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**Needs of eWOM information and attitude toward eWOM
information in the relationship between website usability and
information quality and brand affection and brand trust.**

**A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Science**

By

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I certify that the work presented in the dissertation is my own unless referenced

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Abstract

WOM has been available since the beginning of trade as people have always offered advice to others to reduce risk. Consumers can give advice to other people as a result of their experiences or they can get advice from others before they decide to buy or use something. WOM exists in every facet of our lives; we share our thoughts, interests, and knowledge with others. After Web 2.0 entered our lives, our traditional information searching techniques changed. Books, encyclopaedias and all kinds of paper based materials adapted to the electronic environment. These changes also changed our advice seeking habits and traditional WOM adapted itself to the electronic environment, becoming eWOM.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate “needs of eWOM information and attitude toward eWOM information in the relationship between website usability and information quality and brand affection and brand trust”. This study conducted Stimulus Organism and Response theory as conceptual model. This model was proved via structural equation modelling relied on 315 students in the UK.

The results of the study showed that website usability and information positively related to needs of eWOM information and attitude toward eWOM information. In addition, consumers` attitude toward eWOM information positively effect on brand affection and brand trust.

Key-Words: Website usability and information quality, brand affection, brand trust, eWOM.

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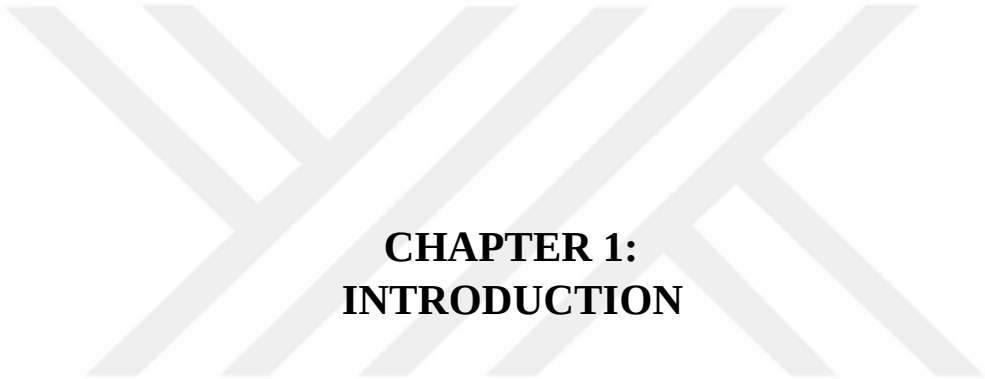
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Quick developments in the information technologies equip consumers with the power to access more information when searching for information about products and services. However, according to Erkan (2016), more information coming from different mediums makes the decision process more difficult. This is why consumers try to search for information from reliable sources. Consumers can give advice to other people as a result of their experiences or they can get advice from others before they decide to buy or use something. This is called word of mouth (WOM). WOM exists in every facet of our lives; we share our thoughts, interests, and knowledge with others (Chen and Berger, 2016). WOM is described by Arndt (1967) as communication flowing between a sender and a receiver which takes place face to face and which does not carry any selling intent. In addition, comments coming from others who are trusted have more power to effect the buyer's decision process compared to companies' advertisements (Jurvetson, 2008). Since Web 2.0, sharing or reaching for information from others has become faster and according to Berthon et al. (2012), this technology has changed the communication process from unilateral to bilateral. That is why, traditional WOM adopted to the electronic environment has come to be known as eWOM. Hennig-Thurau et al., (2004) explain that eWOM involves comments shared using web-based platforms which are provided by any kind of user or firm and which express both positive and negative aspects of a product or service. In addition, the Web 2.0 environment is very easy to join and it offers some main benefits, for example "interaction, participation and sharing" (Chen et al., 2012). Web 2.0 technology has equipped consumers with lots of information about products and services provided by different people. It also enables people to disseminate their own consumption-related opinions to the community by using eWOM on the internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). This new tool of marketing communication is perceived to be cost-effective in reaching many consumers. As Weber (2002) has stated, while new technologies have made it possible to produce at a low cost, the new era has raised marketing costs. Thus, marketers have started to focus on WOM more than ever because as (Chen et al., 2012) point out, many people can be informed from just one entry on the web.

Consumers can search for information about any kind of service and product on a web-site. In addition, new technologic devices such as computers, smart phones, tablets and different services make it easy to reach any kind of information on the Web 2.0 environment (Chen et al., 2012). That is why, information quality and usability of a web-site has become a very important element for consumers. Consumers are generally more effected by useful and

quality information which can change their perceptions of products or services. Also, consumers share their thoughts via web-based platforms and comments can affect others consumers' product and brand decisions (Siahailatua, 2010). Thus, companies should pay more attention to these comments to maintain their customers' brand loyalties and their reputation.

1.2 Motivation and Research Gap

In the past, companies used limited marketing tools to address a limited number of consumers. After the development of the Internet, companies reached very effective communication tool which is remote from control, in a free form and high global communication ability with low cost (Chu, 2009). On the other hand, from the consumer perspective, fast and flexible opportunities for decision making, research availability, and service diversity advantages have increased the use of the internet by individuals (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). That is why consumers have also integrated themselves into web-based platforms. Companies use the virtual environment to easily reach their target consumers. Information provided on their websites and ease of usage offer convenience to users. Thus, perceived information quality and website usability take a crucial place in consumers' minds (Belanche et al., 2012; Kim and Eom 2002; Kim and Niehm, 2009; Lin, 2007). On the other hand, consumers' traditional information seeking habits have also adapted to the Internet. At the end of the 1990s, after information started to flow on the web via computers, eWOM made it possible for consumers to share their thoughts on online communities (Marsden, 2006). Also, conversations on web-based platforms (social media, forms, blogs etc.) are generally related to brands. To the best of our knowledge, limited study has been conducted on the relationship between website, eWOM and brand. The present study has been developed on the basis of the Stimulus – Organism - Response theory. Based on the literature review, eWOM has been examined by limited research as an organism. In response to all the above, the following research question has been raised:

Research Question (RQ): “Are ‘needs of information and attitudes towards information’ effective in the relationship between `the website usability and information quality` and `brand trust and brand affection`?”

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to show the effect of “needs of information and attitudes toward information in the relationship between website usability and information quality and brand trust and brand affection”

The objectives of this research are outlined as follows:

- To review literature based upon the “Website usability and information quality effect on Attitudes toward information and Needs of information”.
- To review literature based upon the “Needs of information and Attitudes toward information effect on Brand trust and Brand affection”.
- To develop theoretical models to explain the effect of “Needs of information and Attitudes toward information in the relationship between Website usability and information quality and Brand trust and Brand affection”.
- To empirically assess the relationships hypothesised in the theoretical models to answer the research questions.
- To discuss the results and position them within the existing eWOM literature.
- To draw managerial implications for academics and practitioners with regards to the effect of “Needs of information and Attitudes toward information in the relationship between Website usability and information quality and Brand trust and Brand affection”.

1.4 Research Approach

The theoretical model of this study has been developed with six measurable hypotheses which relate to existing literature. The quantitative technique has been applied as a result of the aim to examine the relationship between measurable. This is because quantitative research uses numbers and numerical correlations to establish causal relationships between variables. As a tool of the quantitative method, a survey was employed because it provides a cost effective, quick and easy way of collecting numerical data from a huge number of participants (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Collis and Hussey, 2009).

1.5 Research Contribution

Compared to traditional WOM, eWOM is a new concept in the marketing literature. Although its effect has been examined by many researchers from the consumer perspective, there are still many gaps in the literature. This study aims to fill three of these gaps. First of all, the eWOM concept has been tested from a different viewpoint and has been approached from many different theoretical models. The Technology Acceptance model (Davis, 1989) and its extensions such as TAM2, TAM3 and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) are the most commonly used models (see. Han et al., 2010; Mathieson 1991; Lee, 2009; Chen et al., 2007; Wook et al., 2014) but there is not enough research which applies the Stimulus,

Organism and Response Theory. The first contribution of this research aims to fill this gap. Secondly, eWOM's effect is generally tested by many researchers in regards to purchase intention (see, Bickart and Schindler, 2001; Prendergast et al., 2010), but the flow of eWOM's communication moves from web-based platforms toward the brand. However, in the existing literature, there is limited research addressing the relationship of these three components. Also, eWOM has been examined by very limited research as an organism. Based on the Stimulus Organism Response Theory, this research provides an evaluation of the effect of "Needs of information and Attitude toward information between Website usability and Information quality and Brand trust and Brand affection"

1.6 Structure of Dissertation

Chapter 1: This section provides a short introduction of the research background and follows the motivation and the research gap, aim and objectives, research approach, and research contribution.

Chapter 2: This section examines the existing literature on the subject and specifies the research gaps. Specifically, this section starts with website information quality and usability, their effect on consumers' eWOM, attitudes towards provided information and their information needs for seeking advice and opinions provided by others. The subsequent section explores how traditional word of mouth has adapted to the electronic environment and what the differences and similarities are between WOM and eWOM. Lastly, it will explore eWOM's effect on brand trust and affection. In addition, this section presents existing models within the literature. Finally, existing literature gaps are highlighted at the end of the section.

Chapter 3: This section presents proposed models within the literature. This chapter also introduces hypothesis development of the conceptual study based on the literature review. The conceptual model SOR is also presented.

Chapter 4: This section presents the research design and why the quantitative research method has been adopted. The sampling procedure and the design of the questionnaire are also outlined in detail. Furthermore, this section presents ethical considerations.

Chapter 5: This section presents the analysis and results of the conceptual study. Initially, participants' demographic profiles and descriptive statistics are outlined through visual aids.

Chapter 6: This section presents a detailed discussion of the results of the conceptual study. The conceptual model and results of the hypothesis have been examined in light of previous literature.

Chapter 7: This section presents the conclusions reached from the results regarding the research question. Recommendations for managerial implications, limitations, and future research directions are presented in this chapter.





CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In the following section, the literature review is presented under five main headings: website information quality and website usability; the differences and similarities between WOM and eWOM; customers' information needs and their attitudes towards this information; the brand affection and brand trust. Therefore, this chapter presents theoretical models used to evaluate consumers' behaviours. At the end of the chapter, literature gaps and conclusions are presented.

2.2 Website Usability and Information Quality

Usability is a concept measured in terms of how much effort is spent by users to use a computer system (Casaló et al., 2008). When users comfortably, easily and effectively use a system without thinking, this system is considered useful for users (Hillier, 2003). Kim and Eom (2002), state that usability plays a crucial role in achieving user satisfaction. However, user satisfaction is affected by many variables and it is very hard to maintain. Consumer satisfaction is unfavourably affected by complicated and non-intuitive systems, buying processes which take a very long time, barriers to updated information and comments which are not related to products (Belanche et al., 2012). Thus, companies need to pay more attention to tracking consumer perspectives on their websites. In order to evaluate usability, Nielsen (1994), offers some criteria such as how easily a user can learn to use a system and memorise its main components, the efficiency level of the designed site, to what extent the designed site avoids mistakes, and users' satisfaction of manageability. Jones and Kim (2010), point out that consumers perceive goods as high quality when they are offered by high usability level websites. Casaló et al. (2008), found that in the banking sector, when usability is increased, it positively affects consumer loyalty and positive WOM. Usable websites encourage positive behaviours and raise the conversion ratio compared to less usable websites (Becker and Mottay, 2001). This feature also increases consumer's satisfaction with the system and cause to re-purchase. As Bai et al. (2008), state, when consumers are satisfied with the system, this satisfaction has measurable and positively acceptable effects on their decision processes.

Information quality refers to different kinds of values provided by a website to consumers (Lin, 2007). After Web 2.0, it is possible to access a substantial amount of information online, however, this convenience also brings some challenge for users. Updated information provided by unknown users, irrelevant or lower-quality information about any kind of product can cause some conflict. This is why, according to Kim and Niehm (2009), different website performance components have the power to distract people. Thus, understandable, comprehensive information which is easily managed and found on the website, is a fundamental necessity for success (Siegel, 2007). This information does not have to be text based but can also be visual and companies can enrich their information quality by using both. However, they should use correct information because according to Wang and Strong (1996) when consumers shop online, they evaluate products or services in terms of provided information.

2.3 Word of mouth

WOM has been available since the beginning of trade as people have always offered advice to others to reduce risk. Even though many kinds of media have existed for many years in order to reach or effect consumers through advertising, Dichter (1966) states that advertisements cannot be more effective than communication between people. The relationships and communication between people are the most powerful tools to change people's attitudes and behaviours (Brooks, 1957). WOM is used to exchange information between people when they need assistance before making a purchase, and this assistance is highly required when products do not carry low psychical or financial risk (Gershoff and Johar 2006). Harrison-Walker (2001) explains that WOM is an informal form of communication which does not carry selling intent and takes place face-to-face between the sender and the receiver about a brand, product or company. In addition, WOM is not just for informing people; it can show up in every step of the buying decision process. Nawaz et al., (2014) show that negative or positive WOM has the power to effect the consumer decision process.

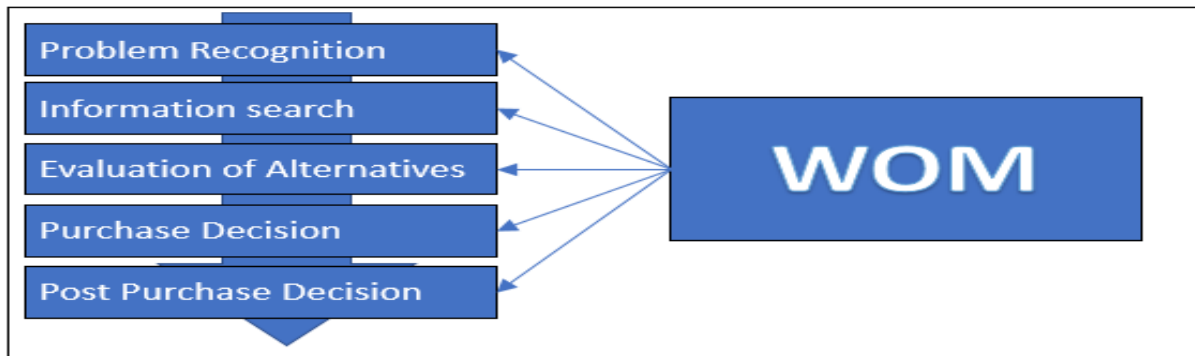


Figure 2.1: WOM effect on consumer decision process

(Kotler and Keller, 2012; Nawaz et al., 2014)

WOM is categorised in many ways: positive or negative, consumer or marketer generated (Erkan, 2016). In addition, its effect can be different in experience or search good. Positive WOM is generated by consumers who are satisfied with products (Holmes and Lett, 1977). Dichter (1966), shows that there are 4 main motivational factors in positive WOM: **first**, product-involvement, advising other people to decrease tension; **second**, self-involvement, making themselves happy because of specific emotional requirements; **third**, other-involvement, giving something to the receiver; and **finally**, message-involvement discussion for advertisement, P&R or commercials. Negative WOM refers to unfavourable comments produced by unsatisfied consumer (East et al., 2008). Consumers pay more attention to unfavourable information rather than favourable information (Homer and Yoon, 1992). According to Gildin (2002), while satisfied consumers inform 3 people about their experience, 7 people are informed by unsatisfied people about their negative experience.

