THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ON CONSUMERS' ENGAGEMENT IN EWOM AND THEIR PURCHASE INTENTIONS

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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ON CONSUMERS' ENGAGEMENT IN EWOM AND THEIR PURCHASE INTENTIONS

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Bilge Baykal, certify that

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ABSTRACT

The Impact of Social Capital

on Consumers' Engagement in EWOM and Their Purchase Intentions

Consumers often seek recommendations before they make a commitment to purchase. Social networks are one of the most appropriate communication platforms on which they can ask other consumers' opinions about various topics. In the literature, the social capital concept is discussed to play a vital role in the process of WOM transmission but no integrated theoretical model or empirical study exists that fully defines and analyzes the relationships between social capital, eWOM and the purchase intentions of consumers on social network site context. This dissertation attempts to fill this gap by proposing and testing a holistic theoretical model which aims to determine the impact of social capital dimensions on eWOM and purchase intentions of consumers through an extensive literature review, a series of exploratory qualitative studies and a large-scale survey-based quantitative study of data collected from 980 users of social media specifically, namely Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and provides support for the reliability and validity of the proposed model. The findings demonstrate that there exists a direct relationship between the dimensions of social capital, consumers' engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions, but the strength of relationships varies. Among these dimensions, social network culture emerges as having the strongest effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM, followed by tie strength and interpersonal trust. Two moderators-gender and social network site usage intensity-are identified as influences of the relationships between model constructs. The implications for marketing theory and practice and directions for future research are discussed in the conclusion part of the study.

ÖZET

Sosyal Sermayenin

Tüketicilerin Tavsiye Alma ve Satın Alma Eğilimlerine Etkisi

Tüketiciler genellikle bir satın alma öncesinde başkalarının tavsiyelerini alırlar. Sosyal ağlar onların başkalarının çeşitli konularda görüşlerini alabileceği en uygun iletişim platformlarından biridir. Sosyal sermaye kavramının ağızdan ağıza pazarlama faaliyetlerinde önemli rol oynadığı literatürde tartışılmakla beraber, sosyal sermaye, ağızdan ağıza pazarlama ve tüketicilerin satın alma eğilimi arasındaki ilişkileri tanımlayan ve sosyal ağ ortamında analiz eden entegre bir teorik model veya betimsel araştırma bulunmamaktadır. Bu tez çalışması sosyal sermaye boyutlarının ağızdan ağıza pazarlama faaliyetleri ve tüketicilerin satın alma eğilimleri üzerindeki etkilerini holistik olarak ele alan teorik bir modeli önermek suretiyle bu boşluğu doldurmaya çalışmakta, bu doğrultuda kapsamlı bir literatür çalışması, keşifsel kalitatif çalışmalar ve 980 adet Facebook, Twitter ve Instagram sosyal medya kullanıcısından toplanan anket datalarıyla gerçekleştirilen kapsamlı bir kantitatif çalışması sayesinde önerilen modeli test ederek, güvenililirlik ve geçerliliğini desteklemektedir. Araştırmanın bulguları sosyal sermaye boyutlarının tüketicilerin sosyal ağlarda tavsiye alma ve satın alma eğilimi oluşturmaları üzerinde direkt etkileri olduğunu kanıtlamakta olup, bu etkilerin güçlülük seviyesi boyutlar arasında değişmektedir. Sosyal ağ kültürünün en güçlü etkiye sahip olduğu görülmekte olup, bu sıralamayı bağlantı yakınlığı ve kişilerarası güven boyutları izlemektedir. İki aracı değişken olarak cinsiyet ve sosyal ağ kullanım yoğunluğu saptanmıştır. Araştırma sonuçlarının pazarlama teori ve pratik alanları üzerindeki etkileri ile gelecek araştırmalara yönelik tavsiyeler sonuç bölümünde tartışılmaktadır.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to

my dear devoted parents, Hüsniye Baykal and Ali Baykal

for without them, none of this would be possible;

and to my beloved brother, Yücel Baykal

who watches over me still.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structures
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CMIN/DF	Chi-square/Degrees of Freedom
CON	Constrained
CR	Composite Reliability
Df	Degrees of Freedom
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
GOF	Goodness of Fit
KMO-MSA	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy
MLE	Maximum Likelihood Estimation
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SE	Standard Error
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SES	Social Economic Status
SMA	Structural Model Analysis
SNS	Social Network Site
UNCON	Unconstrained

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Non-personal and commercial sources such as advertising have been well recognized by influencing consumer decision making and purchasing intentions in marketing and consumer behaviour literature. However, it has been increasingly suggested that consumers rely more on informal communication sources as opposed to formal institutional ones when making product preferences or purchase decisions. (Herr, Kardes & Kim, 1991; Bansal & Voyer, 2000). Consumers often perceive and rate personal sources as the most credible sources of information (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Engel, Kegerreis & Blackwell, 1969; Price & Feick, 1984, Rogers, 1995; Wiedmann, Hennigs & Langner, 2007; Goldsmith & Clark, 2008). The act of exchanging marketing information among consumers, which is defined as WOM, has been found to have significant role in consumer attitudes and behaviours (Gilly & Wolfinger, 1998; Grewal, Cline & Davies, 2003). Jayawardhena, Wright and Dennis (2007) argues that there is enough support for the importance of social interactions (Rohm & Swaminathan 2004) and recreational motives like WOM (Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004) in shaping consumer attitudes and purchasing orientations. WOM sets itself apart from other forms of communication, such as advertising, with its superiority by being capable of spreading information from person to person.

Furthermore, researchers have found that WOM communication plays an influential role in affecting consumer decisions in a wide range of product categories and areas like household goods and food products (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Arndt 1967), new cars (Kiel & Layton, 1981; Oliver & Swan, 1989), service switching (Keaveney, 1995), selection of service providers (Alreck & Settle, 1995; Bansal &

Voyer, 2000) and diffusion of information regarding new products (Rogers, 1983; 1995). WOM was also often regarded as in relationship with consumers' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with previous purchasing experiences (Blodgett, Hill & Tax, 1997). Early studies attributed this impact to normative social influence (Asch, 1953; Kelman, 1958; Stafford, 1966) while subsequent research relates it to the informational aspect of social influence (Bloch, Sherrell & Ridgeway, 1986; Mangold, Miller & Brockway, 1999).

With evolution of internet**,** WOM has evolved to electronic Word of Mouth and named as eWOM, which refers to particular type of WOM occurring in online settings (Dwyer, 2007). EWOM is superior to traditional WOM's face-to-face communication in respect to the effect, speed and spread of its range. Many researchers have explored influences of eWOM on product success (Chevalier & Mayzlin 2006) and consumers' online behaviors (Hung & Li, 2007; De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008). EWOM can be observed in many different online platforms, such as product reviews, discussion forums, blogs, e-mails and social network sites. Among many new media, social network sites has become one of the most popular activities among Internet users (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). According to Hampton, Goulet, Rainie and Purcell (2011), nearly 60% of U.S. American internet users use at least one social networking site, which has nearly doubled since 2008. Lipsman (2011) states that social networking sites become increasingly embedded in people's daily activities. He (2011) indicates that 1/12 of users' online activity time was spent on a social network site in 2007 while this ratio has increased dramatically to 1/6 in 2011. According to another research which was conducted in 2010 by Dougherty, social networks in the UK received more visit (11.9% of traffic) than search engines (11.3% of traffic) in May, 2010. Facebook is recently the second biggest source of

online traffic, closing in on Google's position being the most visited website in the world (Dougherty, 2010).

Social network sites did not only enhance consumers' online experiences but also changed their online expectations in terms of social and information outcomes. Most members tend to go to social network sites to socialize not to shop at first. One of the most fundamental features of social networking sites is the opportunity to make connections with other people, which has been argued to be their core function and named as networking (Donath & Boyd, 2004; Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006). Members gather in social networking sites to meet one another, communicate, socialize, seek and offer advice on numerous topics including daily lives, emotional states, careers, politics, hobbies, causes and foundations, brands, products and services (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Singh & Cullinane, 2010). Social network sites have very easy access to direct communication while making members interconnected in a way that was not previously possible. Activities occuring in social networking sites has a wide range from socializing to exchanging opinions, recommendations and experiences regarding products and services. These product and service recommendations are basically the examples of generation and use of eWOM on social network sites (Brown, Barry, Dacin & Gunst, 2005). According to the findings of a research in which 1,000 online consumers were surveyed (Yun, 2011), Yun (2011) highlights that online shoppers' buying behaviour is influenced by following sources: customer reviews (71%), community forums (45%), facebook wall (31%), videos (30%), Facebook fan page (25%). Social network site members react and listen to their connections' comments, which in turn affects their attitudes and intentions. Kozinets (1999) also maintains that the influence of friends is highly prevalent on social network sites.

A recent Gallup survey on social media written by Elder (2014) which is published in the Wall Street Journal provides important implications about the actual motivations of consumers' social media users. In parallel with past research findings (Donath & Boyd, 2004), consumers are drawn to social network sites mainly because they want to make connections and take part in the conversations. Gallup survey (as cited in Wall Street Journal, 2014) discloses the fact that vast majority of consumers (94%) who use Facebook, Twitter and other social networking channels do so primarily to connect with friends and family. 29% of consumers also indicate their goal to follow trends and to find product reviews and information while 20% has the aim to comment on what's hot or new or to write reviews of products. When Gallup (as cited in Wall Street Journal, 2014) asked more than 18,000 consumers about the influence of social media on their buying decisions, 62% said they had no influence at all, 30% said they had some influence, while only 5% said they had a great deal of influence. Gallup even found that the metrics of correlating the number of fans and followers with social media success of companies could even mislead since 34% of consumers who reported "liking" or "following" a company still said that social media had no influence on their purchasing behaviour. Gallup research shows that consumers are much more likely to turn to friends, family members and experts when seeking advice about companies, brands, products and services while company sponsored Facebook pages or Twitter feeds have almost no persuasive power on them destroying the myth of digital marketing companies who spend a huge amount on design and management of these sponsored pages every year (Wall Street Journal, 2014). Considering these new findings which highlight the fact that consumers are more impressed when they interact with companies through their own social networks rather not directly on their company sponsored pages, eWOM phenomenon

can be referred as a more genuine, effective and trustable source of information in the eyes of consumers. So, it is obvious that social connections have more capacity to influence people's opinions and attitudes towards companies, products and brands than companies' commercial attempts in online environments.

While past research has mostly focused on the outcomes of eWOM like purchase decisions and sales volume, there is still too much unknown about its drivers, particularly on social networking sites. Despite the huge potential of social networking sites for facilitating eWOM, research on why, how and by which drivers eWOM is generated in the emerging online social environment remains vague. Since past research has supported that relationship building is the primary objective of social networking site users, a question remains about the comprehensive social factors influencing eWOM in this context. Among these comprehensive social factors, social network ties are particularly important for enhancing the understanding of engagement in eWOM process. A few past studies have applied concepts pertaining to social network ties to understand traditional WOM referral behaviour in offline environments but social network site context differ notably from conventional organizations (Brown & Reingen 1987; Gilly, Graham, Wolfinbarger & Yale, 1998).

When the drivers of eWOM on social networking sites are focus of investigation, social capital concept should be introduced to the study because it represents the total resources inherent in online social networks mediating between the individuals and hence foster their intention and activeness to perform voluntary eWOM behavior. So, social capital, being one of the vital concepts that has been frequently discussed in WOM literature in recent years, should be well understood while exploring drivers of eWOM behaviour. Stephen and Lehmann (2008) suggest

that social capital plays an important role in the process of WOM transmission. It is not an individualistic characteristic or trait while being instead the total of resources of relationships, information and ideas that reside in networks (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In this respect, from the consumer behaviour perspective, consumers' reliance on product recommendations and opinions from friends in their personal networks like reference groups, in other words eWOM, can be interpreted as the evidence of effects of social capital. Accordingly, social capital may serve as an influential driver that affects consumers' use of social networking sites as a vehicle for eWOM and shaping their purchasing intentions consequently.

While social network sites provide an outlet for consumers to seek opinions of others, how does social capital of consumers play role in their recommendation taking and purchase decision process? Do the opinions provided by social networks really impact consumers' purchases? These are among the key questions to be answered in this thesis, including the overarching question of whether social capital impacts consumers' purchase intentions consequently. The aim of this doctoral thesis is to explore, define and analyze the relationship between social capital dimensions of consumers and their engagement in eWOM activities and purchase intentions in the context of social network sites. Therefore, the objectives of the research are threefold:

1- Explore the social capital based drivers of eWOM on social network sites.

2- Construct an integrated conceptual research model that defines and investigates the effect of social capital dimensions on consumers' engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions.

3- Refine, test and validate the research model to provide an exhaustive view of the social capital-eWOM-purchase intention relationship.

1.1 Gaps in knowledge and motivation of research

While previous research on eWOM has examined different topics in consumer opinion platforms (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner & Gremler, 2004), emails (Phelps, Lewis, Mobilio, Perry & Raman, 2004) and blogs (Thorson & Rodgers, 2006), empirical research on eWOM phenomenon on social networking sites is still scarce. Since online communication via eWOM occur extensively and regularly in social networking sites, social network site context constitute an interesting and less developed research stream for further investigation.

Although power of eWOM on consumer decision making has been well developed in academic literature, most of current research has focused on outcomes of eWOM like sales and little is known about social capital drivers of it. Brown and Reingen's study (1987) constituted a notable exception which provided some insights about the impact of relational dimensions of social capital on WOM referral behaviour. Although a few more studies provide initial insights into the drivers of consumer's eWOM behaviour in computer mediated environments (Balasubramanian & Mahajan, 2001; Hennig-Thurau et.al., 2004), there is still a big gap for theoretical and empirical knowledge about social capital determinants of eWOM in social network site context which is targeted to be filled under the scope of this study.

There is a need for an integrated model presenting relationships between social capital dimensions, eWOM engagement and purchasing intentions of consumers on social network site context. Constructs like eWOM, Trust and Social Network Ties have been investigated to a limited extent in some prior research but their interrelations and influences on consumers' intentions to purchase in the context of social network sites are still being under-explored. So, the main objective of this study will be to suggest and test an integrated model. The proposed model will

explore the relationships between all social capital dimensions and their effects on consumers' engagement in eWOM and finally purchasing intentions in the social network site context.

Most of the past research in social network site literature, especially Facebook studies, has been relied on student samples' perceptions and often neglected demographic, gender, age, income and education group differences. Although student samples are continuously criticized by their limitations, there is still little attempt to overcome this limitation in the recent studies. This research will be an attempt to test a proposed conceptual model on a non-student sample consisted of participants with diversified range of age, income, social status and gender. Additionally, consumer trait differences like perceived self efficacy, propensity to trust will also be explored to gather additional valuable insights.

