) had a strong positive and significant correlation with customer purchase intention. Brand information quality and customer purchase intention were positively correlated ( $r=0.518$ ). Message source credibility which is the third variable was positively associated with customer purchase intention ( $r=0.478$ ). This implied that brand information quality was one among the variables that has a stronger relationship with customer purchase intention among the selected hotels.

Table 5  
*Effect of E-WOM Dimensions on CPI*

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)	.930	1.161		.801	.424		
Online reviews	.329	.050	.320	6.619	.000	.816	1.225
Brand information quality	.313	.054	.288	5.815	.000	.774	1.293
Message source credibility	.302	.051	.280	5.887	.000	.842	1.187

a. Dependent Variable: Customer purchase intention  
Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 5 showed that online reviews has significant positive effect on customer purchase intention ( $\beta =0.320$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ). Brand information quality has significant positive effect on customer purchase intention ( $\beta =0.288$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ). Message source credibility has significant positive effect on customer purchase intention ( $\beta =0.280$ ,  $p=0.000 < 0.05$ ). The result showed that there is no multicollinearity because the VIF of online reviews (1.225), brand

information quality (1.293), and message source credibility (1.187) towards customer purchase intention are below 10. Besides, the tolerance level is more than 0.1 where online reviews have 0.816, brand information quality has 0.774 and message source credibility has 0.842.

Table 6  
*Fitness of the Study Models*

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	236.380	3	78.793	78.446	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	291.283	290	1.004		
	Total	527.663	293			

a. Dependent Variable: Customer purchase intention

b. Predictors: (Constant), Message source credibility , Online reviews , Brand information quality

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 6 showed that the independent variables were good indicators of E-WOM. This was supported by the F measurement of 78.446 and the detailed p value (0.000) which was less than 0.05 significance level. Therefore, the model was statistically significant.

Table 7  
*Variations in Customer Purchase Intention*

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.669 <sup>a</sup>	.448	.442	1.002

a. Predictors: (Constant), Message source credibility , Online reviews , Brand information quality

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 7 showed that the dimensions of E-WOM were seen as acceptable factors in explaining the variations in customer purchase intention with adjusted R square of 0.442. This means that the dimensions of E-WOM explained 44% of the variations in customer purchase intention.

## Discussion of Results

Table 4 showed that online reviews had a strong positive and significant correlation with customer purchase intention ( $r=0.516$ ). Table 5 showed that online reviews has significant positive effect on customer purchase intention ( $\beta =0.320$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ). Test of H1a showed that online reviews have significant relationship with customer purchase intention for hotel services in Delta state ( $0.000< 0.05$ ). The result aligned with the study of Guo *et al.*, (2020), indicating that positive online customer reviews increase the probability of purchasing more than negative ones. Chen and Ku (2021) discovered a direct correlation between various online review platforms and their role in promoting impulsive internet purchases. The findings suggest that reviews provide valuable information about the actual experiences of previous customers, assisting potential purchasers in making well-informed decisions regarding the suitability of a product or service for their requirements and expectations.

Table 4 showed that brand information quality and customer purchase intention were positively correlated ( $r=0.518$ ). Table 5 showed that brand information quality has significant positive effect on customer purchase intention ( $\beta =0.288$ ). Test of H2a showed that brand information quality has significant relationship with customer purchase intention for hotel services in Delta state ( $0.000< 0.05$ ). The result agrees with Lin *et al.*, (2014) assertion that content reliability is

a critical component in assessing the value of communication. This implied that in-depth knowledge regarding a product, including its characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages, assists clients in making informed judgements.

Table 4 showed that message source credibility was positively associated with customer purchase intention ( $r=0.478$ ). Table 5 showed that message source credibility has significant positive effect on customer purchase intention ( $\beta =0.280$ ). Test of H3a showed that message source credibility has significant relationship with customer purchase intention for hotel services in Delta state ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ). Wertgen and Richter (2020) demonstrated that credibility of a source is frequently used to imply positive characteristics of a communicator that impact the recipient's willingness to accept a message. If the information source is seen as an expert in the industry or domain, clients are more inclined to trust the information given.

Guests who have had great attachment experiences are more likely to share their positive experiences through eWOM, which can enhance the hotel's reputation and potentially draw in new guests. Attachment theory emphasises the influence of adverse events on relationships. When a hotel does not match a guest's expectations or provides a terrible experience, it might result in negative e-WOM. Comprehending how attachment dynamics impact negative e-WOM can assist hotels in addressing customer issues, enhancing service quality, and reducing possible reputation harm. Social Impact Theory provides useful insights into the social interactions of electronic word of mouth in the hotel sector. Hotels can enhance their online reputation, establish trust, and influence potential guests through electronic word-of-mouth by using social influence concepts.

### CONCLUSION

The study concluded that electronic word-of-mouth has significant positive effect on customer purchase intention for hotel services in Delta state. However, online reviews, brand information quality and message source credibility has significant positive relationship with customer purchase intention for hotel services in Delta state. Positive online reviews have a substantial effect on a hotel's reputation and can sway potential customers' decision-making. Responding swiftly and graciously to negative reviews is vital as they are likely to damage a hotel's reputation. Encouraging contented customer to write favourable evaluations can improve the hotel's visibility on the internet. Consistent and precise brand information fosters confidence with potential guests. Compelling content showcasing distinctive selling points, services, and positive features of the hotel can captivate and interest potential guests. Reliable sources including respected travel influencers, industry experts, and favourable web reviews can boost a hotel's trustworthiness. Transparency, accuracy in communication, and fulfilling commitments are key factors in establishing enduring credibility. Leveraging user-generated content, such guest images and favourable reviews, in marketing initiatives can enhance credibility. Recognising and showcasing user-generated material on official hotel platforms demonstrates gratitude for guest submissions.

### Recommendations

- i. Marketing managers must ensure the hotel's official website is consistently updated with precise and up-to-date information regarding amenities, services, pricing, and policies.
- ii. Managers should proactively search for and display favourable guest testimonials and feedback on the hotel's website and other venues. Genuine testimonials from happy

customers enhance the hotel's legitimacy and have a favourable impact on potential guests.

- iii. Hotel managers should consistently check online review platforms for comments. Respond swiftly and openly to any concerns or issues presented by guests. Showing responsiveness can improve how the hotel is perceived.

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