2.3.1 Electronic Word of Mouth

After Web 2.0 entered our lives, our traditional information searching techniques changed. Books, encyclopaedias and all kinds of paper based materials adapted to the electronic environment. These changes also changed our advice seeking habits and traditional WOM adapted itself to the electronic environment, becoming eWOM. At the end of the 1990s, after information started to flow on the web via computers, eWOM made it possible for consumers to share their thoughts in online communities (Marsden, 2006). Web 2.0 technology has equipped consumers with the ability to access a great amount of information about products and services provided by different people disseminating their own consumption-related opinions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). In addition, virtual platforms offer useful information without cost, stress, and barriers to consumers (Abubakar, 2012). Basically, many people can be informed by posting just one entry on the web. Moreover, new technologic devices such as

computers, smart phones, tablets and different services make it easy to reach any kind of information from anywhere (Chen et al., 2012).

Table 1 EWOM Platforms

Platform	Example
Blogs	Xanga.com
Consumer Review Websites	Shopping.com
Discussion Forums	Abertillery.net
Shopping Websites	Amazon.com
Social Media Websites	Facebook.com

Adopted from Cheung and Thadani (2012)

Web 2.0 technology changed the communication process from a bilateral one to a unilateral one (Berthon et al., 2012). Consumers started using their power, using the internet to influence each other, since traditional WOM adapted to the online environment. This means that, while marketers share product related information on company websites, the online environment has made it possible for consumers to share their own opinions by posting pictures, comments and videos (Erkan, 2016). EWOM allows consumers to come together. Despite living in different countries, people with similar brand or product interests are able to make effective cost / brand comparisons (Cheung et al., 2008). This feature of eWOM refers to removed borders. Exchanging information occurs in a borderless place called the Internet. In addition, the speed at which eWOM spreads is very fast. (Silverman, 2011) states that if 25 people start to inform another 25 and so on (such as $25 \times 25 = 625$, $625 \times 25 = 15,625 \dots$), in just 6 steps it is possible to inform almost the whole word population. This feature shows how powerful eWOM is. However, not every comment is favourable. If any information is negative, it can be very harmful for companies (Ferguson and Johnston, 2011).

Table 2: Differences and Similarities between WOM and EWOM

Traditional Word of Mouth	Electronic Word of Mouth
Similarities	
Flowing Bilateral	
Communication between people is foregrounded	

Differences	
Source is known	Source is unknown
Simultaneously happening	Not happening simultaneously
Face to Face	On the Internet
Geographical closeness required	Geographical closeness is not necessary
Spreading speed is low	Spreading speed is high
Effect on a low number of people	Effect on a high number of people

Adopted from Chu, (2009)

2.3.1.1 Needs of Information

Consumers acquire information from two sources called internal and external sources. Before purchase / buying decision making, first of all, consumers evaluate products or services in terms of information created from their own experiences (Murray, 1991). According to Westbrook (1987), this experience creates subjective feelings which are a strong motivational tool for consumer motivation, producing WOM, complaints and repurchase intention. However, this information quality and amount sometimes is not enough, and people seek out different kinds of external sources. This effort can originate from “opinion seeking” (Chu and Kim, 2011), attempting to access others’ opinions about any kind of product or service, or “advice seeking” (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), seeking advice from others to feel comfortable provide assurance. In addition, volume of information needs also takes place to apply external sources as Flynn et al. (1996), suggested when highly information needs is required for decision, consumers start to look at different kinds of sources. When consumers search for external sources like online stores, the relevant information’s availability and diagnosticity attracts consumers’ attention (Dick et al., 1990). In addition, not only advice seeking but also opinion seeking, needs of information is generally toward to brand. WOM provided by other consumers effects brand trust and brand affection (Wu and Wang, 2011; Tractinsky et al., 1999).

2.3.1.2 Attitudes toward Information

When consumers decide to buy a product online they are not able to physically test it, which is why their decision depends on the information provided by the website. However, information provided by sellers generally shows the positive side of the product. As a result,

consumer comments are more reliable and dependent on real experience expressing both positive but also negative sides of products or services (Park et al., 2007). This is why comments provided by online consumers play a crucial role for sales (Chen and Xie, 2005). However, incorrect information coming from different people can be harmful for the trust mechanism and this could negatively affect their attitude towards information. The adaptation of attitude toward information on the bases of the theory of reasoned action is held by (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). This theory explains that personal performance comes from the individualistic behavioural intentions, in another words, it is shaped by personal attitudes and subjective norms (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). After TRA, Davis (1989) developed the Technology Acceptance Model based on TRA, which defines IS acceptance. TAM is used by many researchers to find out the acceptance of web based technologies or estimating usage, purchasing and revisiting a website in terms of consumers' intentions (Hassanein and Head, 2007). In addition Prendergast et al. (2010) highlight that, when consumers exhibit positive attitudes towards Electronic Word of Mouth, this situation positively effects their purchase intentions. Attitudes toward information have different effects on high and low involvement consumers. According to Park et al., (2007), the volume of argument coming via messages has more power on low involvement consumers and they can be easily persuaded. However, this situation is not valid for high involvement consumers who pay more attention to argument quality. Thus, eWOM can indirectly influence brand affection by damaging trust, or directly affect it by manipulating the current opinions of consumers.

2.4 Branding: Trust and Affection

Traditionally, a brand is thought to induce a specific personality, asset and product or service performance in the mind of a customer (Aaker, 1991; Doyle, 1998). A brand may be a substitute for information because it simplifies the research and comparison process that consumers have made before deciding (Rowley, 2004; Bergstrom, 2000). Because of this, consumers' attitudes toward brands are critical. Consumers' positive attitudes towards a brand do not just come about as a result of the brand's quality but also according to Fournier, (1998) as a result of the consumer-brand relationship where the brand contributes to a consumer's personality, aims and values. As such, brand trust and its effect on consumers hold a very important place.

2.4.1 Brand Trust

Following the onset of online shopping, we have been able to shop for anything without going anywhere, but our decisions while online shopping depend on the information provided

by seller and consumer comments. Trust plays a very critical role. Trust is explained by Moorman et al. (1993) as “a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence”. Trust is not only related to taking risks, but also to the extent to want to take risks (Ambrose and Johnson, 1998). In this regards, brands take a very critical place because according to Mrazek (2010), a brand has the power to reduce the unknown or unpredictable risk and features. People are willing to feel less risk and feel more comfortable while purchasing, which is why they tend to buy from brands which they have had a good experience with. Brand trust is explained by Xingyuan et al. (2010), as consumers’ positive expectations to brand features and feel confidence about them. Morgan and Hunt (1994), state that brand loyalty is created by brand trust because trust creates interaction which is very valuable. With online shopping, brand trust gains more importance compared to traditional shopping because of intangible features of Web. In addition, website quality is also important to consumers because according to Ruparelia et al. (2010), website design, the quality of communication flowing in it and past consumer experience all influence brand trust. Ha (2004) states that consumers generally want a website to go beyond offering a message, they want them to provide a positive experience. In addition, usable websites with a high level of information quality have advantages in the market as Ha and Perks, (2005) suggest that firms are required to effectively use web based applications to increase their brand trust.

2.4.2 Brand Affection

Aaker (1997, p. 347) states that sets “of human characteristics” can be “associated with a brand” such as friendly and warm. Plummer (2000) points out that brand personality, coming from characterization, is one way to define a brand. People reach towards brands like they reach for other people. According to Matzler et al. (2008), consumers build many kinds of association with brands. Brands are highly related to a consumer’s positive emotions and this relation leads to commitment, coming from consumers’ attitudes and purchase loyalty (Matzler et al. 2006). One of these associations is brand affection, which is created by consumers’ positive or negative considerations of brands (Keller, 1993; Bhat and Reddy, 2001). Brand affection makes it possible for consumers to associate a brand with emotional and positive responses (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). The difference between brand trust and brand affection is that for the latter, consumers think less, this creation happens fast and unintentionally. The former is more rational compared to brand affection (Moon, 2007). Sung et al. (2009), highlight that the relation between brand personality and brand affection is

higher than brand trust. In addition, Poolthong and Mandhachitara, (2009) suggest that affection consists of higher levels of trust or positive effects coming from brands which are used by consumers.

Table 3: Factors effecting research components

Components	Factors	Authors
Website Usability	Visibility of system status, match between system and the real world, user control and freedom, consistency and standards, error prevention, recognition rather than recall, flexibility and efficiency of use, aesthetic and minimalist design, help users recognize, diagnose and recover from errors, help and documentation	Nielsen, 1994; Casaló et al., 2008; Hillier, 2003; Kim and Eom, 2002; Belanche et al., 2012; Jones and Kim, 2010; Becker and Mottay, 2001; Bai et al.2008.
Website Information Quality	Relevant, timely, secured, and well-designed information	Liu and Arnett, 2000; Lin, 2007; Kim and Niehm, 2009; Siegel, 2007; Wang and Strong, 1996.
Attitudes towards information	Source credibility, argument quality, information usefulness	Sussman and Siegal, 2003; Park et al., 2007; Chen and Xie, 2005; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Davis, 1989.
Needs of Information	Risk reduction advice and opinion seeking	Chu and Kim, 2011; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Murray, 1991; Wu and Wang, 2011; Tractinsky et al., 1999; Dick et al., 1990; Westbrook 1987.
Brand Affection	EWOM, sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, ruggedness	Wu and Wang, 2011; Sung and Kim, 2010; Aaker, 1997; Plummer, 2000; Matzler et al. 2006; Keller, 1993; Bhat and Reddy, 2001; Moon, 2007; Poolthong and Mandhachitara, 2009; Sung, et al. 2009.

Brand Trust	Security, privacy, brand name, word- of- mouth, good online experience, and quality of information	Ha, 2004; Moorman et al. 1993; Mrazek, 2010; Ambrose and Johnson, 1998; Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Ruparelia et al. 2010; Xingyuan et al. 2010; Ha and Perks, 2005.
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2.5 Relevant Theories

This section starts by introducing the theoretical models used to evaluate consumer behaviour. Based on the literature review, the proposed theoretical model (Stimuli-Organism-Response) to use in this research will be shown. Finally, this section concludes with a summary.

2.5.1 Theory of Reasoned Action

TRA is developed by Azjen ve Fishbein (1980) as behavioural intentions theory which is based on social-psychology. In social-psychology, conscious behaviour is most commonly examined using this theory because it was developed to explain optional will which leads to behaviours. It is also the most used theoretical framework in scientific research (Olson and Zanna, 1993). According to this theory, the possibility of putting proposed behaviours into practice is highly influenced by other people's attitudes towards this behaviour (Sheppard et al., 1988). In other words, it is necessary for others to accept an individual's behaviours; subjective norms are impressed by this normative belief (Madden et al., 1992). Thus, behavioural intention consists of two components: first, an individual's attitude which consists of the favourable or unfavourable evaluation of what happens if a behaviour is performed; and subjective norms which come about from external pressures. This is why individual attitudes and social norms. Both have the power to shape behavioural intentions (Park, 2000). In some situations, although a person may not have a positive attitude toward something, they may be influenced by the opinions of those who value it, influencing their behaviour (Brown, 1999).

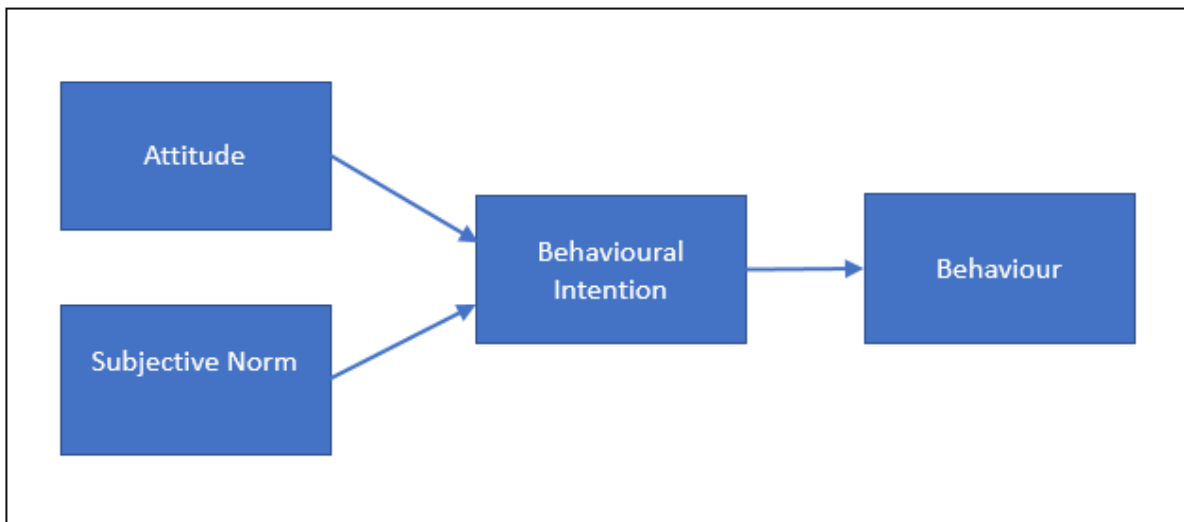


Figure 2.2: Theory of Reasoned Action (Madden et al., 1992)

2.5.2 The theory of planned behaviour

The theory of planned behaviour was developed based on TRA. This theory aimed to remove TRA deficiency. It explains that an individual's behaviour does not occur as a result of individual will. Other factors are also effective in shaping individual behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). TPB integrates perceived behaviour control to TRA and thus, attitude, subjective norm and perceived behaviour control have power on intention and this intention affects actual behaviour (Lynne et al., 1995). In other words, this theory uses TRA components alongside one more variable: perceived behaviour control. After integrating PBC to TRA, it has been possible to examine not only people's volitional behaviour but also actions performed by individuals without their will (Shaw et al., 2000). When people perceive that they do not meet obligatory sources to perform behaviour, their intention to carry out the behaviour decreases even if they have positive attitudes and subjective norms about the behaviour (Madden et al., 1992). PBC consists of the following two dimensions: self-efficacy and controllability, (Ajzen, 2002). Self-efficacy refers to confidence / comfort while controllability is an individual's own role on behaviour. Rhodes and Courneya (2003) state that because of the internal motivation, self-efficacy strongly links to intention compared to controllability. However, controllability is a function of an individual's beliefs, facilitating situations (Chang, 1998).