1.2 Theoretical and managerial contributions

Main theoretical contribution of this study is the fact that it is the first complete and robust model that defines the relationship between all dimensions of social capital, engagement in eWOM and purchase intention. We do not only provide a holistic model defining the direct effects of social capital on engagement in eWOM but we also analyze effects of different moderating variables like personality trait, product type, gender and social network site usage intensity rate. This study attempts to fill an important gap in marketing literature by proposing an integrated model underpinned by the Social Capital Theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Although there have been several research on social ties, trust, eWOM and online shopping in literature, there is no unified model investigating the interrelationships among these variables. Since social capital concept is one of the underexplored areas in

marketing, this study will try to fulfill this need by contribution to this area. Secondly, this study will contribute a theoretical understanding of consumers' use of social network ties as an information vehicle for eWOM and influences on their purchasing intentions. Most of past research limit their investigations around outcomes of online eWOM like sales and do not start further investigations on social drivers of it. Additionally, previous researchers mostly prefer online shopping sites as the research context while this study is specifically concentrates on social network sites. Third, although trust is very often explored by its effects on online shopping, there is little attention to its effect on the recommendations which finally impacts purchasing intentions of consumers. Fourth, while many researchers are criticized by use of student sample groups, this study tries to overcome this limitation by using a diversified sample group enabling to capture more generalizable outcomes.

In addition to the theoretical contributions, this study also contributes to the managerial understanding of consumer engagement in eWOM on social networks by several ways. First, this study will highlight the extent if consumers are incorporating recommendations and purchase activity into their social networking behaviour. So, this might give important implications for marketers changing the climate of trust and influence upon consumer behaviour. This will give them serious advantage in constructing their social media strategies and draw a road map for reaching their customers through the most trustworthy channels which are their own friends and inspire them to advocate on their behalf. Secondly, online marketers will be able to know how to leverage consumers' interpersonal trust in their friends' recommendations in social network sites. They can design social plug ins to drive deeper engagement with consumers like "recommend to a friend" plug in suggestions. So, digital strategists may benefit from the results of this study by

creating integrated recommendation system strategies which leverages consumers' social graphs to sell more products. As the third contribution, this study will inform marketers about consumers' differences in evaluating recommendations from their friends. This will help marketers in reaching their target consumer groups through use of their most trusted reference groups. The fourth contribution is that this study helps companies to realize the real value of eWOM in social networks. As consumers become savvier using the Internet to gather information on products and services, firms will have to determine the optimal strategy for delivering information through not only commercial but also social pathways. The final managerial contribution will be the findings of this study which may give marketers clues in establishing "friendship-based" approach in their social network site strategies. As social network sites are built on relationships, companies should work to achieve building a "friendship" with their consumers in their own social context or should be "friends of their friends" by correctly examining their "tie relations" and "recommendation chains". Social network ties hold potential as an effective marketing tool for reaching and engaging customers but only if utilized in a correct and natural manner with a "pull" strategy.

When marketers use peer-to-peer product-related conversations for their marketing purposes, their goal is to “get the right people talking about the product or service without it appearing to be company-sponsored”. In terms of connecting the right people, no traditional marketing forms can be more accurate than social network ties. Due to the characteristic and dynamics of social networks, it is relatively easy for marketers to visualize and articulate their customer groups' social network ties, identify the influencers and opinion leaders through the number of friends or followers, the number of postings about the products or brands and

response rates from others. Taken together, the decreased effectiveness of traditional media and the benefits of social media, marketers are eager to use social networks as a new vehicle for stimulating consumers' product-related conversations. With this growing interest of marketers, new professional agencies that provide organized eWOM programs or sponsored conversation services in social media are recently emerging.

1.3 Organization of doctoral thesis

Our research approach is primarily exploratory and descriptive. This is because research defining the relationship between social capital dimensions and eWOM on social network sites is rare and studies that have analyzed this relationship fail to provide a comprehensive view. In building our research strategy and outline, we primarily followed the research design strategies for exploratory and descriptive research outlined by Churchill and Iacobucci (2010). The research consists of three major phases. First exploratory phase involves a literature review building a theoretical background and determining the gaps in extant research, followed by a qualitative study in order to form a general outline of the social capital and eWOM relationship on social network sites. Second phase involves building the initial theoretical conceptual model, measurement instrument and development of hypotheses. At the second phase, a pilot study is also conducted to pretest and refinement of the measurement instrument and the research model. Third descriptive final phase consists of testing and validating the final theoretical model through three step analyses; EFA, CFA and SMA.

The thesis is organized into eight sections. This section presents the rationale and motivation for the study, its importance and contribution, an overview of the

gaps in knowledge and sets the conceptual foundations while setting the research objectives. In Chapter 2, eWOM concept in social networks and Social Capital Theory, being the theoretical foundation of conceptual framework of the study is presented. An overview of past studies conducted in the area are also included. We begin by building a theoretical background as described in Chapter 2, followed by an exploratory qualitative study to form a preliminary conceptual model of the social capital-eWOM-purchase intention relationship. During this exploratory phase, which is described in detail within Chapter 3, we utilize in depth interview technique with 18 interviewees through an open-ended questionnaire with 21 items. Several rounds of content analyses help us to refine and modify some of the elements in our preliminary conceptual model. Chapter 4 discusses the preliminary research model by definition of its constructs, dimensions and relationships suggested between the constructs based on theoretical and empirical highlights. Research questions and hypotheses derived from the construct relationships are also presented in this chapter. This is followed by a pre-test by 16 participants and a pilot study on a sample group of 100 respondents. Chapter 5 provides research design and methodology. This chapter includes discussions on research method, sampling, data collection and procedures and questionnaire development including the operationalization of the variables. Chapter 6 presents data analyses and findings. At first, data screening and Exploratory Factor Analyses are used in refining the hypotheses and constructing the final research model. Then, this chapter outlines the testing and validation of the final model through two step analyses. The primary method of analysis is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Validation of the constructs in our measurement model involves confirmatory factor analysis, where reliability and validity were established through convergent validity, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted

(AVE), discriminant validity. After validation of the measurement model, structural model is developed and proposed hypotheses of the research were tested. Control variables of demographic characteristics like age, gender, social status and income and situational characteristics like product type and social network site usage intensity are integrated to the structural model analysis in order to further test and confirm that effects of independent (exogenous) variables on the dependent (endogenous) variables are not caused by any outer effects. After completing all series of structural model analyses, post-hoc tests were conducted in order to compare our structural model with alternative models and confirm its overall quality fit. Then, mediation relationships in the structural model are analyzed by both chi-square difference tests and bootstrapping method disclosing all direct and indirect effects between constructs. As the last series of analyses, moderation effects of demographic characteristics and consumer traits of consumers, situational characteristics were tested to have a complete understanding of our research model. In Chapter 7, results are discussed along with interpretation of the findings. Followed by conclusion notes and implications in Chapter 8, the theoretical contribution and implications of the dissertation are discussed as well as implications for practitioners. Limitations of the study are also outlined in Chapter 8, along with future research suggestions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 EWOM in social networks

By definition, WOM is a personal communication between a receiver and a source in which the receiver perceives messages as noncommercial (Day, 1971). WOM communication, which can be defined as all informal communications about the ownership, usage or characteristics of particular goods or their sellers is well established in academic literature (Westbrook, 1987). WOM, being basically the act of exchanging marketing information among consumers, is one of the most important interpersonal communication methods among different channels for receiving information (Grewal et. al., 2003; Godes & Mayzin, 2004). Early studies found that the influence of WOM on consumer choice is greater than print ads, personal selling and radio advertising (Katz & Lazarsfeld 1955; Herr et. al., 1991). Individuals often use knowledgeable friends, relatives or acquaintances as information sources (Price & Feick, 1984). For this reason, WOM is seen as more objective and reliable than marketer-generated information because of being fully consumer generated and is able to confirm or strengthen opinions stimulated through various communications (Engel et. al., 1969). Today, the WOM communication strategies, which refer to the use of informal interpersonal communication channels to promote products, brands or services, have been regarded as the most effective alternatives to the traditional forms of strategic communication (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009).

There are different forms of WOM such as traditional offline WOM and Internet facilitated online WOM, named as eWOM (Steffes & Burgee, 2009). Either

online or offline WOM, the focus of the communication is the sharing of information about individuals' experiences about products and services.

Rapid development of information and communication technologies have improved the ways through which they communicate with their friends for obtaining information (Gault & Peterson, 2003). This internet-based interaction, which is named as eWOM communication, forms the basis of consumer-generated media with a broadcast ability that consumers use to educate others about different kinds of issues like ideas, news, experiences, products, brands and services. Even though the motives for traditional WOM are expected to be somehow relevant with eWOM, there are differences between them. While traditional WOM usually involves an immediate conversation, eWOM involves both simultaneous and asynchronous interactions among people separated by time and space (Steffes & Burgee, 2009). EWOM conveys users' experiences both in positive or negative ways and can be in the form of "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau et. al., 2004; p. 39). Examples of these forms are usenet posts (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004), online product reviews (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Liu, 2006), pass-along emailing (Norman & Russell, 2006) and every kinds of chatting and messaging on forums and social network sites.

EWOM can take place via many different online channels, such as e-mails, discussion forums, instant messaging, homepages, blogs, product review sites, online communities, newsgroups, chat rooms and social networking sites (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006; Vilpponen, Winter & Sundqvist, 2006). Today, the immediacy and global interconnectivity of the Internet provides an affordable, unlimited and easy

accessible means for electronic communication that enables every type and big amount of information to be diffused more broadly and quickly through networked individuals (Negroponte & Maes, 1996; Parker-Brown & Gaca, 1999; Townsend, 2001). The emergence of user-generated content in channels like blogs, social network sites and discussion boards leads consumers to enjoy greater control over their media behavior and take more active roles in their product decision-making process (Riegner, 2007). Without geographic and time constraints, consumers can easily and quickly exchange product related information and opinions with their personal contacts (Graham & Havlena, 2007) and have the potential to reach global audiences who share common interests about a product or brand. The anonymous and interactive nature of cyberspace enables consumers to freely give and seek opinions about the product experiences of peer consumers who are known or unknown to them (Schlosser, 2005; Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006).

In recent years, social network sites have emerged as one of the most successful venues for eWOM. These sites provide an effective, powerful channel for consumers to create a visible personal profile, build a personal network and display interpersonal commentaries publicly (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). As they provide consumers a convenient channel to establish relationships, exchange product information and develop e-commerce, these communities become a good source of eWOM for both consumers and marketers (Hagel & Armstrong, 1997). Social network sites not only enhance consumers' online experiences, but also change their online expectations about social and informational outcomes. For example, activities occurring in social networking sites range from socializing with existing friends or making new ones to exchanging information and experiences regarding products or services. All of these online communications have potentially led consumers to

change their approach to searching for product information and making purchase decisions. The extensive social interactions among many consumers through their public personal networks have created an information intensive environment of social networking sites where consumers can easily and quickly disseminate their thoughts and opinions. For this reason, social network sites play a significant role in sharing and distributing product related information and can serve as an influential vehicle for eWOM.

In social network sites, consumers may engage in eWOM behaviour through a variety of ways by being either an opinion taker or giver such as posting their thoughts and opinions about a product or service on their personal profiles, sending or asking product or promotional information through an inbox message within the sites or clicking applications like "Send a Gift" or "Send Flowers". They react, listen and answer their connections' comments, which in turn influence their attitudes and intentions about different areas of interest. This influence may extend to products and services. As an example, a consumer's friend might join a group, recommend it to friends and then they might likely to enquire about that group and also join it.

The way consumers make purchase decisions and interact with members of their social network has fundamentally changed with new applications on social network sites (Hung & Li, 2007; Niederhoffer, Mooth, Wiesenfeld & Gordon, 2007). Consumers can be part of virtual brand communities on social network sites by applications like "Starbucks Fan Page". Some social network sites like Facebook have new features increasing the recommendation power of social networking by online recommendations through the "Like", "Recommend" buttons or checking in applications like the "Places" location-based services. With the new features on social network sites, the way consumers make purchase decisions and interact with

members of their social network has fundamentally changed (Hung & Li, 2007; Niederhoffer et al., 2007). Senecal and Nantel (2004) examined the influence of online product recommendations on consumers' product choice. Findings from their experiments showed that subjects who consulted product recommendations selected the recommended products twice as often as subjects who did not consult any recommendations which again indicates the influential power of eWOM and online product recommendations on consumers' product-related decisions. A more recent study by Chadwick Martin Bailey (as cited in Owyang, 2010) reports that 33% of Facebook users are fans of brands and 60% of these consumers are more likely to purchase or recommend a friend after liking a brand. De Valck, Bruggen and Wierenga (2009) suggested that recommendations on social network sites like Facebook may have a more significant effect on need recognition, actual behaviour and post purchase evaluations than other type of virtual communities.

Social networks are sending an increasing amount of traffic to retailers which is up to 13% in 2010 such that 9.1% of visits to e-shopping sites recently come from social media (Owyang, 2010). Being aware of this, online marketers are developing direct shopping functions in current social network sites or launching separate shopping networks on their own websites.

Another reflection of this eWOM potential on social network sites is newly emerging social context advertising. Social context advertising is performed on basis of the software that developers call "social plug-ins" including "Like" buttons, "Recommendations" plug-ins, "Login", "Comments" and "Activity Feed" buttons. When embedded in advertisers' websites, social plug-ins allow visitors to share their attitudes, thoughts or behaviors about products or activities advertised on the websites with other friends on their own social networks. Fowler and Efrati (2010)

report that the implementation of social plug-ins results in one- to five-fold increase in referral traffic from Facebook and visitors from Facebook stay on advertisers' websites for 20 percent more time than the visitors from search engines.

In sum, eWOM communication on social network sites potentially generates benefits for social marketers, non-profit organizers and cause advocates as well as commercial marketers. Under the light of these advantages, there is high possibility to find empirical evidence of eWOM effects on message recipients' attitude or behavior changes on social network sites. So, this study focuses on the social network context since they are ideal platforms for the use and spread of eWOM. In this study, eWOM is defined specifically in the social network context as "the act of exchanging marketing information among consumers in social network sites."

2.2 Drivers and outcomes of eWOM

Traditional view of WOM literature asserts that three basic elements are incorporated in any WOM episode as participants, interaction and outcome. WOM interaction is bidirectional and interactive being performed by the participants who occupy roles of WOM seeker and WOM source (Gilly & Wolfinger, 1998). WOM seeker refers to individual who seeks out information from a friend, colleague, neighbour when contemplating a purchase, WOM source is the one who provides information to the receiver. WOM participants, who are WOM seeker and WOM source together, comprise the WOM interaction and results in WOM outcome.

In another research stream aligning with social influence literature (Iyengar, Van den Bulte, & Valente, 2010), the WOM process reveals two sources of social influence: individual influence and structural influence. Individual factors refer to variables such as personal expertise, skill, personality and psychological traits. Much

of the opinion leadership literature is underscoring the contribution of such individual traits on the information givers' motivation and influence on others' decision making. Opinion leadership and opinion seeking have been conceptually understood as two important components of individual influences and WOM behavior (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008). Conceptually, opinion leaders are the information generators or providers in WOM communications. Individuals with high levels of opinion leadership may exert great impact on others' attitudes and behaviors (Rogers, 1983; Feick & Price, 1987).