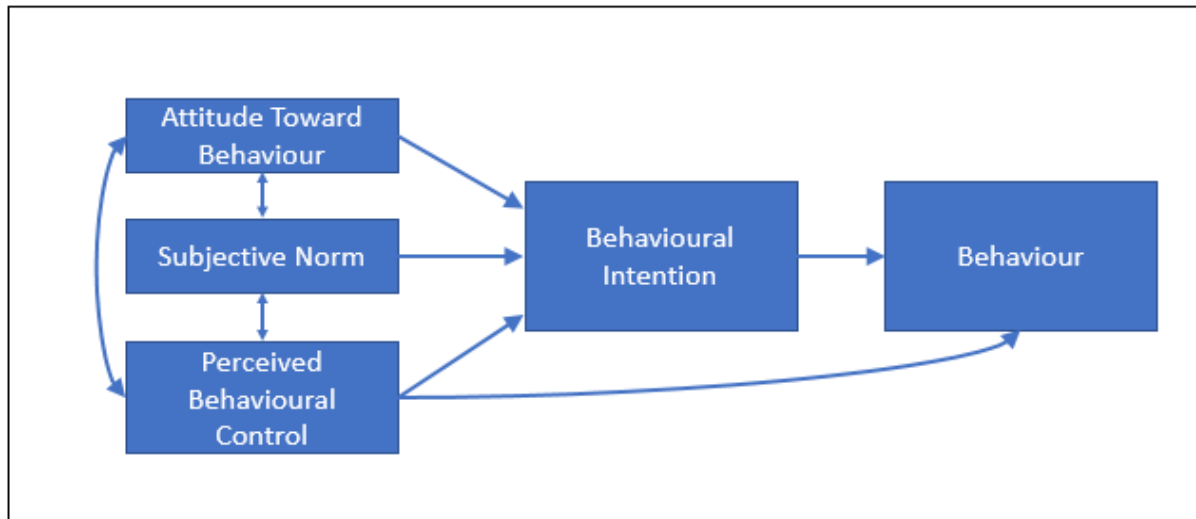


Figure 2.3: The theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)

2.5.3 Technology Acceptance Model

This theory was developed by Davis (1989), relying on Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action. The technology acceptance model is the theory of information systems and purposes to explain and theoretically model how society or people accept a technology. It can provide important ideas to researchers and practitioners who are in the process of explaining the behaviour of individuals in general and more particularly to how using or not using technology can predict behaviour (Liao and Cheung, 2001) While TRA is a model used in a wide variety of areas to explain and predict human behaviour (Chen et al., 2002), TAM's purpose is to explain the determinants of computer use in terms of the relationship between computer based technologies and user population (Davis et al., 1989). According to the model, an individual or society moves in two different ways regarding how and why this new technology is to be used. In this regard, Davis (1989) points out two different components which are: 'perceived usefulness' and 'perceived ease of use'.

Perceived Usefulness: In the perception of the user, it is defined as the belief that the system used will increase the performance of the person.

Perceived Ease of Use: In the perception of the user, it is defined as the belief that the system used does not require any special effort.

However, TAM is considered by many researchers as lacking explanatory ability which is why Venkatesh and Davis (2000) developed TAM, Venkatesh et al. (2003) developed the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology, and why Venkatesh and Bala,(2008) developed TAM3.

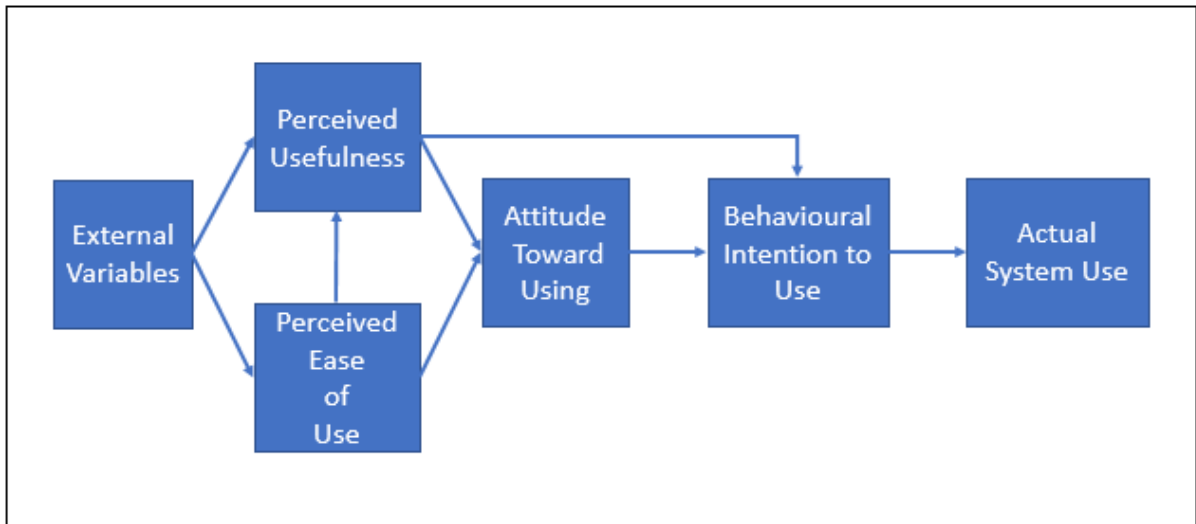


Figure: 2.4: Technology acceptance model (Davis et al., 1989)

2.5.4 Information Adoption Model

After Web 2.0, it is possible for consumers to share their interests with many people online. However, this has also brought some challenges to consumers because unknown sources and an overwhelming amount of information can lead consumers to become confused. (Chaiken and Eagly, 1976; Cheung et al., 2008) state that the degree of information affecting a consumer can vary from person to person and it can be stimuli at different ratios for different people. This is why Sussman and Siegal (2003) developed a theory to identify which factors have power to draw consumers' attention to adopt information. This theory derived from theories of adoption such as TRA (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980) and TAM (Davis, 1989) and theories of informational influence such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty et al., 1981). ELM points out that there are two ways of processing the information, referring first to the degree of people's cognitive effort, the central route which is required for a high degree of cognitive effort, and second, the peripheral route which is heuristic and where basic decision making takes place as a result of speed judgments (Shen et al., 2015). According to this model, information usefulness turned into information adoption is based on two different determinants which are argument quality and source credibility.

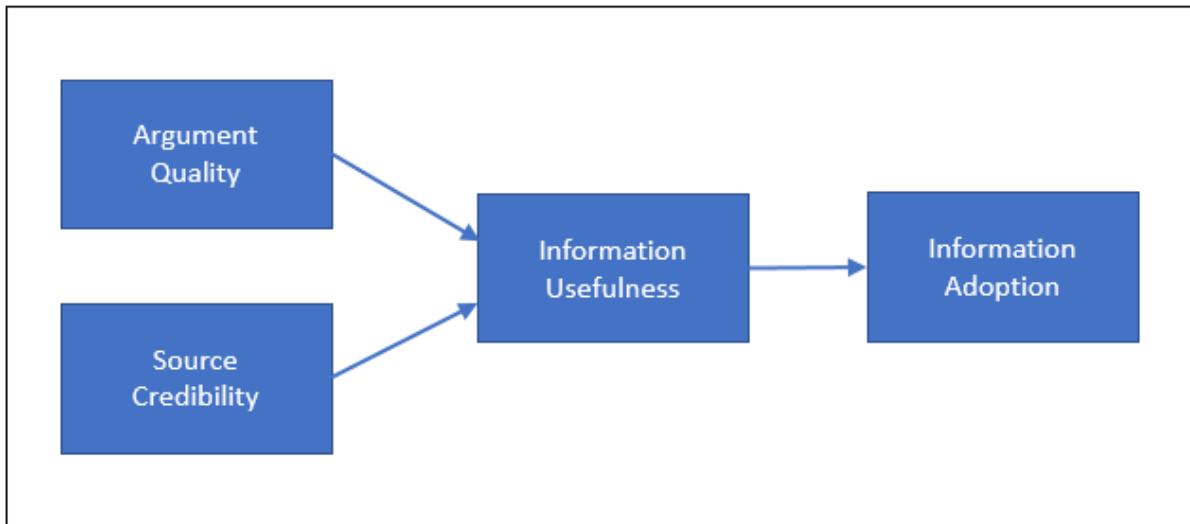


Figure 2.5: Information Adoption Model (Sussman and Siegal, 2003)

2.5.5 Stimulus Organism Response Model (Research Model)

SOR is based on the classical stimulus response model which explains that an individual's behaviour could be a learned response to the stimulus (Woodworth 1939). According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974), when people are exposed to any kind of stimuli, they develop a cognitive and affective process (organism) and this process leads them to respond. The first component of this model are stimuli. Stimuli are a number of qualities that influence consumer perceptions (Mazursky and Jacoby, 1986). In traditional shopping, environment features such as employees or other consumers, social factors, visual factors such as colours and designs, and music or other sounds can be stimuli (Eroglu et al., 2001; Eroglu et al., 2003). The second factor is the organism. The organism refers to the transformation of stimuli to sensible information, making this information suitable to the environment before any evaluation and conclusion. This is also a cognitive process and effective in changing a consumer's emotional condition (Koo and Ju, 2010). The last component in this model is the response. The response is the reaction, the behaviour / attitude of consumers at the end of this evaluation process (Chang et al., 2011).



Figure 2.6: Stimulus Organism Response Model (Cziko, 2000)

Table 4: Summaries of Theories

Theory/ Model	Characteristics	Relevance to eWOM	Authors
SOR	The stimulus has an effect on the passive and unprepared organism and this effect then turns to response	This theory examines the relationship among variables, thus, it is more suitable to this research.	Woodworth, 1939; Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Mazursky and Jacoby, 1986; Eroglu et al., 2001; Eroglu et al., 2003; Chang et al., 2011; Koo and Ju, 2010.
TRA	Behavioural Intent toward to actual behaviour is affected by subjective norm and normative beliefs	Using this theory, consumers' online behaviour can be examined, thus it is not suitable for this research.	Fishbein and Ajzen, 1980; Olson and Zanna, 1993; Sheppard et al. 1988; Brown, 1999; Park, 2000.
TAM	The perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use determine the intent to use a system to use one as a mediator for actual system use (Samaradiwakara and Gunawardena, 2014)	Using this theory, consumers' acceptance and use of technology can be examined, thus it is not suitable for this research.	Ajzen, 1991; Venkatesh and Davis, 2000; Venkatesh et al. 2003; Venkatesh and Bala, 2008; Davis et al., 1989; Chen et al., 2002; Liao and Cheung, 2001.
TPB	Behavioural Intent toward actual behaviour is affected by the subjective norm, normative beliefs and volitional control	Using this theory, consumers' online behaviour can be examined, thus it is not suitable for this research.	Ajzen, 1991; Davis, 1989; Lynne et al., 1995; Madden et al., 1992
IAM	Provided information usefulness toward information adoption is affected by source credibility and argument quality	This theory may examine which factors have the power to draw consumers' attention to adopt online information. This theory is relevant to the first two components (stimulus and organism) but SOR is more suitable in regards to the main idea of this research	Sussman and Siegal, 2003 Chaiken and Eagly, 1976; Cheung et al., 2008; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Petty et al., 1981; Shen et al., 2015.

2.6 Research Gaps

Based on the existing literature, many researchers have examined eWOM on the different web-based platforms (Cheung and Thadani, 2012; Engel et al., 1969; Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Prendergast et al., 2010). However, these web-based platforms' effect on consumers' attitudes towards online information and consumers' efforts to find information within the website is widely neglected. This is despite that fact that website information quality has been studied by many researchers who have studied consumer behaviours (use, recommend, preference). (Chiu et al., 2005) perceive value and loyalty intention (Kim and Niehm, 2009), overall service quality and satisfaction (Yang et al., 2004), there is a lack of research regarding website usability and information quality effect on eWOM. In addition, many researchers have studied eWOM's effect on purchase intention, however, its effect on brand affection and brand trust have widely ignored.

The conceptual model has developed from the Stimuli-Organism-Response theory because the eWOM concept has been tested from different view, role and based on different theoretical models, by doing this, Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) and its extensions such as TAM2, TAM3 and TPB (Azjen, 1991) are most commonly used models (see. Han et al., 2010; Mathieson 1991; Lee, 2009; Chen et al., 2003; Wook et al., 2014). In addition, based on the existing literature, the researcher used the SOR model testing eWOM as a Stimuli and Response, but to the best of our knowledge, there has been very limited research conducted which tests eWOM as an Organism. Thus, this research is going to apply SOR and examine eWOM as an organism.

H1a: Website usability and information quality are positively related to consumers' attitudes towards eWOM information.

H1b: Website usability and information quality are positively related to consumers' needs for eWOM information.

H2a: Consumers' attitudes toward eWOM information are positively related to brand affection.

H2b: Consumers' attitudes toward eWOM information are positively related to brand trust.

H3a: The Needs of eWOM information are positively related to brand affection.

H3b: The Needs of eWOM information are positively related to brand trust.

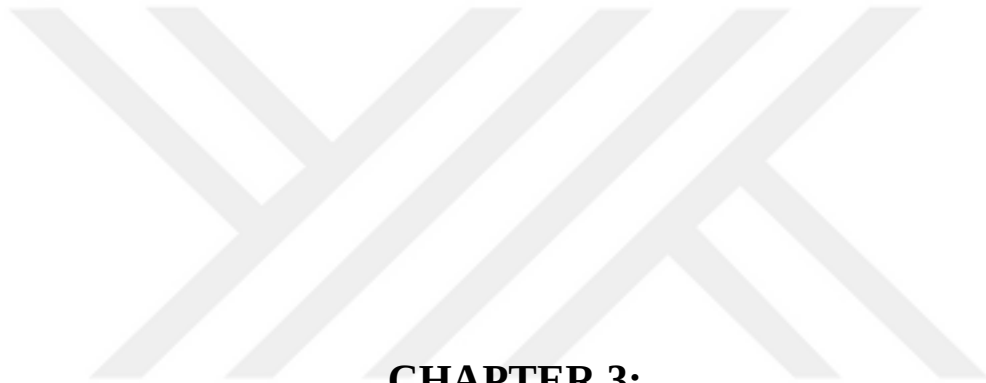
2.7 Summary of the Chapter

This section presented the existing literature on the research topic and the literature gap.

Specifically, this section began with WOM and its web-based extension, eWOM, after that, it explored consumers' need for information and their attitudes toward this information. Then website usability and information quality were explored and finally, brand affection and brand trust were discussed. In addition, the theoretical models were pointed out. At the outset of the section, the literature gaps were identified based on existing literature.

The following chapter presents the proposed conceptual model and the hypothesis of this research.





CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the justification of the research model based on the literature review and existing theories. The research model has been developed based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response theory. The key mediating factors of this theory are websites' electronic word of mouth and brands.

3.2 Justification of the Conceptual Model

According to Davis (1989), social behaviours are linked to an individual's attitude. Thus, information technology usage is influenced by an individual's behaviour. This situation is also valid for the consumers' online advice or opinion seeking process. This relationship between consumers and their eWOM attitude has been tested by many researchers such as those applying TRA (Cheung and Thadani, 2012; Prendergast et al., 2010), TPB (Morrison, 1979; Han, Hsu and Sheu, 2010) TAM and its extensions TAM (Mathieson 1991) TAM2 (Lee, 2009) UTAUT (Chen et al., 2007) TAM3 (Wook et al., 2014) and finally IAM (Cheung et al., 2008). However, although SOR has been widely applied in order find out consumers' behaviour (Hoyer and MacInnis, 1997), SOR is not an oft applied model in eWOM studies. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) proposed the stimulus (S) -organism (O) -response (R) paradigm that defines emotions and behavioural responses to environmental stimuli, stating that the shopping environment is comprised of stimuli (S) which affect organisms (consumers, O) and cause an approach or prevention response (R). This paradigm has been applied by many researchers in online environment studies (Koo and Ju, 2010; McKinney, 2004; O'Brien, 2010) but the application of SOR theory in eWOM studies has been limited. In existing literature, eWOM has been tested as a stimulus (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Peng and Kim, 2014), and a response (Davis and Khazanchi 2008). However, to the best of our knowledge, limited study has explored eWOM as an organism. This approach postulates that stimuli act on a passive and unprepared organism (Eysenck and Keane, 2000) and this relationship causes response. In regards to the proposed research concerning the relationship between websites, eWOM and brands, SOR is the most applicable theory.

3.3 The Proposed Conceptual Framework

EWOM is created in web-based platforms. Consumers use this information and this relationship generally towards a brand. In the proposed research, website information quality and usability are treated as stimuli because Kim and Stoel (2004) point out that a website is the main tool for the communication of internet users and the first interface that consumers on the internet meet to research topics such as products and brands. Second, consumers' need

for eWOM information and consumers' attitudes toward eWOM information are organisms because consumers use these websites for advice or opinion seeking (Chu and Kim, 2011; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004) to reduce perceived risk. Finally, brand affection and brand trust are responses because conversations between consumers, information provided by a website, and the opinions of other people are generally about a brand.

Based on the identified literature gap and theoretical model, the proposed research model is as follows:

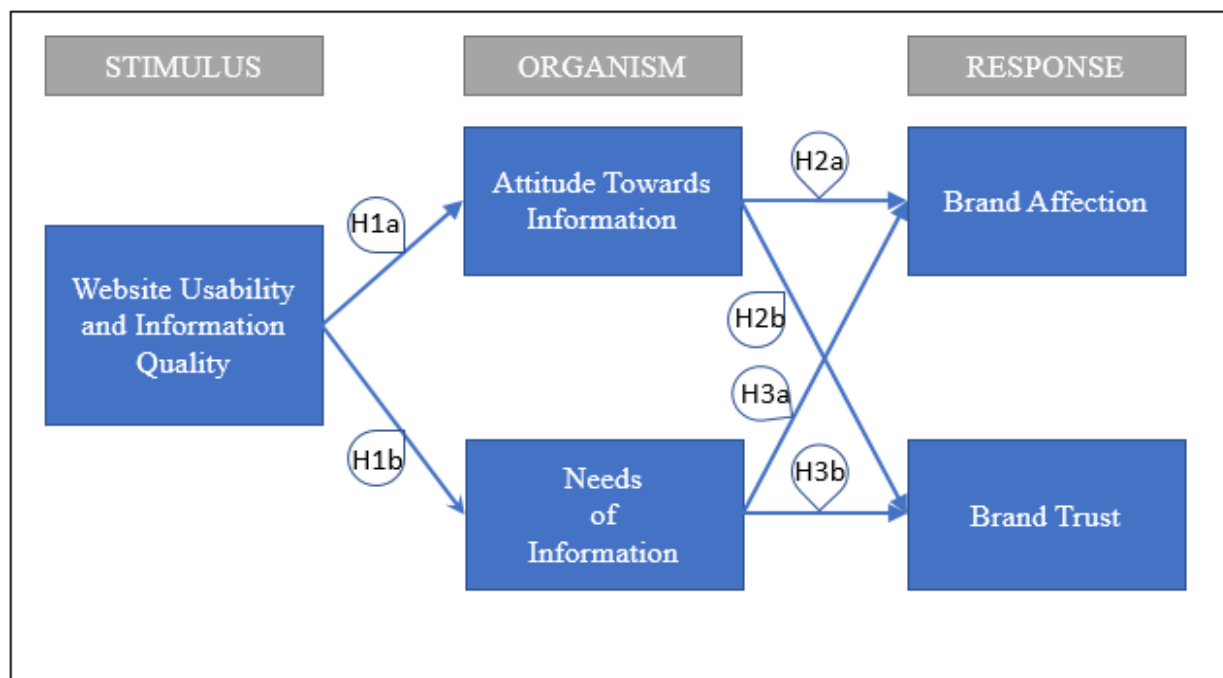


Figure 3.1: Proposed Conceptual Model

H1a: Website usability and information quality are positively related to consumers' attitudes towards eWOM information.

H1b: Website usability and information quality are positively related to consumers' needs of eWOM information

H2a: Consumers' attitudes toward eWOM information are positively related to brand affection.

H2b: Consumers' attitudes toward eWOM information are positively related to brand trust.

H3a: Needs of eWOM information are positively related to brand affection.

H3b: Needs of eWOM information are positively related to brand trust.

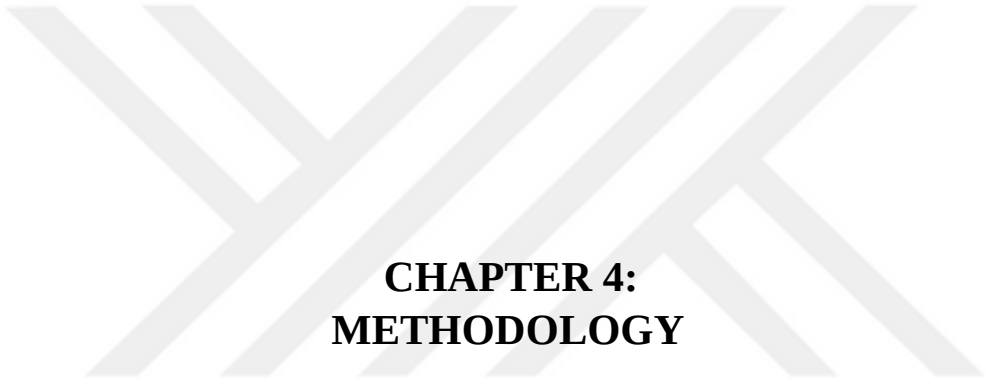
3.4 Summary of Hypotheses Development

This study employs SOR theory as a theoretical background because as Mehrabian and Russell (1974) state, the shopping environment is comprised of stimuli (S) which affect organisms (consumers, O) and cause an approach or prevention response (R). First of all, website usability and information quality were treated as stimuli because according to Cheung and Thadani (2012), following the development of the Internet, various platforms such as blogs, consumer review sites, discussion forums, shopping sites and social media websites have facilitated eWOM communications between consumers. Secondly, the needs of eWOM information and attitudes toward eWOM information are viewed as organisms because eWOM is one of the most useful sources of information for consumers as it is made up of the opinions and experiences of other customers instead of the information produced by the marketer (Erkan, 2016). Finally, brand affection and brand trust were treated as responses. This research sees websites with usability and high information quality as having a positive effect on consumers' needs of eWOM information and attitudes toward eWOM information as this relationship increases brand affection and brand trust. Kim and Stoel, (2004) have stated that websites are the first interface that consumers meet on the internet to research topics such as products and brands

3.5 Summary of the Chapter

This section presented the conceptual model and hypotheses development of this research. The applied theory was discussed and its uses introduced. The research questions were presented based on the employed theoretical model.

The next chapter explains the specified methodology to validate the theoretical model in this research.



CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy is concerned with how the research should be carried out to develop knowledge in the direction of the philosophical views and assumptions of the researcher (Collis and Hussey, 2009). In this regard, the paradigm takes a very critical place. The paradigm consists of how the beliefs that inspire and influence the researchers should be investigated and which pathways should be followed while conducting the research. It also concerns how to interpret the findings at the end of the research (Yin, 2009). Bryman and Bell (2011) state that research philosophy consists of two components which are positivism and interpretivism. While positivism refers to a 'concrete structure,' interpretivism refers to the 'projection of human imagination' (Morgan and Smircich, 1980). The main benefit with positivism is that researchers do not influence their research with their own opinions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Positivism is applied to test hypotheses while interpretivism aims to generate hypotheses (Collis and Hussey, 2009).

4.2 Research Approach

Saunders et al., (2012) state that there are two approaches in research: deductive and inductive. The inductive approach is when a researcher or evaluator aims to obtain themes, concepts or a model through comments deriving from raw data, while the deductive approach involves data analysis prepared to test whether the data consist with previous assumptions, theories or hypotheses detected or built by a researcher (Thomas, 2006). Thus, positivism relates more to the deductive approach because as Creswell (2009) states, positivist studies use the existing literature to construct appropriate theories and hypotheses based on these theories. The deductive approach flows from the general to the specific and requires a large sample. In other words, the deductive approach makes generalisations based on a sample, increasing reliability but decreasing validity. Based on the existing literature there are two types of research strategies: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative strategy usually relates to a positivist and deductive approach and the qualitative strategy is often associated with an interpretative and inductive approach (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Qualitative data is interpretative and subjective whereas quantitative data is objective (Barczak, 2015). Quantitative research examines the relationship between variables and tests objective theories (Creswell, 2009) while the qualitative strategy "provides information about context and allows [for] a deeper understanding of phenomena" (Patton, 2002). Calder (1977) describes qualitative research as the absence of numerical and statistical data while the quantitative approach "is often used as a synonym for any data collection technique (such as a

questionnaire) or data analysis procedure (such as graphs or statistics) that generates or uses numerical data”. (Saunders et al., 2012).

4.3 Research Design

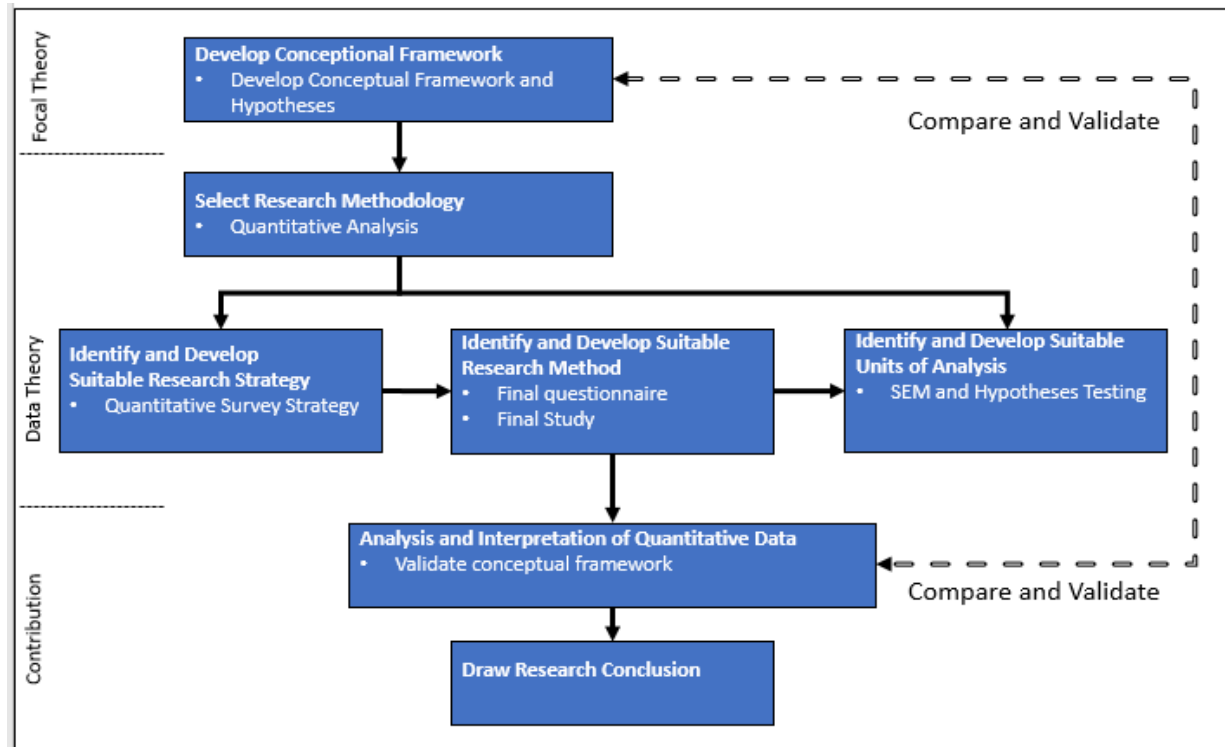


Figure 4.1: Research Design

4.4 Research Strategy

The research design “provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p.40). The different research strategies were summarised by Saunders et al. (2012) as: survey, experiment, archival research, ethnography, case study, action research, narrative inquiry, and grounded theory. Saunders et al. (2012) state that the appropriate research strategy should be employed with regards to the research question and objectives, the scope of available information about the research area to be investigated and the amount of available resources. These research strategies are as follows: the survey and experiment are mainly concerned with quantitative research; the case study and archive research are linked to the mixed method; ethnography is grounded theory, narrative research; and action research strategies are in fact related to qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2012).