Opinion seeking plays a significant role in individual influence component of WOM process. In contrast, opinion seekers are those who desire to obtain information or opinions from others that help them evaluate products and services for their purchases (Feick & Price, 1987; Flynn, Goldsmith & Eastman, 1996). Opinion seeking is the behavioral counterpart to opinion leadership and occurs when an individual seeks advice and information from a friend, family member or colleague who is often considered as an opinion leader on the subject of interest (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008; Shoham & Ruvio, 2008). Consumers with high levels of opinion seeking behavior, known as opinion seekers, definitely tend to search for information and advice from others when making a purchase decision (Flynn et. al., 1996). Compared to opinion leaders, opinion seekers possess relatively lower product involvement and product class knowledge in a given product category and therefore actively look for information and advice from opinion leaders when they perceive the information to be useful (Goldsmith & Clark, 2008). Past research found a significant negative correlation between level of interpersonal search and product experience (Kiel & Layton, 1981; Beatty & Smith, 1987). In other words, individuals

with little knowledge and experience are likely to obtain information from their friends.

Past research also found that opinion seekers seek opinions and advice mostly through online channels because it is easy to attain pre-purchase information which can also reduce their perceived risk and secure lower prices (Goldsmith & Horowitz, 2006). By getting valuable information from others' knowledge of the products, opinion seekers facilitates eWOM behavior in social network sites (Chu & Kim, 2011). The basis for acceptance of a WOM message on the Internet is the opinion seeker's belief that it facilitates his or her decision process. By hearing about opinion leaders, the opinion seeker can avoid the loss of time, money and the risk of failure. The power of the source of information resides in the perceived expertise and credibility in the eyes of the opinion seeker (Gilly et. al., 1998).

In social network sites, if opinion seekers regard eWOM recommendations of friends or classmates as credible and reliable, they rely on these social network sites more as an important information source for their purchase decisions. Communities and social networks are knowledge sharing entities where people feel membership and commitment (Huysman & Wulf, 2005). People willingly exchange tacit knowledge about their personal experiences of products and brands in social networks (Hung & Li, 2007). In the context of social network sites, a socially rich environment provides opinion leaders greater opportunities to give product related thoughts and opinions to other consumers. Opinion leaders may also use social networking sites as a tool for self-expression through associations with desired products and services like highly recommending a product.

Other source of influence in social influence literature is the structural influence on WOM which has been relatively less studied. In organizational theory,

Salancik and Pfeffer's (1978) Social Information Processing Model (SIP) explains how an individual's perception, attitude and behaviors are influenced not just by objective attributes of the task and his personal traits but also by the opinions, beliefs and behaviors of salient others (cited in Rice & Aydin, 1991). Based on Festinger's Social Comparison Theory (1954), Social Information Processing Model (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978) proposes that individuals are adaptive agents to their social contexts in which social information is produced. The network structural effect on individual's susceptibility to social pressure to conform has been theorized as the Social Contagion Process (Burt, 1987; Burt & Janicik, 1995). Social influence psychologists distinguish the contagion process from social facilitation or compliance process, defining contagion as an event in which a recipient's behavior has changed to become more like that of the actor or imitator (Burt, 1987). Based on the Social Information Processing Model and Social Contagion Theories, a typology of structural mechanisms underlying WOM communication in networks can be assumed.

The first mechanism is the direct personal recommendation effect. This mechanism is the most straightforward influence of WOM communication. The second mechanism is the contagion effect. Individuals are exposed to social information not only by receiving direct recommendations, but also by roaming interpersonal networks. Interpersonal networks are the major venue for WOM communication in terms of facilitating friends' behavioral or attitudinal updates. In other words, social networks enable users to observe and learn about others' thoughts and activities through usual social contacts which can produce more or fewer contagion effects. So, second mechanism is differentiated from the first one being

unintentional and based on learning or imitation rather than direct interaction compliance with recommendations.

Opinion seeking part of eWOM interaction is taken as the focus of individual influence perspective in this study while opinion giving part is excluded from the scope. Structural influence perspective includes both direct and indirect recommendation mechanisms under the scope of the study. Consumers might actively seek and take advice from their social network ties or be exposed to recommendations indirectly by seeing posts or conversations of others on their walls in social network sites. So, both structural influence mechanisms might occur for the opinion seeking participant in the context of this study which provides a rich environment for proliferation of eWOM.

Another area of research related with WOM participants has been concerned about the relationships between participants of WOM interactions. An important feature of WOM interactions is the existence of personal relationships between the WOM participants as friends, neighbors, family members or associates. Two concepts as homophily and tie strength should be considered about these interactions between WOM participants.

The theory of homophily suggests that most human communication occur between a source and a seeker who are alike, that is, who are homophilous (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1954). Homophily facilitates the flow of product information because of perceived ease of communication (Price & Feick, 1984). Homophilous individuals are more likely to have similar product needs and wants than heterophilous individuals, resulting in the sharing of the most personally relevant product information (Feldman & Spencer, 1965). The homophily between the source and the receiver of WOM communication plays an important role in the degree to

which a WOM information source influences the receiver's decision (Feldman & Spencer, 1965; Brown & Reingen, 1987).

Another relationship between the participants of WOM interactions have been studied under the concept of tie strength (Granovetter, 1973, 1974, 1983; Duhan, Johnson, Wilcox & Harrell, 1997). Strong tie relationships are distinguished from weak tie relationships by the amount of time which two individuals spend together, the emotional attachment, the level of intimacy and the degree of reciprocity. Hence, the tie strength of a relationship is defined as strong if the source is someone who knows the decision maker personally. Tie strength is defined as weak if the source is merely an acquaintance or one who does not know the decision maker at all. Research area about tie strength has demonstrated that the greater tie strength of the tie between the sender and the receiver, the greater the influence of the sender's WOM on receiver's purchase decision (Bansal & Voyer, 2000). Duhan et. al. (1997) developed a model focusing on factors that influence the likelihood of consumers' using strong tie; friends and family and weak tie; acquaintances or strangers sources of recommendations. Under the light of these, tie strength and homophily factors should be considered in the investigation of eWOM drivers on social network sites in this study.

Although advices of some social network ties are neglected, some of them are taken into consideration more seriously. The underlying reason for this is mainly depends on the concept of trust which is another important construct to be considered while investigating the drivers of eWOM activities in this research. Trust has been long recognized as an important construct in communication and social capital literature and also studied in e-commerce area (Hoffman, Novak & Peralta, 1999). Moorman, Deshpande and Zaltman (1993, p.82) define trust as "a willingness to rely

on exchange partner in whom one has confidence." This confidence comes from the partner's expertise, reliability and trustworthiness (Fukuyama, 1995; Chow & Chan 2008). Trust, being an important factor of social relationships, has been found to facilitate the exchange and use of information due to the increasing perceived credibility of the partner as an information source in a social relationship (Robert, Dennis & Ahuja, 2008). As a result, it is reasonable to believe that trust in a personal information source, which is named as interpersonal trust, can affect the nature and pattern of eWOM behavior in social network sites. Interpersonal trust is basically the form of trust in a personal source viewed as an enduring attitude, belief or expectancy possessed by an individual in interpersonal relations that the promise of another individual can be relied upon (Rotter, 1967; Carroll, Barnes, Scornavacca & Fletcher, 2007). Along the same line of thinking, connections through social network sites are perceived as more credible and trustworthy than anonymous sources like product reviews, forums or marketers' advertising messages. Unlike communicating with anonymous fellow consumers through other eWOM platforms such as product forums, social network ties are the real contacts who are already in consumers' personal networks and perceived more trustworthy than unknown strangers. If consumers trust the product recommendations of their social network ties, their intentions to purchase the recommended products are stimulated. So, interpersonal trust should also be considered while examining the drivers of eWOM on social network sites in this research.

In addition to drivers of eWOM engagement, outcome of eWOM is also considered under the scope of this research. WOM outcome is defined as any movement in consumers' evaluations, purchase intentions as a result of exposure to evaluations, information or recommendations of referents. This movement may

appear in different forms in a variety of consumption behaviour including awareness, expectations, perceptions, attitudes, behavioural intentions and actual behaviours.

2.3 Social capital theory

2.3.1 Definition of social capital

In general terms, social capital broadly refers to the resources accumulated through the relationships among people (Coleman, 1988). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p.14) explain social capital concept as ‘‘the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition’’. Some other academic scholars have defined social capital as the set of all resources embedded within social networks accessed and used by the network actors (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1993; Woolcock & Nayaran, 2000; Lin, 2001; Robert et. al., 2008).

Social capital allows a person to draw on resources from other members of the network to which he belongs. Access to individuals' resources outside one’s close circle provides access to non-redundant information, resulting in benefits such as new employment connections (Granovetter, 1973), different forms of useful information, establishing personal relationships or the opportunity to organize new groups (Paxton, 1999). Social capital is shown to promote positive outcomes such as career success, compensation, job searching, team effectiveness, resource exchange, and product innovation. In summary, social capital has always attracted attention in literature from various social science disciplines like sociology, political science, economics, organizational research, marketing and communication.

In marketing and communication areas, social capital is especially applicable to discussing the meanings of social relationships developed and sustained via social network sites (Choi, Yoojung, Yongjun & Dongyoung, 2008). As Coleman suggested (1990), social capital is intangible and comprised of obligations, information, ideas, shared norms and expectations that can affect individual's behaviors. A subsequent theoretical elaboration of social capital by Coleman (1988) goes into more depth on the actual mechanism of its formation within communities and the role of trust component in it. Coleman (1988) agrees with Bourdieu (1986) when the latter argues that people engage in social capital in order to entrap others in obligations. However, while Bourdieu did not consider the possibility that an obligation could go unrecognized, Coleman (1988) considers it. Because of this unrecognition, trust concept enters into social capital area as a vital component. By this respect, trust refers to the belief that an existing obligation can be called in at a later date. Trust and network concepts are the main elements which play an important role in social capital. Fukuyama's definition in 1999 represents the popular view of social capital that characterizes it as the level of trust within the group which promotes cooperation.

Some drivers of eWOM interactions, such as eWOM participants' relationships like tie strength, homophily and trust are explored in the previous section. However, there is another vital concept, social capital, which have been frequently discussed in eWOM literature (Stephen & Lehmann, 2008). Social capital concept is the most compherensive driver which serves as the backbone of this research covering all of the resources inherent in social networks. It also provides the necessary conditions that facilitate knowledge sharing activity in social network sites (Zaheer, Gulati & Nohria, 2000; Inkpen & Tsang, 2005; Kankanhalli, Tan & Wei,

2005). Knowledge benefits are mostly derived from high levels of social capital in social network context (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). So, theoretical background of social capital concept will constitute the basis of the proposed conceptual model of this research.

2.3.2 Dimensions of social capital

In the field of studying social relations and networks, theories like Social Cognitive Theory, Social Learning Theory, Social Exchange Theory and Social Capital Theory are often applied in past studies. Social Capital Theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) underpins the theoretical framework of this study by incorporating the interpersonal aspect into knowledge exchange phenomena that has been ignored in Social Exchange and Social Cognitive theories and past studies in some different disciplines. Social Capital Theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1997; 1998) is chosen as the theoretical basis for this study because it explains the logic of relations in the best way by showing that social relations create value and impact on consumers' behavioural intention to purhase.

The most important contribution of Social Capital Theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) and also the reason why it was chosen as the basis of this study is that it gives an understandable explanation of how networks can be formed between individuals and social units and how knowledge exchange occurs between them. Social Capital Theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) claims that what an individual gets from the network, which is the source of social capital, can encourage him to exchange his knowledge and as a result can create new intellectual capital, which is any type of eWOM influencing his perceptions, decisions and intentions (Hung & Li, 2007). The theory mentions that the individual's knowledge contribution has impact

on others' knowledge development in online networks (Wasko & Faraj, 2005). This captures the essence of the Social Capital Theory, that is, social networks create value for consumers by affecting their knowledge and perceptions (Wiertz & Ruyter, 2007).

Social Capital Theory (Burt & Janicik, 1995; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) first appeared in community studies, emphasizing the centrality of personal relationships developed over time that provide the basis for trust, cooperation, and collective action in networks. The notion of social capital view interpersonal relationships in networks as a valuable resource like traditional physical and human capital. In knowledge exchange situations, social capital symbolizes not only the knowledge embedded in people, but also the relational connections which individuals use to gain access to those resources.

In an attempt to further clarify this concept, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) suggested three dimensions of social capital: namely, structural capital, cognitive capital and relational capital. They draw on Granovetter's (1992) discussion to clarify the distinction between structural and relational embeddedness.

2.3.2.1 Structural capital

The structural dimension of social capital represents the configuration of the physical ties that connect the members in the network. Those physical ties among members also facilitates access to the resources. Structural capital concerns the overall pattern of connections between actors and interpersonal configurations of linkage among them. Generally, it is the properties of the whole system and perceives the network of relationships as a whole. Because of this, it is defined in terms of network connectivity and network closeness which means who you reach and how you reach

(Burt & Celotto, 1992). The most important facets of this dimension are the presence or absence of network ties between actors, network configurations, the patterns of linkages in terms of density, hierarchy and connectivity (Krackhard, 1989; Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

2.3.2.2 Relational capital

The relational dimension of social capital refers to the emotional and affective status within the social network. Relational elements facilitate the exchange of resources between actors. Relational capital mainly represents the personal relationships which people develop by time in the network structure through interactions on the basis of shared language and values (Granovetter, 1992). It focuses on the relationship values like friendship and respect which might influence people's behaviour. Among the key facets of this dimension are thus trust (Putnam, 1993), norms and sanctions (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1995), obligations and expectations (Granovetter, 1985; Coleman, 1990; Burt & Celotto, 1992) and group identity or identification (Merton, 1968).

2.3.2.3 Cognitive capital

The cognitive dimension of social capital refers to shared representations which allow actors to access resources effectively (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Cognitive capital refers to resources involving common representations and interpretations, shared meaning and value systems instilled among the participants of the network structure (Cicoural, 1973). It can be thought of as a protocol that is implicitly premised to maintain and manage the relational network in terms of shared language, codes, narratives, vision and value perception (Cicoural, 1973; Arrow, 1974).

2.3.2.4 Relationships between dimensions of social capital

Tsai and Ghoshal (1998) further examined the relationships among these three dimensions of social capital, placing relational capital at the central position related to the other two dimensions of structural and cognitive capital. The structural dimension, manifesting social interaction ties, may stimulate trust and trustworthiness, which represent the relational dimension. Frequent and close social interactions permit actors to know and understand each other better and to share important information. The structural dimension of social capital thus leads to the development of relational capital, which is manifested by trust, norms of reciprocity, a sense of obligation, identification and expectation. The cognitive dimension may also lead to the relational dimension of social capital. Common values and shared language being the major manifestations of cognitive capital, encourage the development of a trusting relationship. Well established interaction protocol, cognitive capital, eliminates unnecessary misunderstandings which impede the development of reliable and trusting relationship and create a common point of view thus stimulating the development of relational capital.

The central theme of Nahapiet and Ghoshal's (1998) argument is that social capital influences knowledge exchange, in their term, "intellectual capital". Knowledge is created through two generic processes: namely, exchange and combination (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Konno, 1998; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). Social capital facilitates the development of this intellectual capital by affecting the conditions necessary for knowledge exchange and combination.

Their three dimensional classification has been adopted by several studies in sociology, political science, economics and organizational research to understand the

impact of social capital on resource exchange and combination, knowledge contribution, quantity and quality of knowledge sharing, exploitative and exploratory learning, instant messenger usage, action continuance intention and team based clan controls. However, there is still a lack of organized and empirically supported knowledge exploring impacts of social capital on consumer behaviour in social media marketing area which this study tries to fill in.