4.5 Data Collection Strategy

This section presents the adopted survey strategy with justifications, then the questionnaire development is shown with the sample size, measurement instruments and ethical considerations.

4.5.1 Justification of Proposed Research Strategy

The survey research determines the characteristics of the sample of the population and then these characteristics are generalised to apply to the whole population (Kothari, 2004). If the sample is perfectly reflected by the distribution of the characteristics of the population, it may be a little different from what it looks like (Fowler, 2014). This research strategy s researchers to aggregate numerous quantities of data from a huge population onto a very economical scale (Saunders et al., 2012). Also, this method produces consistent data, since the participants are given a number of fixed answers, so it is easier to code, analyse and interpret the data collected from the participants (Malhotra et al., 2012). In addition, this technique is suitable for researchers attempting to test theories in order to develop the understanding of social phenomena (Collis and Hussey, 2009). Taking the information below into account, the survey research strategy is the most appropriate for this research.

4.5.1.1 Questionnaire Development

The survey strategy can use a number of methods to find answers to the research questions. Frequently used survey methods include self-administrated questionnaires and face-to-face and telephone interviews (Erkan, 2016). Questionnaires are considered to be one of the most suitable data collection tools for gathering data from big samples (Saunders et al., 2012). Furthermore, this method has been considered suitable not only for participants, but also for researchers; participants can respond quickly to questions and researchers can code questions quickly for analysis (Gray, 2014). This research applies the self-administrated questionnaire method. Self-administered questionnaires (SAQ) specify a questionnaire, specially designed to complement the data of a participant, without intervention from researchers (Lavrakas, 2008). The self-administrated questionnaire is cost effective and enables researchers to reach many potential respondents in various locations.

4.5.1.1.1 Population

In the survey design process, identifying the target population is the most important factor in order to reach meaningful results. The target population of this study is people living in UK, both male and female, aged above 18 years of age, who read information about products or brands on the internet. National Statistics (2016) has showed that 87.9% of adults in the UK use the Internet (approximately 45.9 million people) while the biggest proportion of these users are aged between 16 to 44 (98.8%), those aged 75 use the Internet the least (38.7%). Taking this information into consideration, only internet users are targeted in this study.

4.5.1.1.2 The Sampling Method

There are two kinds of sampling methods, namely probability sampling which is stratified, simple, systematic etc. (Saunders et al., 2012) and non-probability sampling which includes quota, convenience, snowball sampling etc. (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This research applies convenience sampling as non-probability sampling.

4.5.1.1.2.1 Justification of the Sampling Method

The non-probability sampling method refers to the unequal chances of evaluating each and every influential situation in the population (Saunders et al., 2012). In addition, when researchers are considered to have limited resources (money, time, effort), convenience sampling as a non-probability sampling method is used. The convenience sampling technique makes it possible to select the appropriate sample to achieve the goals and objectives of the study (Saunders et al., 2012). Students studying at all levels of UK universities are more appropriate for this study. According to National Statistics (2016), 74% of those aged 16 to 24 and 85% of those aged 25 to 34 search for information about goods and services. Furthermore, 65% of 16 to 24 year olds and 63% of 25 to 34 year olds create content to share. In addition, the instances of always using reviews provided by others is very high at 42% of 16 to 24 year olds and 53% of 25 to 34 year olds. Thus, they are more internet-oriented and more ideal candidates for this study.

4.5.1.1.3 Sampling size

The size of the sample needs to be big enough to reflect the population (Collis and Hussey, 2009). If the sample is perfectly reflected by the distribution of the characteristics of the population, it may be a little different from what it would look like (Fowler, 2014).

According to the Office of National Statistics approximately 45.9 million adults use the Internet in the UK. Tabachnick ve Fidell (2014) suggest the formula below to identify the sample size,

$$N \geq 50 + 8m$$

N: Sample Size

m: Variables Number

Based on the number of variables on the questionnaire m: 29, on this occasion, the sampling size will be 282. However, Moutinho and Hutcheson, (2011) suggest another graph to identify the sample size which is below.

Table 5: Sample Size

Sample size for a 95% confidence level when parameter in population is assumed to be over 70% or 30%.

Size of population	Reliability			
	±1% point	±2%point	±3% point	±4% point
1,000	a	a	353	235
2,000	a	760	428	266
3,000	a	890	461	278
4,000	a	938	479	284
5,000	a	984	491	289
10,000	3,288	1,091	516	297
20,000	3,935	1,154	530	302
50,000	4,461	1,195	538	304
100,000	4,669	1,210	541	305
500,000 to ∞	4,850	1,222	544	306

A in these cases more than 50% of the population is required in the sample. Since the normal approximation of the hypergeometric distribution is a poor approximation in such instances, no sample value is given.

Adopted from Moutinho and Hutcheson, (2011)

The first formula to identify the sample size is not fit for the second graph. The sample size needs to be appropriate for both formulas. In addition, because of the possibility of invalid questionnaires this research aims to identify a sample size of 315.

Table 6: Instrument Measurements

Website Usability and Information Quality (Jones and Kim 2010)	WUIQ1	The website labels are easy to understand.
	WUIQ2	The display pages within the website are easy to read.
	WUIQ3	The information on the website is effective.
	WUIQ4	It would be easy for me to become skilful at using this website.
	WUIQ5	I find the website easy to use.
	WUIQ6	The website adequately meets my needs.
	WUIQ7	The text on the website is easy to read.
	WUIQ8	The information on the website is pretty much what I would need

		to complete my purchase.
Brand Trust (Delgado- Ballester, 2004) concerns	BT1	This is a brand that meets my expectations
	BT2	I feel confidence in this brand
	BT3	This is a brand that will not disappoint me
	BT4	This brand guarantees satisfaction
	BT5	This brand would be honest and sincere in addressing my
	BT6	I could rely on this brand to solve the problem
	BT7	This brand would make any effort to satisfy me
	BT8	This brand would compensate me in some way for the problem with the product
Brand Affection (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001)	BA1	I feel good if I purchase this brand
	BA2	This brand makes me happy
	BA3	This brand gives me pleasure
Needs of Information (Chu and Kim, 2011)	NOI1	I like to apply them when I consider new products
	NOI2	If I have little experience with a product, I often use them.
	NOI3	I usually consult them to choose best alternative for me.
	NOI4	I frequently gather them before making a purchase.
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.
	ATI4	If I do not read them when I buy a product, I worry about my decision.
	ATI5	They impose a burden on me when I buy a product
	ATI6	They irritate me when I buy a product.

4.6 Ethical Consideration

Ethical consideration usually involves the privacy of participants, the volunteerism of participants, the confidentiality and inconvenience or stress of data that researchers could cause to participants (Saunders, et al., 2012). Discussions on ethical issues in business research can be divided into four main areas: lack of informed consent, deception, invasion of privacy and harm to participants (Diener and Crandall, 1978). Cooper and Schindler (2014) propose some criteria for researchers to consider: 1) participants' rights must be protected; 2) sponsors of the research should be informed; 3) research should be based on ethical

standards; 4) the safety of the research team members should be provided; 5) the designed research should be followed.

The data collection process was guided by Brunel University's Research Ethics Committee and it was conducted after the committee's approval of the study. All participants were informed about the aims and objectives of the research. It was also stated that their participation

was voluntary, that the names of the participants were not to be asked during the survey, they could leave the survey when they wanted, and that the results of the research could be evaluated collectively and utilised for academic purposes only. (see Appendices A,B,C)

4.7 Data Analysis Strategy

The following section presents an analysis of the quantitative data with reliability and validity, and Structural Equation Modelling.

4.7.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data

Data cleansing is a process that identifies erroneous, unreasonable, or incomplete data and is used to modify or delete this data to increase the data quality (Chen et al, 2014). This study applied SPSS 20 software for data coding and screening, after which, the descriptive statistics of collected data were examined. Then, the reliability test was conducted to determine whether the measurements were consistent. Finally, SEM was used by applying AMOS 20 software to verify the theoretical model of the study

4.7.1.1 Reliability and Validity

In the study, the KMO test, the Bartlett Test and a reliability analysis (Cronbach Alpha) were used to calculate the appropriateness of the factor analysis of the scales. The KMO test measures the adequacy of a sample with respect to the distribution of values for conducting factor analysis and the Bartlett test shows whether the correlation matrix is an identity matrix. The KMO value should be greater than 0.5 and Bartlett's test should be below 0.05 Kaiser (1974). Cronbach's alpha is the most commonly applied predictor of the reliability of tests and scales (Hair et al., 2010). According to Nunnally (1978), Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70 indicate that the scale is acceptable.

4.7.1.2 Structural Equation Modelling

SEM is a statistical methodology of various multivariate techniques which tests the relationships between dependent and independent variables at the same time in the hypothetical model (Henri, 2007). SEM is a two-step method, carrying out a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and testing the structural model. It is widely used in the literature to

assess whether the data supports the model (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). CFA is widely used to examine the hypothesized relationships between ordinal variables (Flora and Curran, 2004). The model should be suitable for discussing CFA and hypotheses (Erkan, 2016). In this study, SEM has been preferred in terms of its suitability to the conceptual framework.

4.8 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented the research design of this study and outlined different research strategies and selected data collection method and data analysis strategy were justified.

Next chapter shows the result of this study.





CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This section shows the results of the research introduced in the previous section. As mentioned earlier, this study used the SEM technique to analyse the collected data. AMOS 20 software was used for this purpose.

5.2 Preliminary Analysis

The data were initially checked for missing values; but there was no missing value found in this study. Afterwards, to prepare the data for further analysis, the data were preliminarily examined using the normality test.

5.2.1 Reliability Testing

Reliability is defined as the consistency of a measure of a concept (Bradford and Cullen, 2012). There were two tests conducted in this study to understand whether collected data was reliable or not, the “Normality and Cronbach’s alpha for reliability assessment”

5.2.1.1 Normality

The study tested whether the data were normally distributed before confirming the factor analysis and path analysis. For the normality test, skewness and kurtosis values were examined. The acceptable range for skewness or kurtosis is below +1.5 and above -1.5 (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2014).

Table 7 Skewness and Kurtosis Scores

	N	Skewness	Kurtosis
WUIQ1	315	-0.793	0.756
WUIQ2	315	-0.562	0.191
WUIQ3	315	-0.513	0.158
WUIQ4	315	-0.319	-0.260
WUIQ5	315	-0.610	0.295
WUIQ6	315	-0.488	0.007
WUIQ7	315	-0.637	0.432

WUIQ8	315	-0.790	0.871
NOI1	315	-0.720	0.823
NOI2	315	-0.501	0.247
NOI3	315	-0.585	0.583
NOI4	315	-0.790	0.671
ATI1	315	-0.676	0.164
ATI2	315	-0.555	0.019
ATI3	315	-0.429	-0.128
ATI4	315	-0.230	-0.522
ATI5	315	-0.110	-0.424
ATI6	315	0.309	-0.673
BT1	315	-0.365	-0.121
BT2	315	-0.474	0.265
BT3	315	-0.426	0.083
BT4	315	-0.412	0.232
BT5	315	-0.521	0.577
BT6	315	-0.590	0.309
BT7	315	-0.674	0.778
BT8	315	-0.358	0.001
BA1	315	-0.726	0.524
BA2	315	-0.483	0.056
BA3	315	-0.595	0.466

5.2.1.2 Reliability Assessment

Hair et al., (2010) state that over 0.70 is proper for Cronbach's alpha value. More specifically, when Cronbach's alpha value is ≤ 0.90 , it is reliable, between 0.70-0.90 it is highly reliable, and it is moderate between 0.50-0.70. Values below 0.50 are viewed as being low in reliability (Hinton et al., 2014).

Table 8 Reliability Assessment

Variable	Numbers of the Measurements	Cronbach's Alpha	Type
Website Usability and Information Quality	8	0.879	High Reliability

Needs of Information	4	0.811	High Reliability
Attitude Toward Information	6	0.754	High Reliability
Brand Trust	8	0.867	High Reliability
Brand Affection	3	0.745	High Reliability

5.3 General Information of Respondents

This study collected data from 384 university students in the UK in February. This section provides the demographic profile of respondents. This section shows the education, gender, age, reading of online consumer review habits, and the Internet familiarity of respondents.

5.3.1 Education

Most of the respondents' education levels were at Bachelors (52.4 %), followed by Master's level (33.3 %) and PhDs (14.3 %).

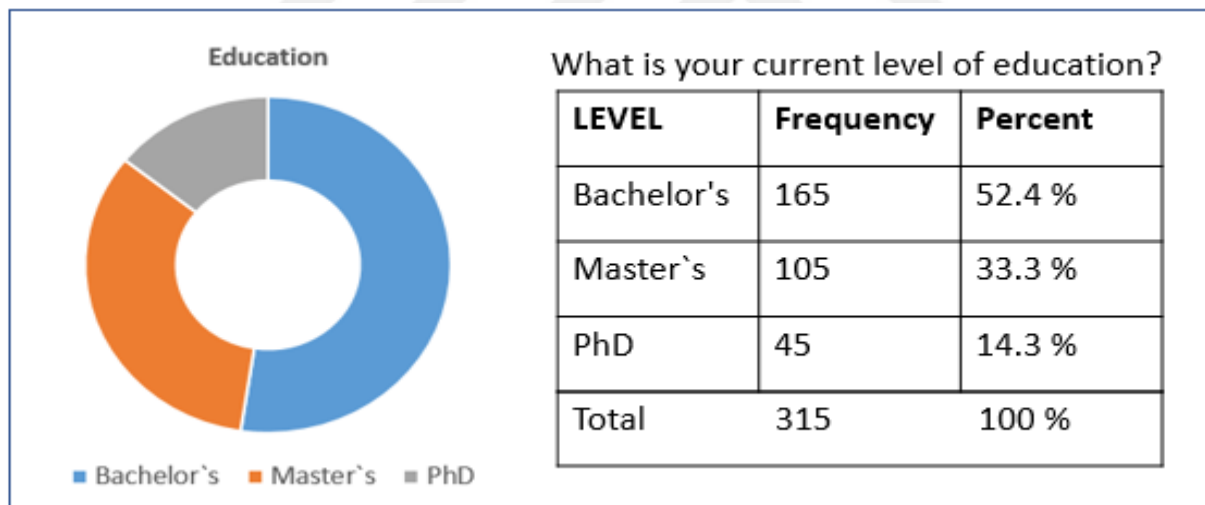


Figure 5.1: Education Level of Respondents

5.3.2 Gender

Male respondents made up 53 % of the total, followed by female respondents with 44.5 % and other with 2.5 %.

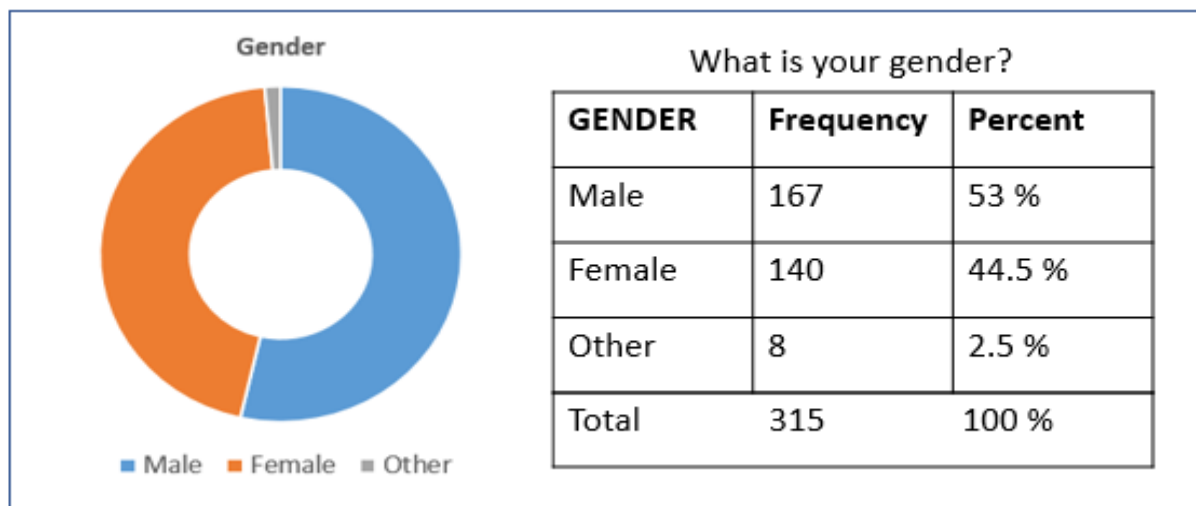


Figure 5.2: Gender of Respondents

5.3.3 Age

The figure demonstrates that almost 93.5 % of the respondents were between the ages of 18-32 and only 6.5 % of the respondents were over 32.

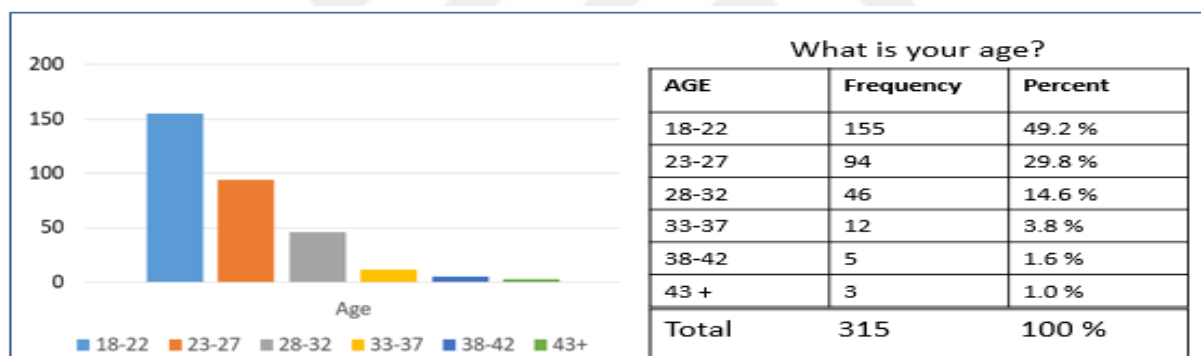


Figure 5.3: Age of Respondents

5.3.4 Reading of Online Consumer Reviews

The Figure shows that most of the respondents read online customer reviews frequently with 46.0 % followed by always with 28.6 % and sometimes with 25.4 %.

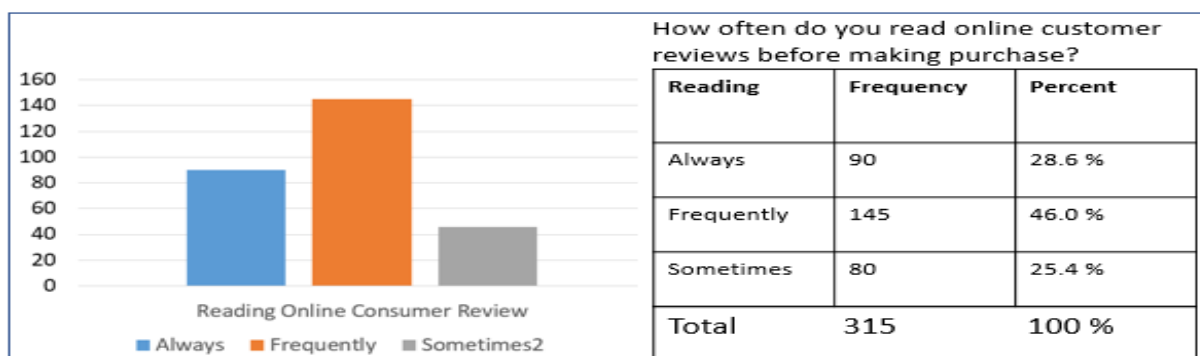


Figure 5.4: Reading Online Consumer Reviews

5.3.5 Internet Familiarity

The Figure shows that most respondents have been familiar with the Internet for more than 6 years (96.8 %), compared to those who have been familiar with it between 4 to 6 years (3.2 %)

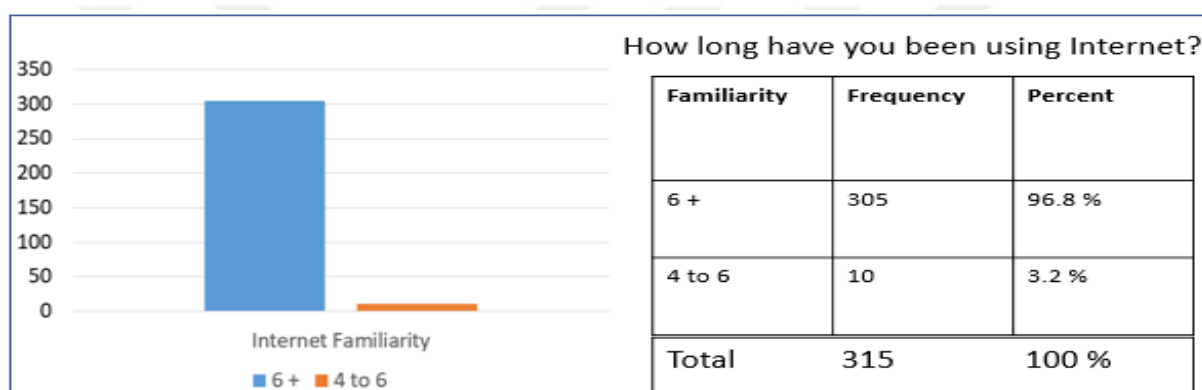


Figure 5.5: Internet Familiarity

5.4 Structural Equation Modelling

The SEM technique consists of two main stages, confirming the factorial analysis and structural model testing (Hair et al., 2010). This section starts with the confirmatory factor analysis and proceeds to structural model testing.

5.4.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Goodness of fit indices assessment and construct validity assessment are two stages to test the validity of the CFA (Hair et al., 2010). The following section presents CFI and follows the construct validity assessment.

5.4.1.1 Goodness of Fit Indices Assessment

The structural model and CFA need to be tested by employing at least four tests of model fit (Hair et al., 2010). However, in this study, eight GFI indices have been employed. These are as follows: χ^2 / Df , GFI, AGFI, IFI, TLI, CFI, RMSEA and PCLOSE. Hair et al., (2010) suggest some criteria for this test as follows:

Table 9: Goodness of Fit Indices for Initial CFA

Model Fit Indices	Recommended Criteria	Default model
χ^2 / Df	1:3	1.805
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.874
AGFI	≥ 0.80	0.851
IFI	≥ 0.90	0.925
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.916
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.924
RMSEA	< 0.50	0.051
PCLOSE	> 0.50	0.426

As shown in the table, some criteria were not achieved according to the recommended line. Anderson and Gerbing (1988) suggest that refinement might be applied by deleting some measures or linking them to a different variable and employing correlated measurement errors.

Table 10: Goodness of Fit Indices for Final CFA

Model Fit Indices	Recommended Criteria	Default model
χ^2 / Df	1:3	1.617
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.908
AGFI	≥ 0.80	0.886
IFI	≥ 0.90	0.956
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.949
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.956
RMSEA	< 0.50	0.044
PCLOSE	> 0.50	0.877

After the refinement, all criteria achieved recommended line.