Figure 1 gives the figural representation of relationships between social capital dimensions suggested in Social Capital Theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998):

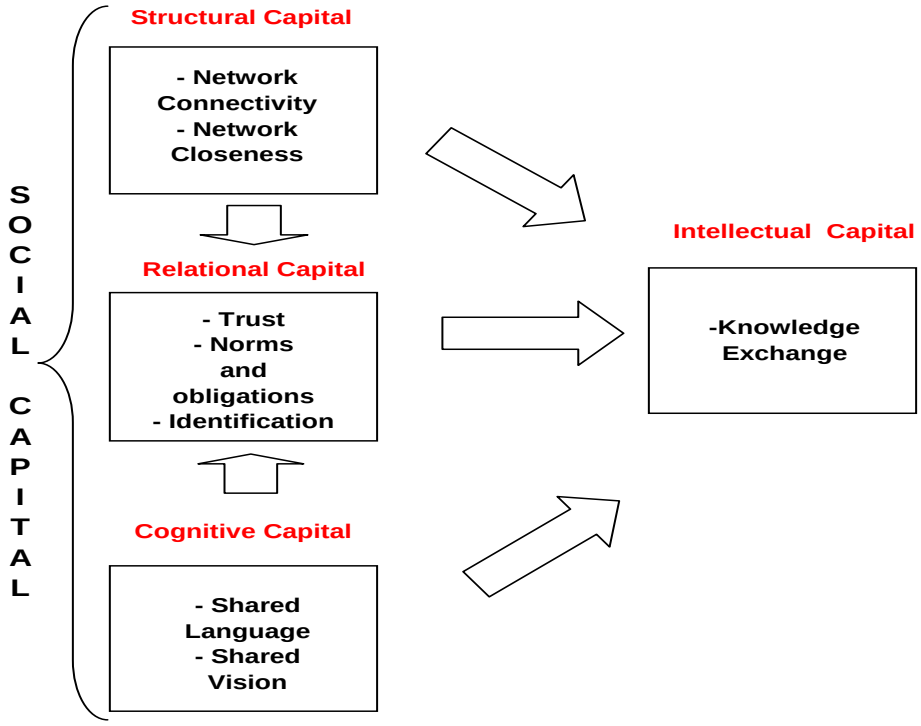

Figure 1. Relationship between social capital and knowledge exchange

Source: Social capital theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998)

2.4 Past Studies about WOM and Social Capital

Traditionally, researchers have focused on the role of WOM recommendations in shaping consumers' opinions (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Studies have shown that WOM is more effective than advertising in converting unfavorable or neutral predispositions into positive attitudes, increasing purchase intentions and shaping brand evaluations (Day, 1971; Sheth, 1971; Herr et. al., 1991). WOM communication is viewed as the most effective information for purchase decisions especially when consumers have little expertise or knowledge in a product category (Gilly et. al., 1998), perceive a high risk in product choice (Lutz & Reilly, 1973; Bansal & Voyer 2000) or when consumers are highly involved in the decision-making process (Beatty & Smith, 1987) and generally susceptible to interpersonal influence (Bearden, Netemeyer & Teel, 1989). The introduction of internet has led to an increasing focus on eWOM and its roles (Hu, Liu, & Zhang, 2008). By passing along useful product information or sharing negative experiences with a product or company, social network site users can help their contacts in their purchase decision making. On the other hand, by searching out advice and opinions from others, eWOM generated from social network sites can exert impacts on users' product choices. Purchase intention, which is one of the most observed results of eWOM process in literature, is also be investigated in this research as an expected outcome of engagement in eWOM.

Past research concerning social relationship factors as antecedents of WOM influence (Wiedmann, Hennigs & Langner, 2007) has suggested that variables such as social capital (Stephen & Lehmann, 2008), tie strength (Brown & Reingen, 1987), demographic similarity and perceptual affinity (Brown & Reingen, 1987; Gilly et. al., 1998), trust (Nisbet, 2006) and interpersonal influence (Bearden et. al, 1989) are

important drivers that lead to the effectiveness of WOM communication. It is argued that these social relationship variables may be applied to influence eWOM communication in social networking sites.

In the consumer behavior and marketing literature, tie strength has been studied extensively in the research of WOM behavior (Brown & Reingen 1987; Frenzen & Nakamoto 1993; Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Goldenberg, Libai & Muller 2001; De Bruyn & Lilien 2008; Ryu & Han, 2009). These studies have found that both strong and weak ties are the key drivers of information dissemination and have established evidence on the impact of tie strength on WOM propagation (Brown & Reingen, 1987; Goldenberg, Libai & Muller, 2001). Although advertising and publicity are effective in the early stage of innovations of a new product, strong and weak ties are the main forces propelling product adoption in the growth cycle (Goldenberg et. al., 2001).

Existing research has examined tie activation in social networks (Weimann, 1983; Reingen and Kernan, 1986; Brown & Reingen, 1987; De Bruyn and Lilien, 2008). Some research does suggest that strong tie sources may be perceived as more credible than weak tie sources (Rogers, 1983). Brown and Reingen (1987) investigated the relationships between social ties and WOM referral behavior. Results from their study suggest that at the macro level, weak ties demonstrated a crucial bridging function, allowing information to disseminate and spread among distinct groups. At the micro level, however, strong ties were more likely to be activated for the flow of referral behavior (Brown & Reingen, 1987). Strong ties were not only perceived as more influential, but they were also far more numerous as sources of information than weak ties. This is in contrast to several previous studies (Granovetter, 1973) that found weak ties to dominate the flow of information. In his

empirical study of job seekers, Granovetter (1974) found that professional, technical, and managerial workers were more likely to hear about new jobs through weak ties (27.8%) than through strong ties (16.7%). Weimann (1983) found that weak and strong conversational ties play different roles in the flow of communication. While the spread of information within the group is more likely to occur through strong ties, weak ties are mostly utilized as the bridges between individuals of different groups (Weimann, 1983). Weimann (1983) further contends that the influence of information mainly arises from strong ties within the group, whereas the bridging function of weak ties is limited to the "flow" of information. In sum, strong ties are more likely to be used and perceived as more influential than weak ties, regardless of the essential role of weak ties in promoting the flow of information and bridging gaps in the broader social system (Friedkin, 1980; Weimann, 1983; Brown & Reingen, 1987). Duhan et. al.'s (1997) model focuses on the factors that influence the likelihood of consumers using strong-tie sources (friends and family) and weak-tie sources (acquaintances or strangers) of recommendations. They found that the likelihood of choosing strong-tie source is influenced by task difficulty and prior knowledge, and the likelihood of choosing weak-tie sources is influenced by the importance of instrumental cues and subjective prior knowledge. Thus, consumers with higher levels of subjective knowledge are perhaps more likely to feel that they can evaluate instrumental information themselves, and thus they are inclined to use the "instrumental to weak-tie" route. In contrast, consumers who perceive great difficulty in the decision task are likely to look to strong-tie sources for recommendations (Duhan et. al., 1997). Hung and Li (2007) conducted a study on a web site, www.onlylady.com, to find out the source of social capital in eWOM, the eWOM generated consumer learning and its effects on knowledge development.

They found that consumers' learning can be affected by the structure and cognitive focus of eWOM and social relations among participants can reinforce the influence power of eWOM.

Whereas the predictions derived from tie strength were usually confirmed, those stemming from homophily received less support (Brown & Reigen, 1987). It is a well-accepted nature of human interaction that people like to interact with those who are similar to themselves, often termed the “like-me” or homophily principle (Laumann, 1966). In the investigation of the impact of homophily on offline WOM communication, Brown and Reingen (1987) find that there is no significant difference in the homophilous nature of weak versus strong ties. Brown and Reingen (1987) do find that the more homophilic a tie is, the more likely it is to be utilized as a source of information, however this information is not perceived as more influential over the decision making than heterophilic ties. Stated alternatively, homophilic sources are more likely to be used as information sources, but the information gathered from these sources is not seen as more credible.

Steffes and Burgee (2009) conducted a research exploring reliance of students on eWOM in choosing their professors through a site called Rate My Professor. They found evidence that students use Rate My Professor as an important source of information for decision making but strength of strong ties does not hold in their decisions. However, they found support that students utilized information from homophilic sources more frequently than heterophilic sources. Another study of De Bruyn and Lilien (2008) investigated how the WOM communication process influences consumers’ purchase behaviors in an online environment. They developed a model to identify the different roles of WOM plays at each stage of the decision making process. De Bruyn and Lilien (2008) found that characteristics of the social

tie, tie strength, and perceptual affinity had positive influences on recipients' WOM behaviors, awareness and interest, whereas demographic similarity had a negative influence on such behavior at each stage of the decision making process.

In examining the proposed causal relationships among three dimensions of social capital, many past studies used cross sectional data. The past studies (see Appendix A, Table 1) generally found that each dimension of social capital has an effect on the quantity of knowledge sharing, quality of knowledge sharing, helpfulness of knowledge contributions, volume of knowledge contributions, explorative learning, exploitative learning and instant message usage.

CHAPTER 3

QUALITATIVE STUDY

3.1 In depth interviews

An exploratory qualitative approach which is expected to provide valuable insights about consumers' perceptions and experiences on social network sites is taken before the quantitative phase. Qualitative research allows researchers to formulate understandings of the subjects under study and to give representations of these perceptions which contribute to the body of knowledge (Wright, 2008). As it is mentioned by Churchill and Iacobucci (2010), an in depth interview carries the advantages of more diversified questions from general to more specific. During in depth interviews, respondents answer some questions in greater depth and others in a more perfunctory manner which enables the real focus of interest about the concept determined by the participants (Yin, 2010). As Churchill and Iacobucci (2010) stressed, in depth interview enables having deeper understanding in specific topics. Also, data gathered by in depth interview from the respondents is not influenced by others and therefore is not biased by group effect. According to Yin (2010)'s recommendations, during an in depth interview, a researcher tries to understand the participant's world in their own words and phrases by directing open-ended questions rather than closed-end ones. Under the expectation of these advantages, two steps of in depth interviews were conducted within the scope of this study which increased the quality of the operationalization of the constructs at the stage of the development of measurement instrument, enabled the researcher to compare and enhance literature survey findings and give support or disprove for the assumptions related with the development of hypotheses.

In depth interviews in the first phase was in the form of taking expert opinions which conducted with managing partners and sector professionals from three private social media companies in Istanbul. Two of the interviewees were managing partners and owners of digital marketing strategy companies while one of them was the general manager of an online esthetic medical company. The first two managing partners working in digital marketing companies were 41 and 48 years old being highly experienced in social media marketing. The third interviewee who was the general manager of an online cosmetic surgery company was 35 years old and was also an experienced digital marketing professional. Three in depth interviews lasted between 40-120 minutes. The objective of the first phase of expert opinion interviews was mainly to confirm and support the significance of the study and its possible meaningful future implications for marketing practitioners in future.

The in depth interviews in the second phase were conducted with a sample group of 18 people. Participants were selected on basis of purposive sampling being experienced Internet and social network site users, using at least more than one social network site for three years or more and have at least 150 or more connections in one of these social network sites. Interview questions were designed to emerge topics and allow respondents to construct answers in collaboration with the interviewer. The researcher implemented guided questions and conversations in order to listen for meanings and interpretations more than extracting direct information (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Interview questions (see Appendix B and C) were structured and grounded in literature discussed previously (Wright & Hinson, 2009). Questions were specific, but slightly altered according to participants' characteristics as the result of actively listening, probing for further clarification and varying the direction as appropriate (Fontana & Frey, 2005). This approach provides rigor and allows for

sound practice in conducting interviews while still promoting researcher flexibility to remain alert for relevant emerging meanings within stories.

The sample included 14 female, 4 male participants of which 5 of them were below the age of 35 and 13 is 35 or older. The general profile of interviewees was a group of participants who were well educated, being all university graduates of which some having master's degrees and in the middle or upper middle class income segment of which 6 of them were bankers or ex bankers. Most of them were single except four. The interviews were tape recorded and moderated by the interviewer who stayed neutral while asking the open ended questions. 7 of interviews were realized face to face and the remaning were conducted on telephone. They lasted between 22-58 minutes, organized in a less structured approach and continued in a less or more involved moderator style depending on the personality of interviewees and the flow of the discussion. They started with the same entrance question : “Are you a user of a social network site? Which social network sites are you a member of?” and then continued with a question of “Which of these social network sites are you using most intensively?”

After the in depth interviews, the researcher transcribed the phrases of the participants manually from the tape recordings and her notes. Statements made by the participants in the interviews were documented for each of the interview questions. Then the data was analyzed as suggested by Griggs (1987) by data reduction, data display, drawing and verifying conclusion steps. The first step was to list down the meaningful sentences and metaphors by selecting the relevant things and excluding others. After summarizing the discussions of each interviewee, a summary table was made to present all the findings. Lastly, the patterns and regularities were identified, the data was rechecked and replicate findings, causal

flows were determined. Coding techniques were employed to generate support for research questions, hypotheses and measurement items.

3.2 Qualitative study findings

Both phases of in depth interviews revealed some interesting findings that contained important and novel information regarding consumers' perceptions of recommendations on social network sites. In the first phase, all of the senior managers found the aim and scope of the research highly significant and indicated that the recommendation effect occuring in the social network sites was a considerable area to explore in terms of building their digital media strategies. However, the insights gathered from the second phase were more fruitful and useful in the development of research hypotheses and measurement instrument.

In the second phase, when social network site usage intensity and patterns were analyzed, Facebook was found as the most intensively used platform in terms of usage density, diversity, number of connections, usage frequency and membership duration. All of the respondents were Facebook users since 2007 and 13 of the respondents spent minumum one hour on Facebook every day. All of the respondents, except one who had 150, had minumum 200 and higher connections on Facebook. However, this finding might be biased due to the elder age of the sample group. Even it was found as slow and rather outmoded according to the younger participants, it was observed that people still continue to use more or less Facebook at every age. As a general impression indicated by the respondents is that Facebook is mostly used by married, older people and also by people who spend more time at home or have more leisure time in their offices. Young people still continue using Facebook to some limited extent but their total spending time has dramatically

decreased from one hour a day to only five minutes during the past 2-3 years. On a Facebook snapshot scene, only one piece of new or video can take place while social network sites like Twitter enables to provide more than ten news at one page in a second. This slower mode gratifies older people while pinching younger ones. So, younger ones have higher usage intensity at other platforms like Instagram and Twitter. Instagram which is used most intensively by eight of the participants is followed by Twitter by seven active users which compete for the second most intensively used social network site in terms of connection number, usage frequency and spent time. Twitter use fluctuates due to the economic and political agenda of the country. Foursquare sometimes appears among the three most intensively used social network sites but seems to lose its popularity because of the competition between Facebook Places application and Instagram photos of places. Instagram and Facebook seems to deprive the function of Foursquare. Linked in has a low usage intensity in terms of frequency, duration and time spent despite its high level connectivity.