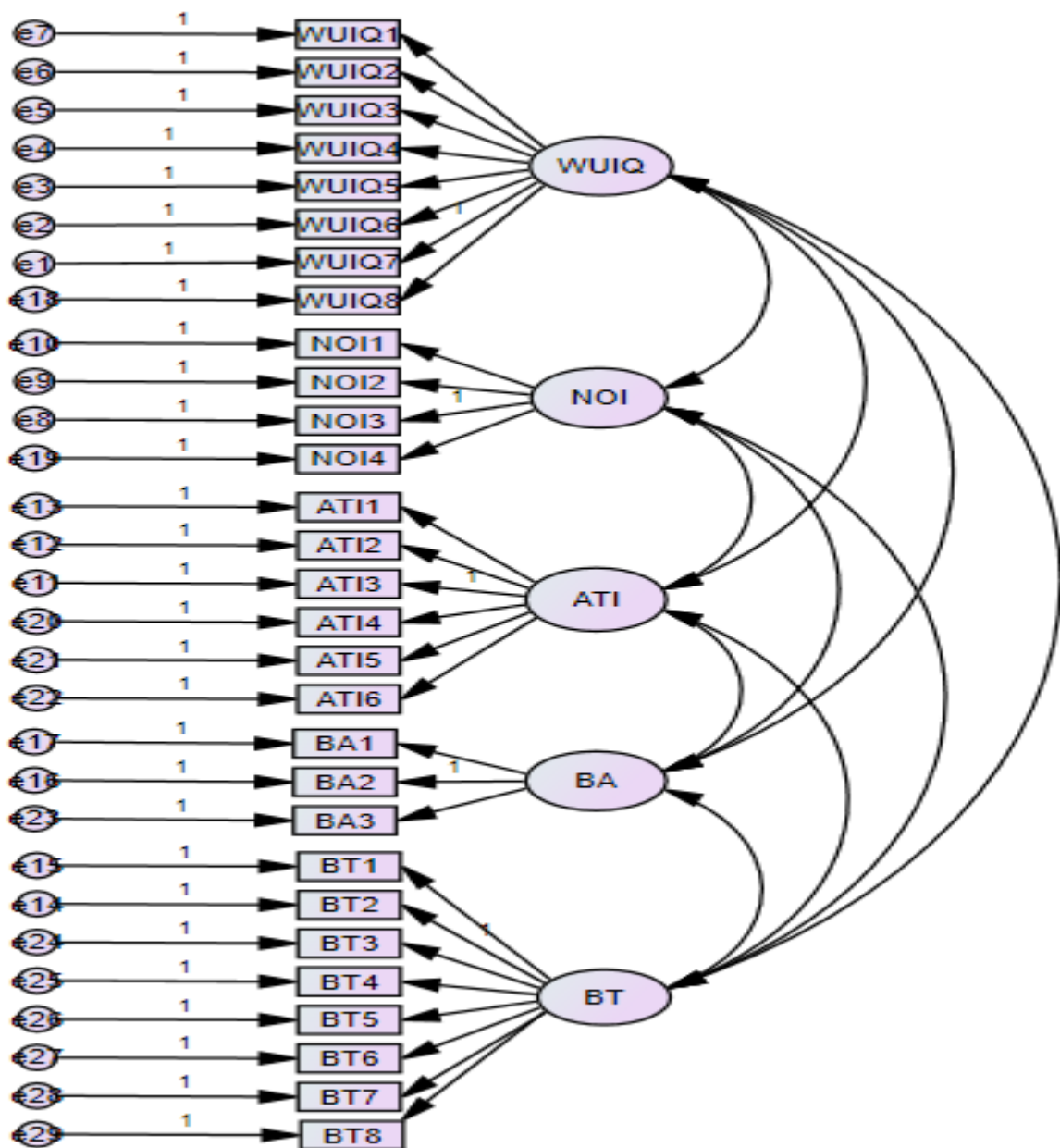


Figure 5.6: Initial Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

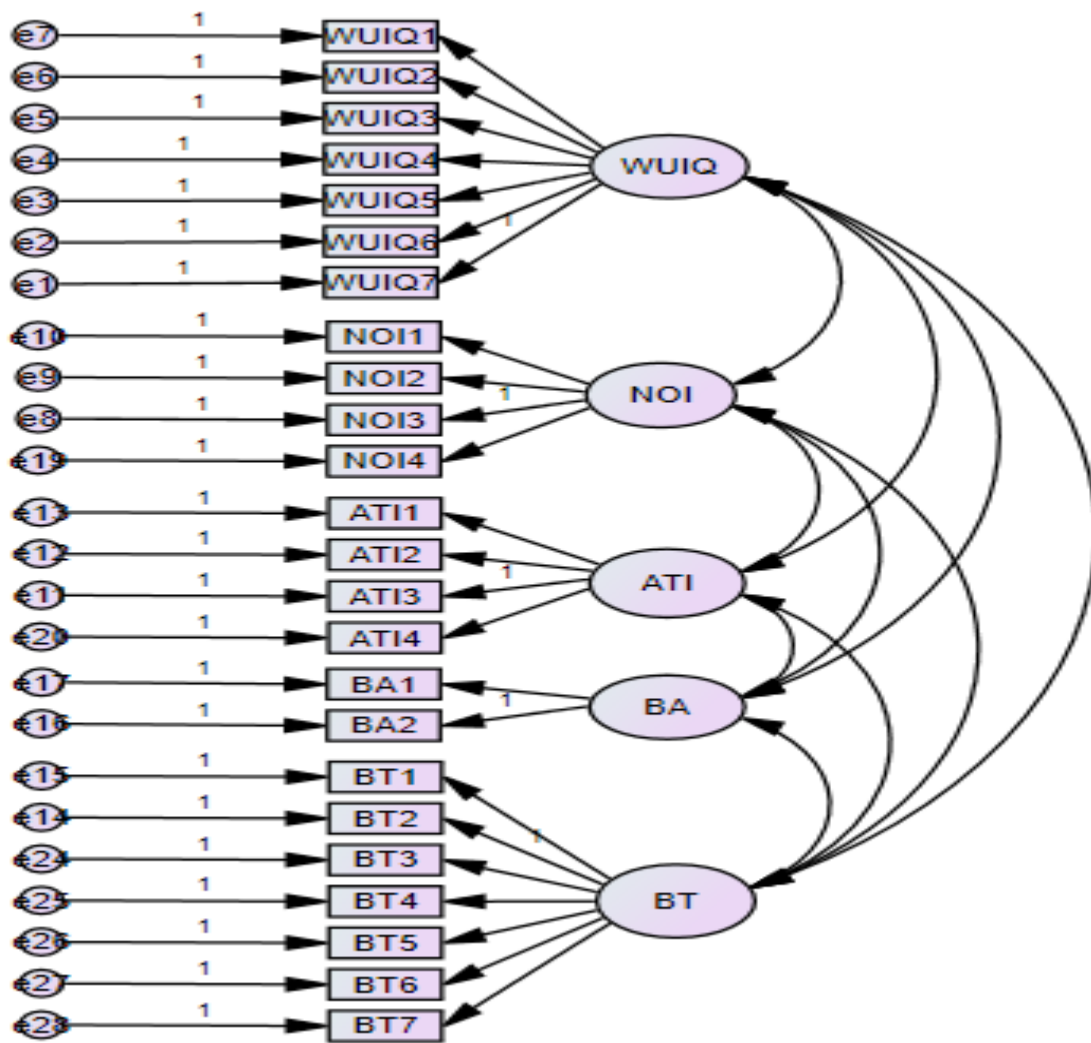


Figure 5.7: Final Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

5.4.1.2 Construct Validity Assessment

Convergent and discriminant validity tests were employed to examine the construct validity. Convergent validity demonstrates how the measures are related to each other (Erkan, 2016). As Fornell and Larcker, (1981) suggest, composite reliability (CR), critical ratio (t-value), factor loading and the average variance extracted (AVE) were conducted to test convergent validity. As a rule, factor loadings need to be greater than 0.50 and all critical ratios need to be higher than 1.96. In addition, the lower range ideal value is 0.70 for CR and 0.50 for AVE (Hair et al. 2010)

Table 11: Convergent Validity

Variable	Measure	Factor Loading	Critical Ratio (t-value)	CR	AVE
Website Usability	WUIQ1	0.78	12.434	0.878	0.509
	And	WUIQ2	0.73		
	Information Quality	WUIQ3	0.79		

	WUIQ4	0.65	10.440		
	WUIQ5	0.77	12.296		
	WUIQ6	0.63	10.187		
	WUIQ7	0.69	-----		
Needs of Information	NOI1	0.77	11.068	0.790	0.557
	NOI3	0.68	-----		
	NOI4	0.79	11.215		
Attitude Toward Information	ATI1	0.75	13.098	0.824	0.543
	ATI2	0.82	14.319		
	ATI3	0.77	-----		
	ATI4	0.59	10.043		
Brand Affection	BA1	0.85	11.574	0.773	0.632
	BA2	0.73	-----		
Brand Trust	BT1	0.73	11.226	0.761	0.615
	BT2	0.84	-----		

In addition, the discriminant validity test was employed to ensure that there were no significant differences between the different variables that may have the same cause (Ghadi et al., 2012). In this analysis, each of the square roots of the AVE need to be higher than the other correlation coefficients involving the constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 12: Discriminant Validity

BT	WUIQ	NOI	ATI	BA
0.784				
0.612	0.714			
0.525	0.536	0.746		
0.593	0.581	0.728	0.737	
0.702	0.534	0.483	0.675	0.795

5.4.2 Structural Model and Hypotheses Testing

The structural model was tested by applying eight GFI indices which were: χ^2 / Df , GFI, AGFI, IFI, TLI, CFI, RMSEA and PCLOSE. The results present that all GFI were on the recommended line for the tests for the structural model. (see Appendix D)

Table 13: Goodness of Fit for Structural Model

Model Fit Indices	Recommended Criteria	Default model
χ^2 / Df	1:3	1.768
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.930
AGFI	≥ 0.80	0.906
IFI	≥ 0.90	0.962
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.953
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.961
RMSEA	< 0.50	0.049
PCLOSE	> 0.50	0.519

Path estimates, critical ratios (t values) and p values were applied to test the research hypotheses. It is possible to say that there is a significant relation between variables when p values are below 0.05 and t values are above 1.96 (Erkan, 2016).

Table 14: Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Estimate	S.E	C.R	P Value
Finding				
H1: WUIQ $\rightarrow$ ATI	0.557	0.076	7.344	***** Supported
H2: WUIQ $\rightarrow$ NOI	0.526	0.074	7.135	***** Supported
H3: ATI $\rightarrow$ BA	0.805	0.142	5.690	***** Supported
H4: ATI $\rightarrow$ BT	0.611	0.143	4.263	***** Supported
H5: NOI $\rightarrow$ BA	-0.028	0.112	-0.252	0.801 Not Supported
H6: NOI $\rightarrow$ BT	0.233	0.130	1.800	0.072 Not Supported

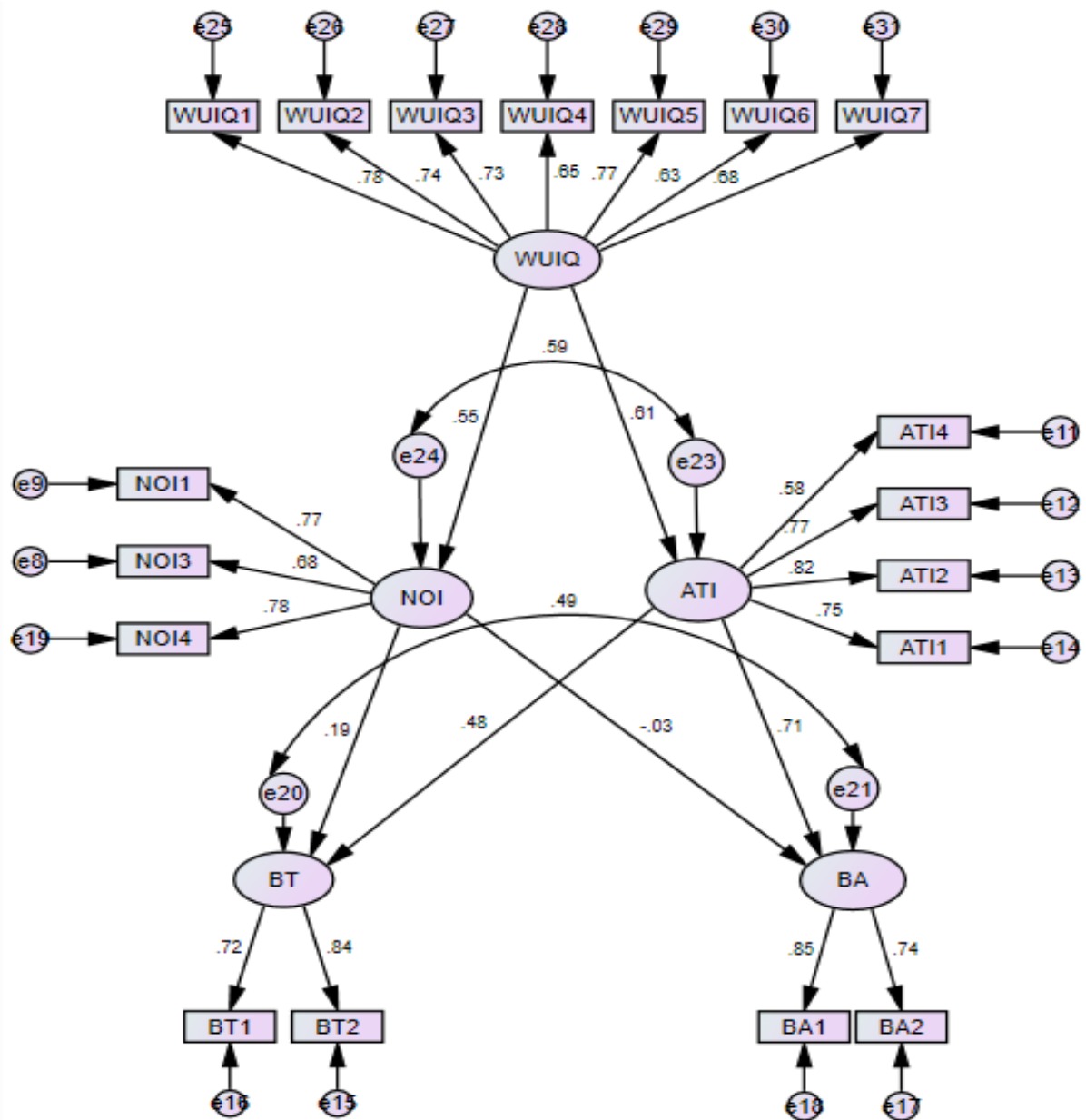
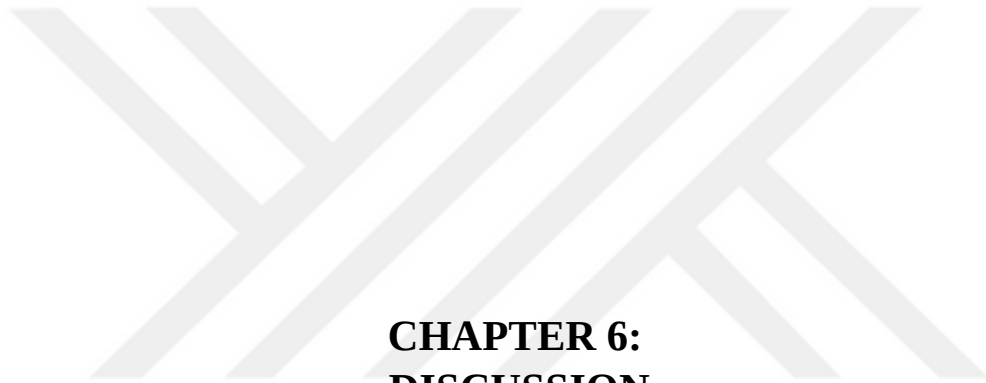


Figure 5.8: Structural Model

5.5 Summary of the Chapter

This section has presented the results of the research. At the beginning, a preliminary analysis of the data, the demographic profile of the participants and the descriptive statistics of the variables were presented. The SEM results were then displayed on the basis of a two-stage which are: CFA and the structural model. The CFA was validated by evaluating the GFI evaluation and validity. Since these test results were above the recommended criteria, this study performed a structural model and hypotheses testing.



CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present a discussion of the conducted research. This study has examined the eWOM information in the relationship between a brand and website. This section discusses the results in detail.

6.2 Website Usability, Information Quality and Attitude towards Information.

This study has found that Website Usability and Information Quality are positively related to attitudes toward information (H1). The empirical results of this study support the direct positive impact of website usability and information quality on attitudes toward information; thus, H1 is accepted. Based on the existing literature, there is limited study that has been conducted in this field. This result shows that when a website is useful and provides quality information, consumers' attitudes towards information provided by the website are positive. This result is not surprising because as Kim and Stoel (2004) point out, the website is the main tool for the communication of internet users and the first interface that consumers on the internet meet to research on topics such as products and brands.

6.3 Website Usability, Information Quality and Needs of Information.

This study has found that Website usability and information quality are positively related to needs of information (H2). The empirical results of this study support the direct positive impact of website usability and information quality on needs of information; thus, H2 is accepted. Based on the existing literature, there is limited study that has been conducted in this field. As above mentioned, consumers apply WOM for "advice seeking" (HennigThurau et al., 2004) and "opinion seeking" (Chu and Kim, 2011). Thus, high quality information and usefulness provided by websites have a positive effect on consumers' needs of information as Kim and Stoel (2004) have stated. The internet is the first interface that consumers on the internet meet to research.

6.4 Attitudes toward Information and Brand Affection

This study has found that the attitude toward information is positively related to brand affection (H3). The empirical results of this study support the direct positive impact of attitudes toward information on brand affection; thus, H3 is accepted. This result refers to when consumers' attitudes toward information are positive. This also has power on brand affection because information in online platforms is generally about a brand and brand affection is created by consumers' positive or negative considerations of brands (Keller, 1993; Bhat and Reddy, 2001).

6.5 Attitudes toward Information and Brand Trust

This study has found that the attitude toward information is positively related to brand trust (H4). The empirical results of this study support the direct positive impact of attitudes toward information on brand trust; thus, H4 is accepted. As opposed to traditional shopping, when consumers decide to buy products online they are not able to physically test them (Park et al., 2007). This is why consumers' positive attitudes provide information which increase brand trust.

6.6 Needs of Information, Brand Affection and Brand Trust

This study has found that the needs of information are not positively related to brand trust and brand affection (H5 and H6). These results are surprising because consumers apply to information for advice seeking" (HennigThurau et al., 2004) and "opinion seeking" (Chu and Kim, 2011) and these efforts are generally about brands. Also, based on the existing literature, it was expected that hypothesis H5 and H6 would be proven. One reason for this result could be that needs of information is more related cognitive and brand affect and trust are more emotional that is why, participants could not build meaningful relationship between them.

6.7 Additional result

In the existing literature, researchers use the SOR model to test eWOM as Stimuli and Response. However, to the best of our knowledge, there is very limited study that has been conducted in eWOM as an Organism and the relationship between the website, eWOM and the brand. Thus, this research employed SOR and examined eWOM as an organism. In addition, it took into account the website as stimuli and the brand response because consumers apply to the website for information which is generally about brands.