3.2.1 Social network site usage pattern and motivations

When the social network site usage motivations were analyzed, it was observed that Facebook was having the highest diversity of activities and goals in peoples' lives. This satisfied some of them, especially people over age of 35, because they could learn different kinds of things by entering into only one platform. They could see their friends' check ins, social lives, comments and at the same time daily news, political and social agenda. Social curiosity, networking, follow up daily political, economic and social news, follow up friends' favourite restorans, places, dressing styles, parties and accessories were some of the motivations of Facebook users.

Instagram had the second diversity of interests like follow up gossips, celebrities, friends, enjoyment, fashion, cosmetics, shopping sites and opportunities, hobby sites like sports, wine, food and analyzing technically good photos of places, food, clubs, pets, fashion, cosmetics as hobbies. Foursquare, mainly concentrated on places, is becoming slowly useless since Facebook is becoming a consolidated platform including Places Check In Application inside it. People also can show themselves while visiting interesting places on Instagram. Twitter and Linked in increase their popularity in some periods due to political agenda of the country or people's career cycles. While twitter is mostly used for basically following the country's daily agenda, economic, political agencies and celebrities, Linked in mostly used in follow up people's new jobs, catching for new job opportunities, finding right people for consultancy and outsourcing of projects.

3.2.2 Recommendation Effect on Social Network Sites

Moderator led the participants to think about the uses of social network sites for giving or finding information and recommendation about products, services, brands, and shops. Many participiants claimed that they do not use social network sites as their first choise to search for information but rather use the google search engine first. Social network sites rank second or third in their choises for information. Some participants mentioned that they also use ekşi sözlük and şikayetvar.com.for getting different perspectives.

Recommendation effect was visible especially on Facebook for different type of products and services. This effect was more slightly observed on other sites, Foursquare, Instagram and Twitter. There was no highly recommended product or service group mentioned except Foursquare which was concentrated on places,

naturally. It was mentioned by the respondents that Facebook check in places application and Instagram was slowly replacing Foursquare's function and Foursquare's popularity has started to decrease losing its meaning and function to Facebook and Instagram. Among the participants' conversations, there was no difference observed between positive and negative WOM communications contrary to literature findings in which the effect of negative WOM was mostly found more influential.

According to participants' answers, it was observed that friends' recommendation effect mostly come in the form of being exposed rather than direct opinion taking by seeing their liking, recommending, following or joining fan group activities. During the interviews, when the participants were forced to remember incidents that they were inspired by a friends' recommendation on social network sites, it was understood that when they bought or considered to buy a product on basis of friends' recommendations, they did this without realizing that they were really considering them; which was rather in the form of a kind of hidden and unconscious effect.

3.2.3 Trust in recommendations on social network sites

In general, it was observed that recommendations from friends were trusted above all other sources including traditional media. The participants perceive social network context more benevolent and honest when compared to traditional media advertisements and it came out strongly that the participants trust their close friends more than anonymous reviews. There are also some hidden clues for a possible hierarchy of trust on SNS connections. At the top, they trust more in their real and close friends, particularly experts in the relevant areas than anonymous reviews. The

second level is their acquaintances being experts in topics and similar to their own personal characteristics. Another important finding was that they have more trust in likes and reviews when there are a lot of them, even when they come from weak ties. 14 respondents mentioned that the majority is important even it comes from strangers while 4 participants were indifferent about the issue. In general, similarity were stressed more by women while majority was perceived as a more important issue by men.

Since similarity and strength of the tie were mentioned to effect the consideration of recommendations by some of the participants, the strength of weak tie motto of Granovetter (1974) was not supported according to the findings of in depth interviews. Majority of recommenders was also stressed to be an influential issue as to be considered in our research framework in addition to other social dimensions derived from literature knowledge.

When moderator asked the participants the trust levels they feel, nine participants chose Facebook highest, three participants Linked in, one Twitter, one Instagram and one Foursquare while four were indifferent. The trust level was at highest in Facebook in most of respondents. Another area which caught the attention of moderator was the importance of common social network culture, vision and language. All of participants except one perceived social network vision important, while social network language was stressed by only 5 of them.

3.2.4 Effects of consumer traits on recommendations on social network sites

During in depth interviews, some respondents revealed some insights about their personalities in relation to self efficacy and propensity to trust traits. Past research suggests that consumers with low level of self efficacy and high propensity to trust

are more susceptible to persuasion since they lack confidence in their judgements and thus tend to rely on opinions of others more (DeLozier, 1976). Some of the participants' scripts:

> ...when I think to buy electronic or technological product, I always ask to my close friend A. from Facebook Messenger because he should certainly know which brand will satisfy my need best even better than myself. I bought my mobile phone, TV and laptop based on his advices. (Interview #14, In depth interview transcripts, April, 2014)

> ...i mostly do not trust in recommendations made in Facebook because I know that many of my friends do not investigate issues compherensively and give advices without based on a priori knowledge. Instead, I search for the products from Google and Şikayetvar.com and analyze the issues by myself which produce better solutions, I suppose. (Interview #3, In depth interview transcripts, March, 2014)

3.2.5 Discussion of exploratory findings

According to in depth interview findings, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are predicted to have higher influence effects and seem to be best choises to be the most appropriate research contexts for the empirical part of the research. Social network site preferences concentrate more on Facebook for middle aged ones while younger participants use Instagram and Twitter more. The total amount of time spent on social network sites increases to two or three hours a day for the younger group. Number of connections of the younger participants are mostly over 350 which presents again a higher level than the older ones. Facebook is especially expected to show higher recommendation effects for middle aged respondents while Instagram and Twitter are more influential on younger ones. Instagram is also observed as having established a more intimate and genuine emotional connection with the younger group. In general, younger ones seem to be more integrated into social network site culture, language, vision and jargons which in turn effects their consideration level of recommendations consequently.

Tie strength and homophily of participants are observed to have effects on the consideration of recommendations. On the other hand, the concept of the majority of recommendations is stressed and expected to be influential especially on male respondents which is decided to be included as an additional construct in the conceptual framework of the research. Interpersonal trust and network cultural elements which requires to be also included in the conceptual framework. Some consumer traits like self efficacy and propensity to trust might also be expected to have some effects on recommendation taking of participants which results in the inclusion of these to be tested test as moderator variables. Differences in product types seem to have a stronger effect on the younger group in terms of consideration of the recommendations. For this reason, a list of different product groups will be included in the study for analyzing the differences in their effects on engagement in eWOM. Quite contrary to literature, the valence of eWOM, being either positive or negative, seems to have no effect on respondents' engagement in recommendation taking due to the in depth interview findings and it is excluded from the scope of the conceptual framework of the study.

CHAPTER 4

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

4.1 Preliminary research model and research questions

In addition to providing general insights, exploratory study also revealed that a possible relationship exists between social capital dimensions like tie strength, homophily, interpersonal trust, shared vision and language and consumers' eWOM engagement and purchase intentions. The findings of in depth interviews confirmed some social capital dimensions to be included in the research conceptual model and indicated some new constructs to be additionally considered like critical mass.

The notion of Social Capital has been applied to a range of social phenomena and IS literature (Kankanhalli et. al., 2005; Wasko & Faraj, 2005; Chiu, Hsu & Wang, 2006). However, as mentioned in the significance of the research section, relationships of all social capital dimensions with eWOM on social network site context and their effects on purchasing intentions were not investigated before in the form of an integrated research model. This study intends to draw upon Social Capital Theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) as the theoretical framing of this integrated conceptual research model. A graphic depiction of the preliminary proposed conceptual model of this study is presented in Figure 2.

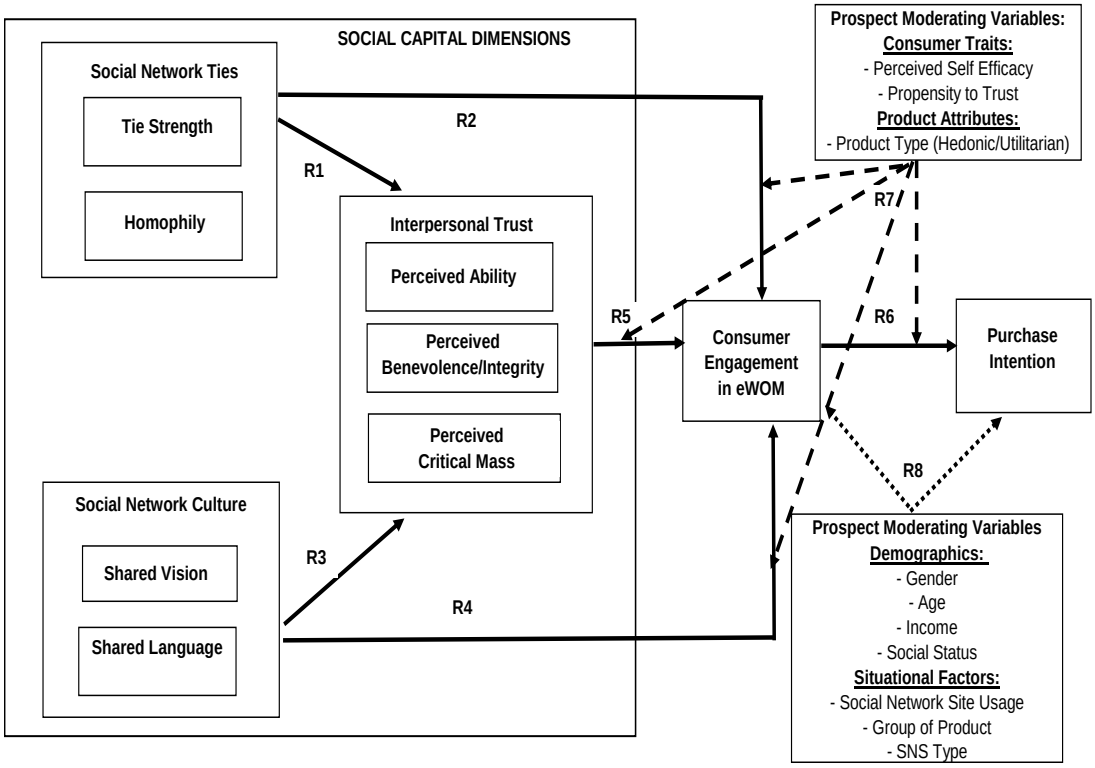

Figure 2. Preliminary conceptual research model

The increasing use of social networking sites has provided marketers a new communication channel and a potential for eWOM research. From a consumer behavior perspective, prior research on eWOM has failed to consider the influence of social factors on eWOM communications and purchase intentions. Past studies on eWOM behaviors in marketing and communication research has mainly focused on consequences and outcomes like sales while little is known about the potential determinants of consumers' eWOM behavior in social networking sites. This study presents the first investigation of eWOM on social network sites by examining the role of social capital factors in such a phenomenon. Online social websites have generated a tremendous amount of eWOM. As such, social network sites have considerably changed the way that consumers make purchase decisions by allowing consumers to freely interact with other consumers, marketers and members of their

personal networks (Hung & Li, 2007; Niederhoffer et al., 2007). As consumers now have increased opportunities to communicate with each other, understanding social capital established and maintained on social networking sites is particularly critical to identify potential market influencers and use them for accelerating positive eWOM. Several research questions are developed based on theoretical and empirical findings which are significant in the understanding of social capital impacts in consumer engagement in eWOM and emergence of purchasing intention in social networking sites.

The general research question related with the main objective of the study is:

R: How (through what mechanisms in social network sites) does social capital of consumers affect their engagement in eWOM and intention to purchase consequently?

In social capital theory, structural capital is assumed to stimulate trust aspect of relational capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Also, structural capital influences the development of intellectual capital according to social capital theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Social capital theory claims that network ties influence both access to parties for combining and exchanging knowledge and anticipation of value through such exchange (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Prior network literature has also documented the implications of association between interaction ties and trust (Granovetter, 1985; Nelson, 1989; Krackhardt, 1992). Also, Tsai and Ghoshal (1998) suggest that frequent and close social interactions permit actors to know one another, to share important information and give a point of view. So, other research questions derived from theory and past studies are:

R1: How do social network ties of consumers affect their interpersonal trust on social network sites? (How do tie strength and homophily dimensions affect their interpersonal trust?)

R2: How do social network ties of consumers affect their engagement in eWOM on social network sites? (How do tie strength and homophily dimensions affect their engagement in eWOM?)

In social capital theory, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) stated that shared language, being a dimension of cognitive capital, influences the conditions for the combination and exchange of knowledge in several ways. They indicate that shared language provides an avenue in which participants understand each other and build common vocabulary in their domains in virtual communities. Another dimension of cognitive capital is shared vision. Social capital theory again claims that members who share a vision will be more likely to become partners sharing or exchanging their resources (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). The common goals, interests, visions that members of a virtual community share will help them see the meaning of their knowledge sharing, which in turn increases their knowledge sharing like eWOM. Other research questions derived from these findings are:

R3: How do consumers' social network culture affect their interpersonal trust on social network sites?

R4: How do consumers' social network culture affect their engagement in eWOM on social network sites?

In social capital theory, the relational dimension of social capital, which is trust, concerns the motivation to share knowledge (Putnam, 2000). Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1997) suggested that when trust exists between the parties, they are more willing to engage in social exchange and cooperative interaction. Nonaka (1994)

indicated that interpersonal trust is important in teams and organizations for creating an atmosphere for knowledge sharing. Besides, people are more likely to share knowledge when social relationships are strong (Szulanski, 1996). Trust is necessary for knowledge sharing and eWOM quality, since it is the first essential to people both in face-to-face environments and online environments. Trust influences the effectiveness of knowledge sharing and organizational learning (Szulanski, 2000). Mutual trust has a positive influence on knowledge transfer (Huysman & Wulf, 2005) and mutual trust among the members of an organization is a critical factor for knowledge sharing (Chow & Chan, 2008). Trust is important in knowledge sharing in virtual communities (Larson, 1992; Jang, Hong, Bock & Kim, 2002; Langerak et al., 2004). In the same way, there may be a positive relationship between trust and knowledge sharing when people use social network sites. Trust promotes mutual understanding and increases information exchange. There are indications in the literature that trust is positively related with intention to obtain knowledge, which is defined as engagement in eWOM in this study (Ridings et al., 2002). Jarvenpaa (2007) indicates that there is strong evidence for the impacts of social interactions (Rohm & Swaminathan 2004) and recreational motives like WOM (Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004) in shaping consumer attitudes and purchasing orientations. The research questions related with these relationships are:

R5: Do consumers' interpersonal trust in social network ties affect their engagement in eWOM?

R6: Do consumers' engagement in eWOM on social network sites affect their intentions to purchase the recommended products?

The last research questions related with consumer traits, attitudes, demographics and situational factors developed on basis of these understandings are:

R7: How do consumer trait (perceived self-efficacy, propensity to trust) and consumer product attitude (hedonic, utilitarian) differences as moderating variables, affect the relationships between constructs of the research model?

R8: How do demographic (gender, age, income, social status) and situational factors (social network site usage intensity and group of product) affect the relationships between constructs of the research model?

R2, R4, R5 and R6 are extremely important research questions that will constitute the backbone of this study because their answers will give support to the effect of social capital on the engagement of eWOM which may lead consumers to purchase intentions consequently. Relational capital is the heart of social capital being affected by other two constructs, structural and cognitive capital and defined as the vital part of social capital in literature. Consumer engagement in eWOM construct is another vital construct in the conceptual model because it is expected to be the main cause for the generation of final dependent variable (DV) in this study, purchase intention consequently. So, R6, which is based on this assumed relationship, is the crucial one to be explored in this study. R7 and R8 are also additional questions which might give interesting implications for especially practitioners. The next sections describe the constructs of the proposed research model in detail.