6.8 Revisiting Data Analysis and Findings

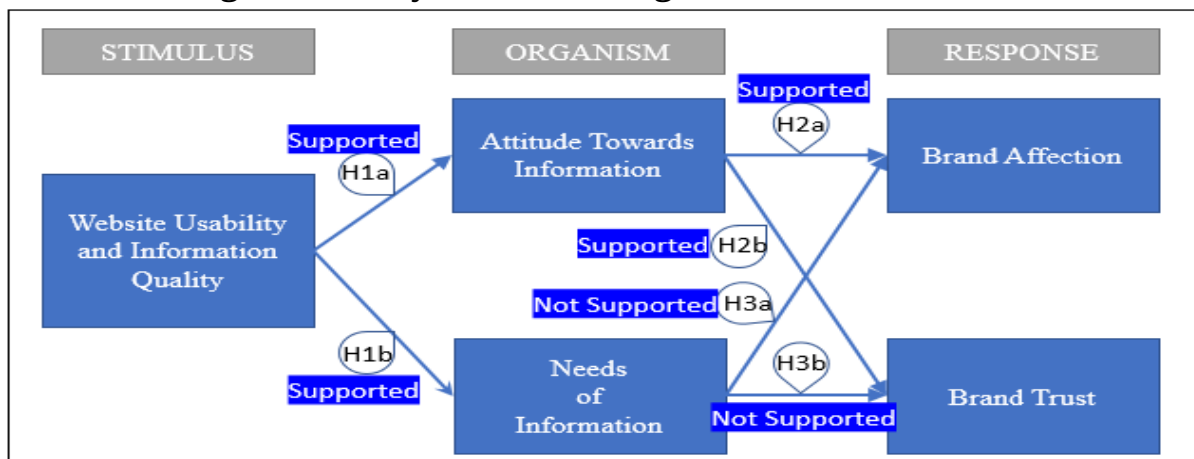


Figure 91: Conceptual Model with Results

Hypothesis	Proposed Structure	Empirical Structure	Outcome
H1a	<i>Website Usability and Information Quality are positively related to consumers' attitudes towards eWOM information.</i>	<i>Website Usability and Information Quality are positively related to consumers' attitudes towards eWOM information.</i>	Supported
H1b	<i>Website Usability and Information Quality are positively related to consumers' needs of eWOM information</i>	<i>Website Usability and Information Quality are positively related to consumers' needs of eWOM information</i>	Supported



Table 15: Comparison to Proposed Structure and Empirical Structure

H2a	<i>Consumers' attitudes toward eWOM information is positively related to Brand Affection.</i>	<i>Consumers' attitudes toward eWOM information is positively related to Brand Affection.</i>	Supported
H2b	<i>Consumers' attitudes toward eWOM information is positively related to Brand Trust.</i>	<i>Consumers' attitudes toward eWOM information is positively related to Brand Trust.</i>	Supported
H3a	<i>Needs of eWOM information are positively related to Brand Affection.</i>	<i>Needs of eWOM information are positively related to Brand Affection.</i>	Not Supported
H3b	<i>Needs of eWOM information are positively related to Brand Trust.</i>	<i>Needs of eWOM information are positively related to Brand Trust.</i>	Not Supported

6.9 Summary

This chapter presented the discussion of research results. It also discussed the accepted and rejected hypotheses, taking into account the previous literature.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the research, the recommendations for marketing implications and limitations and recommendations for future research

7.2 Summary of Dissertation

The main objectives of this research that encourage the result of the proposed aim will be demonstrated as follows:

- To review literature based upon the effect of “website usability and information quality” on “attitudes toward information and needs of information”. (Completed in chapter 2)
- To review literature based upon the “attitudes toward information and needs of information” effect on “brand trust and brand affection”. (Completed in chapter 2)

- To develop theoretical models to explain the effect of “attitudes toward information and needs of information” in the relationship between “website usability and information quality” and “brand trust and brand affection”. (Completed in chapter 3)
- To empirically assess the relationships hypothesised in the theoretical models in order to answer research questions. (Completed in chapter 5,6)
- To discuss the results and position them within the existing eWOM literature. (Completed in chapter 6)
- To draw managerial implications for academics and practitioners in regard to the effect of “attitudes toward information and needs of information” in the relationship between “website usability and information quality ” and “brand trust and brand affection”. (Completed in this chapter)

Table 16: Meeting Objectives

Objective	Chapter
1	2
2	2
3	3
4	5,6
5	6
6	7

7.3 Meeting Research Question

The results of the study showed that website usability and information positively related to needs of eWOM information and attitude toward eWOM information. In addition, consumers` attitude toward eWOM information is positively affect on brand affection and brand trust.

7.4 Limitations for Future Research

Although this research provides a considerable theoretical and practical contribution, the following limitations can be addressed in future research.

As a result of time and budget constraints, this research employed convenience sampling to collect the data. Thus, university students were involved as participants even though

university students are a more internet-oriented group. Thus, they might not perfectly reflect the entire population. On the other hand, this research considers all websites together, instead of specifically focusing on one type of website such as a personal blog, an e-retailer, a brand's websites and non-marketer driven sources. The results might vary in terms of the website.

7.5 Recommendations for Future Research

The demographic information of the study may also make meaningful differences in the website, eWOM and brand relationship. Other eWOM variables such as information usefulness, information credibility, information quality, information adaptation can be employed for further research. In addition, other website quality components such as visual appeal and image, interactivity and innovativeness can be conducted for further research. Finally, purchase intention and eWOM attitudes can be applied as responses for further study.

7.6 Recommendations for Marketing Implications

This research provides marketers with a frame of reference to understand the influence of eWOM in the relationship between websites and brands. In addition, the research can benefit website and brand owners in terms of adaptation. Websites need to be more usable and they need to provide high quality information to fulfil consumers' need for information. This is important because as Kim and Stoel (2004) have stated, the website is the first interface that consumers on the internet meet to research topics such as products and brands. Secondly, consumer attitudes toward information have power on brand affection and brand trust, which is why credible and quality information linked to brands can increase brand loyalty and make one brand stand out from the consumer perspective. Furthermore, the chain from the website to the brand is an integrated process. Thus, paying attention to one variable while ignoring another can break the chain. This is why companies, website providers, and brand owners are required to elaborate upon every variable in this chain and track the information. They must also elaborate upon negative information provided by other users draw more attention to consumers compared to the positives and indubitably this can harm purchase intention, brand trust and affection.

7.7 Personal Reflection

I am very delighted to have prepared this dissertation. Studying a less examined topic in the literature pushed me a lot. However, my dissertation taught me existing theoretical models, how to use AMOS, and how to conduct my proposed research through a theoretical model. As a marketing candidate, learning this information has equipped me with many skills for

conducting different research in the future. More importantly, thanks to Dear Dr. Ashaye, from whom I learnt how important a well prepared structure is for research.

7.8 Summary

This chapter presented the summary of the dissertation and limitations and recommendations for future research of this study also recommendations for marketing implications and finally personal reflection of the author.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A: SAMPLE PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

SAMPLE PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Checklist – you should complete each of these headings in detail – see [Participant Information Sheet Guidance](#)

Study title: The effect of “Attitude Toward Information and Needs of Information” in relationship between “Website` Information Quality and Usability” and “Brand Trust and Brand Affect”.

Invitation Paragraph: You are invited to take place in this research in the frame of a master`s dissertation Brunel University London, Department of Business School. You are kindly invited to participate in this research study by completing the attached questionnaire.

What is the purpose of the study? This study aims to examine The effect of “Attitude Toward Information and Needs of Information” in relationship between “Website` Information Quality and Usability” and “Brand Trust and Brand Affect”.

Why have been invited to participate? Participants enable to have social perspective by giving information in terms of their opinion and more useful to identify specific topic compared to secondary data.

Do I have to take part? Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the questionnaire at any time with no obligations.

What will happen to me if I take part? The approximate time to complete this questionnaire is 10 minutes.

What do I have to do? You will answer the questions about EWOM on the internet, website usability and information quality also brand trust and brand affect.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? There is no risk

What are the possible benefits of taking part? The collected data will be used for academic purposes and this is unstudied topic that is why, You will play a very important role

What if something goes wrong? Chair of the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential? Yes, It is an anonymous questionnaire whereby all responses will remain confidential and analysed at an aggregate, not individual level.

What will happen to the results of the research study? I will examine the results, It will be guide for firms and very good contribution to academic literature

Who is organising and funding the research? I am a MSc marketing student at Brunel University London. This is my personal research, I am funding it

What are the indemnity arrangements? Brunel provides appropriate insurance cover for research which has received ethical approval.

Who has reviewed the study? The College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Include a passage on the University's commitment to the UK Concordat on Research Integrity This study is controlled by academic rules and Brunel University. My University where the research held with commitment to the UK Concordat on Research Integrity. Hence, this is legal procedure guarantee your right during and after the research.

Contact for further information and complaints for any queries or further information about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Student

Advisor

Oguzhan Ozyigit
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Appendix B: LETTER OF APPROVAL



College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Brunel University London
Kingston Lane
Uxbridge
UB8 3PH
United Kingdom

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9 February 2017

LETTER OF APPROVAL

Applicant: MR OGUZHAN OZYIGIT

Project Title: eWOM effect

Reference: 5558-LR-Feb/2017- 5864-2

Dear MR OGUZHAN OZYIGIT

The Research Ethics Committee has considered the above application recently submitted by you.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

- The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee by way of an application for an amendment.

Please note that:

- Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, posters, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to receipt by the Committee of satisfactory responses to any conditions that may appear above, in addition to any subsequent changes to the protocol.
- The Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.
- You may not undertake any research activity if you are not a registered student of Brunel University or if you cease to become registered, including abeyance or temporary withdrawal. As a deregistered student you would not be insured to undertake research activity. Research activity includes the recruitment of participants, undertaking consent procedures and collection of data. Breach of this requirement constitutes research misconduct and is a disciplinary offence.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James D. Knowles', written over a horizontal line.

Professor James Knowles

Chair

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Brunel University London

Appendix C: QUESTIONNAIRE



Dear Participants,

My name is Oguzhan Ozyigit and I am a MSc marketing student at Brunel University, London. I am conducting a study examining “eWOM in the relationship between website and brand”. You are kindly invited to participate in this research study by completing the attached questionnaire.

It is an anonymous questionnaire whereby all responses will remain confidential and analysed at an aggregate, not individual level. The collected data will be used for academic purposes only and has been approved by the Brunel Business School Ethics Committee.

The approximate time to complete this questionnaire is 10 minutes. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the questionnaire at any time with no obligations. However, I really appreciate your participation. Thank you for your cooperation, and for any queries or further information about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,
Oguzhan Ozyigit
Brunel Business School
Brunel University, London, UK
Email: 1538799@my.brunel.ac.uk

Section 1:

- Are you a university student in the UK?

Yes ☐

No ☐ (If No, you don't need to continue... Thank You...)

- What is your current level of education?

Bachelor's ☐

Master's ☐

PhD ☐

- What is your gender?

Male ☐

Female ☐

Other ☐

- What is your age?

18 - 22 ☐

23 - 27 ☐

28 - 32 ☐

33 - 37 ☐

38 - 42 ☐

43 or above ☐

- How often do you read online customer reviews before making the purchase?

Always ☐

Frequently ☐

Sometimes ☐

Never ☐

- How long have you been using the Internet?

Less than 1 year ☐

1 to 3 years ☐

4 to 6 years ☐

More than 6 years ☐

Section 2:

Please circle the number that indicates your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements

Strongly Disagree	<u>Disagree</u>	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Website Usability and Information Quality

Website Usability and Information Quality are positively related to consumers' needs of eWOM information and attitude toward eWOM information.

Please answer the following questions by considering the website you are researching	1	2	3	4	5
The website labels are easy to understand					
The display pages within the website are easy to read.					
The information on the website is effective.					
It would be easy for me to become skilful at using this website.					
I find the website easy to use.					
The website adequately meets my needs.					
The text on the website is easy to read.					
The information on the website is pretty much what I would need to complete my purchase.					

Consumers' Needs of eWOM Information

Consumers' needs of eWOM information is positively related to Brand Affect and Brand Trust.

Please answer the following questions by considering the comments on the internet about the product that you recently bought or thought you would like to buy.	1	2	3	4	5
I like to apply them when I consider new products					
If I have little experience with a product, I often use them.					
I usually consult them to choose best alternative for me.					
I frequently gather them before making a purchase.					

Consumers` Attitudes Toward eWOM Information					
Consumers` attitudes toward eWOM information is positively related to Brand Affect and Brand Trust					
Please answer the following questions with the brand you are considering purchasing or thinking about purchasing	1	2	3	4	5
I always read them when I buy a product					
They are helpful for my decision making when I buy a product					
They make me confident in purchasing product.					
If I do not read them when I buy a product, I worry about my decision.					
They impose a burden on me when I buy a product					
They irritate me when I buy a product.					
Brand Trust					
Please answer the following questions with the brand you are considering purchasing or thinking about purchasing	1	2	3	4	5
This is a brand that meets my expectations					
I feel confidence in this brand					
This is a brand that will not disappoint me					
This brand guarantees satisfaction					
This brand would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns					
I could rely on this brand to solve the problem					
This brand would make any effort to satisfy me					
This brand would compensate me in some way for the problem with the product					
Brand Affection					
Please answer the following questions with the brand you are considering purchasing or thinking about purchasing	1	2	3	4	5
I feel good if I purchase this brand					
This brand makes me happy					
This brand gives me pleasure					

Appendix D: MODEL FIT SUMMARY

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	44	224.596	127	.000	1.768
Saturated model	171	.000	0		
Independence model	18	2679.568	153	.000	17.514

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.043	.930	.906	.691
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	.284	.288	.204	.257

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
	Delta1	rho1	Delta2	rho2	
Default model	.916	.899	.962	.953	.961
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
Default model	.830	.760	.798
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	1.000	.000	.000

NCP

Model	NCP	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	97.596	59.718	143.328
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	2526.568	2362.342	2698.142

FMIN

Model	FMIN	F0	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	.715	.311	.190	.456
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	8.534	8.046	7.523	8.593

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.049	.039	.060	.519
Independence model	.229	.222	.237	.000