4.2 Social network ties

This construct draws upon structural capital aspect of social capital theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Structural dimension of social capital concerns overall patterns of connections among individuals, including the presence or absence of network ties as well as density and strength of them (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Kang & Shin,

2009). A social network is defined as a set of individuals, nodes and relationships between ties (Onxy & Bullen, 2000). Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998, p.252) argued that “the fundamental proposition of the social capital theory is that network ties provide access to resources and provide the opportunity to combine and exchange knowledge”. Tsai and Ghoshal (1998) considered social network ties as the channels for information and resource flows. In this research, structural dimension of social capital is named as social network ties and has been conceptualized by two constructs from social influence perspective in literature: tie strength and homophily.

4.2.1 Tie strength

Mark Granovetter introduced the concept of tie strength in his landmark 1973 paper “The Strength of Weak Ties”. According to Granovetter (1973, p.196), tie strength is "the potency between members of a network". Granovetter (1973) described tie strength as a combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity and intimacy, mutual confiding and the reciprocal services that characterize the tie. All WOM communication takes place within a social relationship that may be categorized according to the closeness of the relationship between information seeker and the source, represented by the construct tie strength (Bristor, 1990; Duhan et al., 1997; Money, Gilly, & Graham, 1998). Strong ties such as family and friends form stronger and closer relationships that are within an individual's personal network and are able to provide material and emotional support (Pigg & Crank, 2004). Weak ties, on the other hand, are often among weaker and less personal social relationships that are composed of a wide set of acquaintances and colleagues with different cultural and social backgrounds (Goldenberg, Libai & Muller, 2001). Social networking sites allow consumers to connect with both closer personal contacts such as family

members and close friends who are strong ties and less personal contacts that include acquaintances and colleagues who are weak ties. Information can be shared or exchanged through social ties which vary in terms of their strength (Stephen & Lehmann, 2009).

Tie strength is "a multidimensional construct that represents the strength of the dyadic interpersonal relationships in the context of social networks" (Money, Gilly, & Graham, 1998, p.79) and includes closeness, intimacy, support, and association (Frenzen & Davis, 1990). The strength of the tie may range from strong to weak depending on the number and types of resources they exchange, the frequency of exchanges and the intimacy of the exchanges between them (Marsden & Campbell, 1984).

Subsequent research has expanded the list of tie strength dimensions. In theory, tie strength has at least seven dimensions and many manifestations. In practice, relatively simple proxies have substituted for it: communication reciprocity (Friedkin, 1980), possessing at least one mutual friend (Shi & Adamic, 2007), recency of communication (Lin & Dayton, 1978) and interaction frequency (Granovetter, 1973; Gilbert & Karaholis, 2008).

Research suggests that tie strength affects information flows. Individuals in a strong tie relationship tend to interact more frequently and exchange more information, compared to those in a weak tie relationship (Brown & Reingen, 1987). Thus, it would seem that consumers would contribute more WOM to strong than weak tie relational partners. In addition, strong ties bear greater influence on the receiver's behavior than weaker ties due to the frequency and perceived importance of social contact among strong-tie individuals (Bansal & Voyer, 2000). Evidence suggests that a strong tie between a network is perceived by members to have a

positive influence on their decision making (Leonard-Barton, 1985). Primary advantage of strong-tie recommendation sources is that they can simultaneously evaluate the decision maker and the product alternatives to provide information that is custom-tailored to the decision maker's preferences (Duhan et. al., 1997). On the other hand, the advantage of weak-tie recommendation sources is that they are not limited to the social circle of the decision maker and thus weak-tie sources are both more numerous and more varied (Duhan et al., 1997). Consequently, there is a greater likelihood of finding more and better information with greater expertise regarding the product from weak-tie recommendation sources.

In a recent study of Zhang (2010), there is an extensive review of literature about definition and measurement of tie strength. The results consistently show that tie strength has two formative dimensions, each having multiple sub-dimensions: (a) temporal overlap, formatively indicated by interaction frequency, relationship duration, and activity diversity (b) emotional closeness, formatively indicated by disclosure of feelings, goals, network, and physical intimacy. It is further tested that these two dimensions additively contribute to the overall tie strength. In this research, tie strength construct covers both temporal and emotional dimensions of this view while operationalization.

4.2.2 Homophily

Homophily refers to degree to which individuals who interact are congruent or similar on certain attributes such as demographic variables; age, gender, education and social status (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970, Rogers, 1983) and perceptual similarity of beliefs, values, experiences and lifestyle (Gilly et al., 1998). Because individuals tend to socialize with those who share similar characteristic, like-me principle

(Laumann, 1966), often termed social homophily (Mouw, 2006), interpersonal communications are more likely to occur between two individuals who are alike, that is homophilous (Lazarsfeld & Morton, 1954). As the result, the exchange of information most frequently occurs between a communicator and receiver who are similar with respect to certain attributes (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970).

Some scholars treat the concepts of strength of tie and homophily as synonymous (Rogers, 1983; Gatignon & Robertson, 1985). However, in this study they are employed as separate but related constructs. A distinction between these constructs is that homophily refers to the similarity in attributes individuals possess who are in a relation, same or different social status, whereas tie strength is a relational property that manifests itself in different types of social relations varying in strength like close friend and acquaintances.

Homophily is a related but conceptually distinct construct from tie strength (Brown & Reingen, 1987). The similarity of individuals predisposes them toward a greater level of interpersonal attraction, trust and understanding than would be expected among dissimilar individuals (Ruef, Aldrich, & Carter, 2003). Thus, individuals tend to affiliate with others who share similar interests or who are in a similar situation (Schacter, 1959). In contrast, heterophilous communication, as nonsimilar individuals such as acquaintances, can facilitate the flow of information between diverse segments of a social system (Rogers, 1983). In summary, past research assumes that: Tie strength (relational property strength in social relations) + Homophily (similarity in attributes of people in relation) = Network closeness (Structural Capital in Social Capital Theory).

4.3 Interpersonal trust

Interpersonal trust dimension draws upon relational capital aspect of social capital theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In this research, relational dimension of social capital is named as interpersonal trust and has been conceptualized by three sub-dimensions from literature: perceived credibility, perceived benevolence/integrity and perceived critical mass.

Trust has been studied in various disciplines and social and organizational scientists provide several viable definitions and frameworks for conceptualizing it. In general, trust refers to an implicit set of beliefs that the other party will refrain from opportunistic behaviour and will not take advantage of the situation (Gefen, 2000; Ridings & Gefen, 2004). Beyond the one dimensional view of trust as a generalized feeling of trusting another person (Gefen, 2000), a number of theories speak about trust as a trustor‘s specific beliefs in the trustworthiness of the other person; namely, the perception that the trustee is benevolent, has one's best interest at heart, truthful being honest and has integrity, competent as being able to deliver on his or her promises and predictable who demonstrates consistency so that the trustor knows what to expect (Fukuyama, 1995; Bhattacherjee, 2001). Mayer and Davis (1999) and Serva, Fuller and Mayer (2005) make the point that trust involves some type of reciprocal action or at least intent to act and involves the willingness to be vulnerable to or depend on another party in particular ways and contexts. These two concepts taken together lead to the definition of trust as the willingness to depend on others based on specific beliefs about their benevolence, integrity, competence and predictability (Mishra, 1996; Gefen, Karahanna & Straub, 2003).

According to literature, the preconditions of trust can be expected to be a combination of rational, cognitive or instrumental reasons as well as emotional and

affective connections (Rempel, Holmes & Zanna, 1985; McAllister, 1995). Researchers have long identified the influence of emotion and affect on trust in social relationships (McAlister, 1995; Tyler & Kramer, 1996; Kramer, 1999; Choi et al., 2008). According to some of them, trust is often more an emotional reaction than thought-out decision; more heart than head. On social network sites, evidence shows that subscribers use the technology mostly for keeping in touch, reacquiring old friends, communicating with friends and acquaintances, social surfing, photograph sharing, making new professional contacts and purchasing goods (Joinson, 2008). Therefore, trust in the network of users should be measured as a combination of benevolence and integrity and competence might play a less meaningful role in social network context.

Trust is the fundamental element and is probably most studied and cited concept of social capital. Although it is an important ingredient in any interpersonal relationship, either in personal or group settings, it becomes more salient in virtual communication situations such as social network sites (Jarvenpaa, Knoll & Leidner, 1998; Ridings et al. 2002). Virtual communities are similar to social network sites in the way that they consist of groups of people with common interests who regularly exchange information in an organized way over the Internet through a public forum. However, the main difference between virtual communities and social network sites is that the members typically do not know in each other in virtual communities while social network site members typically know each other in either offline or online world or both. Also, social network site services provides a permission facility where its members can allow or prevent other members from viewing their site. So, it is assumed that there is an inherent basis of trust between members of social network

sites so that they will refrain from opportunistic behaviour and not take advantage of the access they were granted.

When individuals believe that another person is trustworthy, regardless of the motivators, there will likely be higher levels of interaction and sharing between the network (Berg, Dickhaut & McCabe, 1995). The same holds true when individuals have trust in groups of other people (Golbeck, 2006). Because social network technologies depend heavily on interactions between users, possibly both on and offline, it is probable that a user‘s beliefs in the trustworthiness of other social network subscribers influence his or her intentions.

Among many types and forms of trust in literature, this study's main concern is related with a specific type of it, Interpersonal Trust, which means basically trust between people who are members of social network sites. This construct can be defined in social network context as the willingness of a consumer to trust the product recommendations of his social network ties. This issue is important since online shoppers are becoming accustomed to sharing their detailed observations as well as personal opinions on a specific product. Accordingly, the reasons why people trust the recommendations on social shopping networks which other consumers provide merit further investigation. Social network site literature has been studying this context and found that interpersonal trust has significantly influenced members' intention to exchange information about products and services. (Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009). When thinking about how individuals develop interpersonal trust in social network sites, trust can result from either a connection to particular individuals or to the group as an entity. In the case of individual attachments in online social networks, those that form between a member and his immediate friends, interpersonal trust grows through interactions and identification. Individuals feel

close to their friends through a common bond. On the other hand, trusting in the entity might result from the cultural environment in the social network.

Interpersonal trust is the main source of the social capital, being its relational capital dimension, contributes to the value of relationships. Interpersonal trust concerns the motivation to exchange knowledge, in other words engagement in eWOM (Putnam, 2000). Besides, people are more likely to share knowledge when social relationships are trusted and strong (Szulanski, 2000). A number of researchers have pointed to the role of interpersonal trust in facilitating interactions between individuals and groups (Feng, Lazar & Preece, 2004; Maloney-Krichmar & Preece, 2005). Interpersonal trust, being an important factor of social relationships (Fukuyama, 1995; Chow & Chan, 2008) has been found to facilitate the exchange and use of information due to the increased perceived credibility of information when the partner as an information source is trusted in a social relationship (Robert et al., 2008). As a result, it is reasonable to believe that trust in a personal source could also affect the nature and pattern of eWOM behavior in social network sites.

Interpersonal trust is defined as a willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on a set of trustworthiness beliefs about his or her credibility, benevolence, integrity and competence (Mayer, Davis & Shoorman, 1995; Jarvenpaa et al., 1998; McKnight, Choudhury & Kacmar, 2002; Gefen et al., 2003) which encourages people‘s concerns about interacting and taking actions when they lack information about the potential risks of doing so. It is also crucial in social interactions, especially in online environments (Gefen et al., 2003). People are more willing to engage in social interactions, when trust is high in relationships (Putnam, 2000). On the contrary, as members participate in the community, it is positively

related for members to trust each other. These indicate that there is a always positive relationship between social interactions and trust.

Interpersonal trust has been recognized as an important antecedent of intellectual capital exchange (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), online transactions (Chang, Cheung & Lai, 2005) and knowledge sharing in virtual communities (Ridings et al., 2002). Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) suggested that when trust exists between the parties, they are more willing to engage in cooperative interaction. Nonaka (1994) indicated that interpersonal trust is important in teams and organizations for creating an atmosphere for knowledge sharing. An important characteristic of informal interactions is that individuals' contributions are difficult to evaluate (Bartol & Srivastava, 2002). Therefore, trust is particularly important in volitional behaviors such as knowledge sharing in a virtual community. According to Blau (1964), trust creates and maintains exchange relationships, which in turn may lead to sharing knowledge of good quality. So, there are many indications in the literature that interpersonal trust is positively related with intention to obtain knowledge which is in parallel with the proposed hypotheses of this research.

Interpersonal trust is defined as the overall willingness of a consumer to trust in the product recommendations of his social network ties in this study. The sub-dimensions of this concept are determined as perceived ability, perceived benevolence/integrity and perceived critical mass in the preliminary research model. Perceived critical mass construct was added into this construct because of the insights provided by in depth interview findings and a few past research. During the interviews, majority concept was highly stressed by interviewees which required the inclusion of a sub dimension named as perceived critical mass in the preliminary conceptual framework. The decision about combining or distinguishing these three

sub-dimensions in the final research model will be given after exploratory factor analyses in the data analyses phase.

4.3.1 Perceived ability

Ability is the trustor's perception of a trustee's competencies and knowledge (Mayer et al., 1995). In the context of social networks, ability is influential to establish trust among members who are centered on specific mutual interest, hobby and events. Perceived ability is the consumer's perception of his social network tie competencies and knowledge salient to the expected behaviour. (Mayer et al., 1995). According to recent research, perceived ability dimension is a form of cognitive trust which is based on competence, expertise and incentives (Riegelsberger, Sasse & McCarthy, 2005).

4.3.2 Perceived benevolence/integrity

Benevolence is defined as the interest in a partner‘s welfare; honesty equates to believability and integrity (Gefen et al., 2003). Perceived benevolence is the belief in the intention of social network tie to treat the consumer well regardless of any profit aim. Perceived integrity is attained when the consumer realizes social network tie will act in accordance with a set of principles (Mayer et al., 1995). Larzelere and Huston (1980), in an effort to develop trust scales for interpersonal trust in close relationships, especially for environments like social networks, found that trust between partners is governed primarily by emotion and they implement the trust construct using measures of benevolence and honesty. In a later work examining trust in close relationships, Rempel and his colleagues (1985) provide comparable evidence that beliefs in a partner‘s love and care are the primary influences of

interpersonal trust. For some others, dependability and predictability play also a minor role in trusting intentions; while competence of the other person is not a big consideration (Rempel, Holmes & Zanna, 1985). Fine and Holyfield (1996) posit that trust emerges from a complex intermixing of culture, emotion and social interactions so that people experience emotional and instinctual feelings of trust towards other individuals and communities alike.

4.3.3 Perceived critical mass

Perceived critical mass is the point where the consumer perceives that the site has a significant number of members that he can associate with. (Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009). Individuals can similarly endorse a product or service by using it themselves. Leibenstein (1950) writes about the bandwagon effect where people join in an activity because others have done so. Further, the actions of crowds or a perceived critical mass can inspire trust (Hsu & Lu, 2004). Another research area, online gaming literature has demonstrated that users value the actions of other users and trust sites more when a perceived critical mass joins in. Similarly, past research suggests that a user many consider a technology trustworthy if he or she perceives that a critical mass of other trusted individuals use the technology themselves. Individuals can similarly endorse a product or service by using it themselves. According to social scientists, some situations require a threshold of participants before a social movement can take place (Oliver, Marwell & Teixera, 1985). In online interactions and social networks, perceived critical mass represents an individual‘s belief that there is a significant number of users who are like themselves, such as friends or online community members, to make it worth joining (Markus, 1987; Lou, Lou & Strong, 2000; McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Cook, 2001; Van

Slyke, Illie, Lou & Stafford, 2007; Glass & Li, 2010; Harden, 2012). In the social network context, perceived critical mass is the point where the adopter perceives that the site has a significant number of members that he can associate with due to common interests or friendship. So, even if a social network site provider claims that they have millions of members, if a current or potential user of a social network site perceives that there are not enough active members that he or she can associate with, then critical mass perception has not been achieved or sustained for that user.

4.4 Social network culture

Cognitive dimension of social capital in social capital theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) is named as social network culture in this study. The cognitive aspect of social capital concerns commonly perceived and followed protocols of interactions among individuals in the network connections. Social network culture dimension is conceptualized in two sub dimensions in the preliminary research model; shared language and shared vision as the manifestations of the theory. (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998).

4.4.1 Shared language

Language has a direct and important function in social relations by facilitating discussion, exchanging information, asking questions and conducting business (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Shared language refers to perceived level of common understanding, interpretation and systems of meaning among members of a community in terms of language usage, narratives, terms, words, jargons and codes (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Shared codes and language facilitate a common understanding of collective goals and the proper ways of acting in social networks.

Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) stated that shared language influences the conditions for the combination and exchange of intellectual capitals in several ways. First, shared language facilitates people's ability to gain access to people and their information. Second, shared language provides a common conceptual apparatus for evaluating the likely benefits of exchange and combination. Finally, shared language also stands for the overlap in knowledge. It thus enhances the capability of different parties to combine the knowledge they gained through social exchange. Shared language provides an avenue in which participants understand each other and build common vocabulary in their domains in virtual communities. In this regard, shared language not only helps share ideas but also enhances the efficiency of eWOM between people with similar backgrounds or practical experiences (Chiu et al., 2006). Accordingly, shared language might help motivating the participants to actively involve in knowledge exchange activities and enhance the quality of shared knowledge, which is eWOM in this study.

4.4.2 Shared vision

Tsai and Ghoshal (1998, p.467) noted that a shared vision "embodies the collective goals and aspirations of the members of an organization". A shared vision is also viewed as a bonding mechanism that combines different resources of an organization to integrate (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). Several studies have shown that a shared vision may hold together even loosely coupled systems and promotes the integration of organizations (Orton & Weick, 1990).When the members of a community have common perceptions about how to interact to each other, they can refrain from misunderstandings in communications and increase opportunities to exchange their opinions freely and effectively. The common goals and interests which they share

also help them to see the potential value and gain of their resource combination and exchange. So, members of an organization or network who share a vision will be more likely to become partners in sharing or exchanging their resources by time. The common goals, interests, visions that social network site members share will help them see the meaning of their knowledge sharing, which in turn increases the quantity and quality of their knowledge sharing, being engagement in eWOM in this study.

4.5 Consumers' engagement in eWOM

The construct “engagement” can have different meanings. The most general understanding of the construct in daily language is the period of engagement between proposal and marriage where a couple promises to marry each other. Engagement can also be described as an arrangement or a promise to be somewhere, the act of participating and sharing or having one’s attention, mind or energy (Gillin, 2007; Mollen & Wilson, 2010). These definitions capture the versatility and vastness of the meaning of the term engagement. Practitioners and academics have begun to use the engagement construct by different meanings of the term when applying it to the online environment and consumer behaviour. Practitioners have focused on the the act of sharing (Gillin, 2007; Swedowsky, 2009; Wong, 2009) while academics focus on having one’s attention, mind or energy (Douglas & Hargadon, 2001; Guthrie, Wigfield, Barbosa, Perencevich, Taboada & Davis, 2004; O’Brien & Toms, 2008; Mollen & Wilson, 2010; O’Brien & Toms, 2010). According to Wang (2011), who is the Principal Analyst and CEO of Constellation Research, engagement means giving consumers a voice. Practitioners believe the best way to let consumers be heard is to provide them with opportunities to participate (Harden & Heyman, 2009; Evans &

McKee, 2010; Solis, 2010). Evans and McKee (2010) state that engagement means customers become participants rather than passive viewers and take the time to talk about companies. Furthermore, they state that engagement can be defined as the active participation within the social web, moving consumers beyond consumption to collaborators integral to the success of the company (Evans & McKee, 2010). Similarly, Atherley (2011) defines engagement as active participation. Atherley (2011) states that engaged consumers respond and create conversations, discussions and discourse.

From a unidimensional perspective, Van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pirner and Verhoef (2010) consider engagement as strictly the consumer behaviors manifested toward a brand like WOM, recommendations, writing reviews, blogging, and helping other customers. Similarly, the Marketing Science Institution (2010, p.4) defines engagement as customers' behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm. Moreover, Vivek, Beatty and Morgan (2011) consider engagement as a behavioral construct that focuses on the intensity a consumer puts forth to participate in organizational offerings and activities. Pham and Avnet (2009, p.116) view engagement to be "a cognitive construct and suggest that engagement seems to be inferred from a pattern of action or withdrawal with respect to a target object like brand".

It is clear that many marketers view engagement in the social web as a "distinct participation-centric place" (Evans & McKee, 2010, p. 21). However, others are starting to give depth to the meaning of engagement by applying cognitive and affective concepts to the term. The Advertising Research Foundation includes an affective component in its definition of engagement by stating that engagement is "turning on a prospect to a brand" (Meskauskas, 2006, p. 1). Dave Smith, founder of

Mediasmith, regards engagement as a cognitive function, stating that engagement is "an unconscious tick of the mind that causes a consumer to think differently about a brand in the future" (Harden & Heyman, 2009, p. 211). Even though industry literature is considering cognition and affection within the engagement experience, most still feel that engagement is the act of participating in the social web. Academics, on the other hand, regard engagement as an affective and/or cognitive driven construct. However, recent academic research is beginning to include also the behavioral side of the term by considering participation element.

Although no agreed upon definition of engagement exists in literature, several consistent themes seem to emerge to describe the construct. Deriving from the definitions of engagement provided by industry practitioners and academics, a reconciliation of the practitioner and scholarly views of the construct suggests that engagement is a multidimensional construct that encompasses cognition, affection, and behavior. This study focuses specifically on the behavioural part of consumer engagement in eWOM since the objective of this research is to explore the impacts of product knowledge sharings on purchase intentions which links to a totally behavioural concept consequently.

Knowledge sharing is defined as "the combination of one or both parties seeking knowledge in response to the request, such that one or both parties are affected by the experience" (Ghosh & Scott, 2006, p. 4). In this study, knowledge sharing through eWOM is explored on social network site context. Social network site users tend to get valuable information about products from others' knowledge, which facilitates eWOM behavior within the network (Chu & Kim, 2011). Consumers engage in eWOM by performing multiple roles as opinion leader, opinion seeker or opinion forwarder. This study focuses specifically on opinion

seeking role of the engagement in eWOM. Opinion seekers actively look for information and recommendation from their social ties on social network sites and may rely on social network ties as an information sources for their purchase decisions.

Mollen and Wilson (2010) point out that engagement goes beyond involvement. Drawing upon Thomson, MacInnis and Park's (2005, p.79) definition of involvement as "a state of mental readiness that typically influences the allocation of cognitive resources to consume an object, decision or action", Mollen and Wilson (2010) state that an engaged consumer is actively committing to the brand both cognitively and affectively via its website, whereas an involved consumer is mentally ready to consume the information cognitively but is not necessarily actively making the commitment. Based on this, engagement is more dynamic whereas involvement is more passive (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). They (2010) recognize that there is limited research on online consumer engagement and past research is lacking support of a relationship between engagement and optimal consumer behaviors like purchase intention. That's why, they urge researchers to investigate this relationship thus further validating the need for this study.

In this study, consumers' engagement in eWOM is defined under the scope which is closer to Mollen and Wilson's (2010) engagement concept that goes beyond involvement, including both cognitive and affective elements and representing also the participative aspect that is active and transactional. Consumer engagement in eWOM means that opinion seeker consumer is taking the product recommendations from social network ties, consuming it cognitively and taking it into consideration affectively by transforming them actively into the idea of purchase intention. In Mollen and Wilson's (2010) framework, optimal consumer behavioural intention

outcomes follow the engagement. So, the scope of consumers' engagement in eWOM goes beyond involvement and includes the behavioural part of the engagement construct. By exploring the relationship between consumers' engagement in eWOM on social network sites and their purchasing intentions, this study will try to fill the gap in past research.

4.6 Purchase intention

WOM outcome is defined as any movement in consumers' evaluations, purchase intentions, or purchase behavior as a result of exposure to the evaluations, information or recommendation from a referent other. This movement may appear in different forms varying from a simple learning phase to a major change. Hence, WOM may impact a variety of consumption behavior, including awareness, expectations, perceptions, attitudes, behavioral intentions and actual behaviors. In fact, studies have shown that WOM is more effective than advertising in shaping evaluations of an innovation (Engel et al, 1969; Sheth, 1971), in converting unfavorable or neutral predispositions into positive attitudes (Day, 1971), in increasing purchase intention (Sheth, 1971), in shaping brand evaluations (Day, 1971) and in forming consumers' expectations (Zeithaml, Bery & Parasuraman, 1993).

WOM can influence decisions either positively or negatively. According to some past research, negative WOM might sometimes appear to be more powerful than positive WOM, particularly in terms of its impact on purchase behavior (Morris, 1988). Arndt (1967) also found that only 54 percent of consumers exposed to favorable WOM bought a product while 82 percent of those who had heard unfavorable comments did not buy it. However, during the qualitative study part of

this research, there was no finding supporting the impact of negative eWOM on engagement and purchase intentions of consumers.

Research on the outcomes of WOM interactions has been mainly concerned with the determinants of interpersonal influence, like the factors that impact the extent to which relevant others are instrumental in determining an individual's consumption behavior. For instance, researchers found relationships between the types of decisions and the extent of WOM influence. Particularly, researchers found that there is a connection between the level of risk and the influence of WOM. The influence of WOM on purchase decisions is less dramatic in a low-risk scenario as opposed to its more influential effects in a high-risk purchase situation (Still, Barnes, & Kooyman, 1984).

Since intention to purchase is the best predictor of purchase behaviour being consumer's conscious decision whether to perform a behaviour (Ajzen, 1985), this research will explore the influence of sources of information generated by social capital on purchase intentions on social network site context. In this study's proposed conceptual model, intention to purchase construct follows consumer engagement in eWOM construct based on prior research and their relationship will be tested based on the developed hypotheses of the research.

4.7 Moderating variables

This part includes the factors constituting the moderating variables of this study. Four groups exist in moderating variables as consumer traits, consumer product attitudes, demographics and situational factors. Two consumer traits are investigated relevant to e-attitudes: perceived self efficacy and propensity to trust while hedonic and utilitarian product attitudes are also explored as consumer attitudes for

moderating effect of consumers' engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions. All demographic characteriscs of gender, age, social status and income and situational factors like social network site usage intensity and product group are also examined in terms of their moderationg effects on the relationships between constructs of the research model.

4.7.1 Perceived self-efficacy

Perceived self-efficacy is the form of people's belief in their knowledge to help solve problems (Kankanhalli, 2005). Individuals with low self-efficacy are expected to depend more on other judgements and opinions in social interaction contexts. In the context of social network sites, this dependency on other's opinions due to a low level of self-efficacy can be reflected by the individual's intention to obtain knowledge from others. In personality literature, theories suggest that people with a low level of confidence in their capability in a specific domain of interest are more susceptible to persuasion since they lack confidence in their judgements and thus tend to rely on opinions of others more (DeLozier, 1976).

4.7.2 Propensity to trust

Trust is the outcome of an individual’s willingness to be vulnerable to others and confidence that both the trustor and the trustee will demonstrate trustworthiness in a reciprocal manner (Mayer et al., 1995). These authors argue that trust is developed through a dynamic cycle comprising the trustor’s perception of trustee characteristics and their own propensity to trust. Early theorists defined ‘propensity’ as generalized expectations of others, an individual personality trait assumed to be stable across different situations, although definitional contradictions emerge in the trust literature.

Kee and Knox (1970) argued that trust depends not just on past experience but also on dispositional factors such as personality. Rotter (1967) was among the first to discuss trust as a form of personality, defining interpersonal trust as a generalized expectancy that the words or promises of others can be relied on (Rosenberg, 1956; Rotter, 1971, 1980). This personality-based form of trust has been referred to by other scholars as dispositional trust (Kramer, 1999), generalized trust (Stack, 1978), and trust propensity (Mayer et al., 1995). Propensity to trust, along with perceived factors of trustworthiness like ability, benevolence and integrity, influences the trustor's willingness to engage in risk taking like sharing information, as trust cannot exist without taking both elements into account. Govier (1994) argued that trust propensity creates a filter that alters interpretations of others' actions. Trust propensity may be the key driver of the form and shape of that leap, affecting interpersonal trust even in the presence of trustworthiness information. In this study, propensity to trust should be considered which may influence individual's intention to trust the knowledge of others on social network sites.

Rotter's (1967) instrument, used as a propensity measure by Mayer and Davis (1999) and Gill, Boeis, Finegan & Mc Nally (2005), did not in fact measure dispositional trust; instead, it measured a generalized expectancy to trust developed from social interaction and individual learning rather than from genetics. Trust scales used to measure propensity therefore contradict the common understanding of trust as a 'trait' or 'predisposition'. This study defines propensity to trust as a generalized expectancy to trust in recommendations developed from social interactions on social network sites.

4.7.3 Hedonic and utilitarian product attitudes

Past research found connections between shopping objectives and the impact of WOM on consumers' purchasing decisions. An experiment investigating the impact of online interpersonal recommendation that occurs during consumer product searches on the Internet, showed that differences in consumer shopping objectives hedonic versus utilitarian can moderate the level of influence that recommender characteristics have on consumer behavior during online shopping (Smith, 2002). In particular, when consumers have hedonic shopping motivates, they are more influenced by the level of closeness, which is tie-strength, than the recommender's expertise. However, when the consumers have utilitarian objectives, they are influenced both by tie-strength and by expertise (Smith, 2002). This literature finding will be tested within the scope of this study, since the type of product attitudes of consumers as hedonic or utilitarian seem to cause some differences in the engagement level of consumers according to the qualitative study insights.

4.8 Control variables

Previous studies on WOM suggest that certain individual difference factors may be associated with WOM referral behaviour. This study concentrate on four most commonly examined a priori demographic factors as gender, age, social status and income. E-Retailing literature also suggests that situational factors like type of social network site, social network site usage intensity and type of product may also influence eWOM and purchase intentions. So, control variables of demographic and situational factors are considered in the research as well as the type of social network site; Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Control variables were tested in Structural Model Analyses part to see if any group differences were present based on these

characteristics and the effect on the endogenous variables was generated only by the main constructs, exogenous variables of our research model not by these demographic and situational factors.

4.9 Research hypotheses

In this section, hypotheses are developed based on the review of relevant theory and literature and proposed to examine the relationships between social capital dimensions, eWOM communications and purchase intentions of social network site users.

4.9.1 Hypotheses related with tie strength

Although the theoretical argument of the strength of weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) is compelling, its empirical verification is on shakier grounds. First, there is the problem of generalizability, because studies examined the role of weak ties in only one context, namely in individuals' search for a new job (Granovetter, 1974; Lin, 1982). The few studies in sociology that put the argument to a direct test (Friedkin, 1980; Weimann, 1983) provide encouraging but inconclusive evidence (Granovetter, 1982). In consumer behavior, direct evidence linking the strength of weak ties to the flow of information through WOM channels of communication appears nonexistent. Granovetter (1982, p. 113) acknowledges in his revisions of the theory "that strong ties can also have some value." However, little research has focused on the circumstances when strong ties play their unique role. Ties activated for the flow of information may also vary in the degree of influence as perceived by receivers. Therefore, it is useful to distinguish between flows of information and perceived influence. As Lin (1971) has observed, the literature on interpersonal communication

has often failed to differentiate between these types of flow. They may be regarded as related but conceptually distinct processes, because the perceived influence plays a more significant role in individuals' decision-making. Research is lacking, but strong-tie sources are often perceived as more credible than weak-tie ones (Rogers, 1983).

The superiority of close friends, strong ties, in consumer behavior is explained by relationship norms. People form one of two types of relationships with others, either communal relationships or exchange relationships (Clark 1979; Clark & Mills 1993). In the former, people give benefits to relational partners because they take care of benefit recipients' needs and have concerns for recipients' welfare without expecting any reward (Aggarwal 2004; Ryu & Han 2009). Contrarily, in exchange relationships, people give benefits to other parties with expectations of getting benefits back in return (Aggarwal, 2004). Generally, people form communal relationships with strong ties, close friends and family, whereas they form exchange relationships with weak ties to whom they do not feel responsibilities (Frenzen and Nakamoto, 1993; Aggarwal, 2004; Ryu & Feick, 2007; Ryu & Han, 2009). Since information recipients know that close friends provide information with a good intention, take care of information recipients' welfare, they may accord more weight to information from close friends than to information from casual friends. Due to this strong-tie superiority assumed in literature, this study assumes that the effects of close friends on product recommendations are more effective.

In social capital theory, structural capital is assumed to stimulate trust aspect of relational capital (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Prior network literature has also documented the implications of association between interaction ties and trust (Granovetter, 1985; Nelson, 1989; Krackhardt, 1992). Also, Tsai and Ghoshal (1998)

suggest that frequent and close social interactions permit actors to know one another, to share important information and give a point of view. As individuals interact over time, their trusting relationship become more concrete and they are more likely to perceive each other more closer and trustworthy (Gabarro, 1978, Granovetter, 1985, Gulati, 1985). Network literature about tie strength also supports that there is an association between strong interaction ties and trust and trustworthiness (Nelson, 1989; Krackhardt, 1992). Hence the following hypotheses are suggested related with the research question 1:

R1: How do social network ties of consumers affect their interpersonal trust on social network sites? (How do tie strength and homophily dimensions affect interpersonal trust?)

H1: Strength of a social network tie has a positive effect on dimensions of interpersonal trust; namely on its perceived ability (H1a), perceived benevolence/integrity (H1b) and perceived critical mass (H1c).

Social capital theory argues that network ties provide access to resources and strongly influence the extent to which interpersonal knowledge sharing occurs (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Bandura (1986) also argues that individuals' behavior is a product of their social network. Through close social interactions, individuals are able to increase the depth, breadth and efficiency of mutual knowledge exchange. The network connectivity among members of a virtual community allows a cost effective way of accessing a wider range of knowledge sources (Chiu et al., 2006). Information can be shared or exchanged through social ties which vary in terms of their strength (Stephen & Lehmann, 2009).

Tie strength has been studied extensively in the research of WOM behavior (Brown & Reingen 1987; Frenzen & Nakamoto 1993; Goldenberg et al., 2001; De

Bruyn & Lilien 2008). These studies have found that both strong and weak ties are the key drivers of information dissemination and have established evidence on the impact of tie strength on WOM propagation (Brown & Reingen, 1987; Goldenberg et al., 2001). Consumers' decision-making is often influenced by others with whom they have either random, loose relationships or by those with whom they have relatively more frequent and intimate interactions in their personal networks (Goldenberg et al., 2001).

In this study, considering the main objective of exploring effects of social capital on engagement in eWOM towards the purchasing intention, the effects of tie strength is explored in terms of its influence on opinion taking side of eWOM for deciding to purchase. So, the focus is on the influence of information gerenated through social ties instead of flow of information. Therefore, the next hypothesis is proposed to explore such phenomena related with research question 2:

R2: How do social network ties (tie strength and homophily) of consumers affect their engagement in eWOM on social network sites?

H2: Strength of a social network tie has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM.

4.9.2 Hypotheses related with homophily

Rogers (1983) suggests that homophily is the level to which pairs of individuals share similarities in attributes such as age, gender, education and social status. While some may suggest that tie strength and homophily are synonymous (Gatignon & Robertson, 1985; Rogers, 1983), tie strength and homophily are perceived as related but separate constructs in this study under the dimension of structural capital in line with Brown and Reingen (1987). A difference between the concepts is that while

homophily refers to the similarities in characteristics of individuals in relationships, tie strength is a property of the strength of the relationship itself. An individual can have a very high level of homophily with a stranger of the same socioeconomic background, even if their tie strength is nonexistent.

According to Brown and Reigen (1987) homophily may play an important role at the micro level of WOM behavior. They argue that homophilic ties provide more information but may not be always considered as more credible. However, according to some researchers, homophilous sources of information may be perceived as more credible than heterophilous ones, suggesting that homophilous sources may be perceived as more influential (Rogers, 1983). Since homophilous individuals are more likely to interact with each other than heterophilous ones, homophilous ties may have a greater likelihood of being activated for the WOM flow of information. Thus, it has been suggested that many flows are homophilous (Gatignon & Robertson 1985; Feick, Price & Higie 1986). Homophily limits people's social worlds in a way that has powerful implications for the information they receive, the attitudes they form and the interactions they experience (McPherson & Smith-Lovin, 1987). From these literature findings, it is perceived that homophily mostly encourages both the flow and influence of the information. So, it is assumed that homophily increases the interpersonal trust in social network ties and increases the influence and consideration level of information by effecting the engagement in eWOM. Thus, the following hypotheses emerge related with research question 1 and 2:

R1: How do social network ties of consumers affect their interpersonal trust on social network sites? (How do tie strength and homophily dimensions affect interpersonal trust?)

R2: How do social network ties (tie strength and homophily) of consumers affect their engagement in eWOM on social network sites?

H3: Homophily of a social network tie has a positive effect on dimensions of interpersonal trust namely on its perceived ability (H3a), perceived benevolence/integrity (H3b) and perceived critical mass (H3c).

H4: Homophily of a social network tie has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM.

4.9.3 Hypotheses related with social network culture

Social network culture is conceptualized under two sub dimensions as shared vision and shared language in the preliminary research model. Shared vision of a virtual community is assumed to have an influence on virtual trust. Literature findings indicate that shared values and common beliefs which constitute the shared vision of the community provide the harmony of interests for people and eliminates the the possibility of opportunitistic behaviour (Ouchi, 1980). Trusting relationships are rooted in congruence of values being the compatibility of community members' value with community's collective value (Sitkin & Roth, 1993).

Since social network sites are groups of people interacting with each other on basis of common interests and goals, members of these sites are likely to trust each other sharing the belief that they work for shared goals and will never hurt each other in an opportunistic manner. This basis develops a natural glue for site members facilitating their knowledge exchange activities. So, shared vision on social network sites supports both interpersonal trust within the members and their engagement in eWOM which may lead them to purchase intentions.

Social capital theory maintains that shared language influences the conditions for combination and exchange of knowledge. From the opinion taker's standpoint in the eWOM process in social networks, shared language offers bettter conditions for access to knowledge in the community through effective communication facilities. Shared language is essential to learning and obtaining knowledge in social networks. While it offers avenues to participants to understand each other better by building a common vocabulary in their domains, it stimulates interpersonal trust, relational capital, on social networks. In this study, it is perceived that shared language helps social network members to share their knowledge, understand their knowledge, trust in their knowledge and engage in eWOM which enhances the efficiency and trustworthiness of communication between people in the network. Hence, the following hypotheses emerge related with research questions 3 and 4:

R3: How do consumers' social network culture affect their interpersonal trust on social network sites?

R4: How do consumers' social network culture affect their engagement in eWOM on social network sites?

H5: Shared vision has a positive effect on dimensions of Interpersonal Trust namely on its Perceived ability (H5a), Perceived benevolence/integrity (H5b) and Perceived critical mass (H5c).

H6: Shared vision has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM on social network sites.

H7: Shared language has a positive effect on dimensions of Interpersonal Trust namely on its Perceived ability (H7a), Perceived benevolence/integrity (H7b) and Perceived critical mass (H7c).

H8: Shared language has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM on social network sites.

4.9.4 Hypotheses related with interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM

Mutual trust has a positive influence on knowledge transfer and is a critical factor for knowledge sharing (Chow & Chan, 2008). Trust is important in knowledge sharing in virtual communities (Chiu et al., 2006; Hung & Li, 2007). There are also indications in literature that trust is positively related with intention to get knowledge (Ridings et al., 2002). Trust is a key determinant of eWOM on social network sites and provides means of generating effective eWOM (Hung & Li, 2007; Choi et al., 2008).

Previous research suggested that when trust exists between people, they are more willing to engage in cooperative actions (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Social capital theory also confirms the impacts of relational capital, which is mainly the trustworthiness dimension on intellectual capital, which is knowledge exhange. In this study, it is assumed that interpersonal trust in recommenders from social network sites affect consumer's engagement in eWOM by taking into consideration of recommendations when making purchasing decisions. So, following hypotheses are suggested related with research question 5 :

R5: Do consumers' interpersonal trust in social network ties affect their engagement in eWOM?

H9: Dimensions of interpersonal trust namely perceived ability (H9a), perceived benevolence/integrity (H9b) and perceived critical mass (H9c) have positive effects on consumers' engagement in eWOM.

4.9.5 Hypotheses related with consumers' engagement in eWOM and purchase intention

Boyd and Ellison (2007) identified the acquisition of social capital as a primary motivator for sharing perspectives and contributing to WOM recommendations. De Valck et al. (2009) suggested that recommendations on social network sites may have a significant effect on need recognition, actual behaviour and post-purchase evaluations' than more established virtual communities. According to Drell (2011), 20% of Facebook users have used the popular social medium to research a product before buying and 42% have written an online review about a product. Data drawn from online interactions within social network communities reveal that 31% of online purchasers were influenced by community members to purchase a product and 26% took no action (Drell, 2011). Greenleigh (2012) found 84% of millennials turn to online communities before purchasing an item and are more likely to seek advice from online communities for purchases involving major electronics, cars and hotels.

In summary, prior research demonstrates that both friends and opinion leaders in social network sites have significant influence upon consumer purchasing behaviour. So, this study develops the hypothesis based on theoretical and empirical findings related with research question 6:

R6: Does consumers' engagement in eWOM on social network sites affect their intentions to purchase the recommended products?

H10: Consumers' engagement in eWOM on social network sites has a positive effect on their intentions to purchase.

4.9.6 Hypotheses related with mediations between constructs

H11: The positive relationship between tie strength and consumers' engagement in eWOM is mediated by interpersonal trust.

H12: The positive relationship between homophily and consumers' engagement in eWOM is mediated by interpersonal trust.

H13: The positive relationship between social network culture and consumers' engagement in eWOM is mediated by interpersonal trust.

H14: The positive relationship between interpersonal trust and purchase intention is mediated by consumers' engagement in eWOM.

4.9.7 Hypotheses related to moderating variables

Hypotheses H27- H46 presented in Appendix D are developed related to research question 7:

R7: How do consumer trait (perceived self-efficacy, propensity to trust) and consumer product attitude (hedonic, utilitarian) differences as moderating variables, affect the relationships between constructs of the research model?

In order to test the moderating effects of a moderating variable, measurement invariance should be achieved as a prerequisite by multiple group confirmatory factor analysis tests. If measurement invariance can be attained, further multigroup moderation analyses can be conducted to determine the effects of moderating variables on path relationships between constructs. Hypotheses H27-H66 are listed in the list in Appendix D but are not presented inside the dissertation text since they could not be estimated because of the reason of failure in achieving measurement invariance at the first step of multigroup CFA moderation analyses. Estimated hypotheses, H17-26, are developed related with research question 8:

R8: How do demographic (gender, age, income, social status) and situational factors (social network site usage intensity and group of product) affect the relationships between constructs of the research model?

Among these prospect moderating variables, only two moderating variables gender and social network site usage intensity could achieve to attain measurement invariance and further continue to be tested in multigroup moderation analyses. So, the full list of estimated hypotheses, H1-H26, are included inside the dissertation text but the remaining hypotheses H27-H66, which could not be estimated, are presented only in the list in Appendix D.

H17: The relationships between tie strength (H17a), homophily (H17b), social network culture (H17c), perceived critical mass (H17d) and interpersonal trust is moderated by gender of consumers.

H18: The relationships between tie strength (H18a), social network culture (H18b) and consumers' engagement in eWOM is moderated by gender of consumers.

H19: Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM.

H20: Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between consumers' engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions.

H21: Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between interpersonal trust and purchase intentions.

H22: The relationships between tie strength (H22a), homophily (H22b), social network culture (H22c), perceived critical mass (H22d) and interpersonal trust is moderated by social network site usage intensity of consumers.

H23: The relationships between tie strength (H23a), social network culture (H23b) and consumers' engagement in eWOM is moderated by social network site usage intensity of consumers.

H24: Social network site usage intensity of consumers moderate the relationship between interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM.

H25: Social network site usage intensity of consumers moderate the relationship between consumers' engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions.

H26: Social network site usage intensity of consumers moderate the relationship between interpersonal trust and purchase intentions.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter covers the design and methodology that are utilized in this research. Research design, data collection method, sampling plan, operationalization of variables and development of measurement instrument are discussed.

5.1 Research design

In online social network area, different type of research design and methodology were adopted in past studies. Many studies combined exploratory and descriptive design by interview methods and focus groups with surveys, content analysis and netnography (Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann, 2005; Wiertz & De Ruyter, 2007; Hung & Li, 2007; De Valck, Schau, Muniz & Arnould, 2009). Since each type of design and method has its own strength and weaknesses, this study uses a triangulation approach within both exploratory and descriptive designs by utilizing method of in depth interview for the qualitative part and survey method for the quantitative part of the research.

5.2 Development of measurement instrument

Measurement items were selected and adapted from previously tested and validated scales in literature. The competing measures for each construct of the proposed conceptual research model were carefully studied under the light of literature and qualitative study findings. The best appropriate widely used measures for each construct were selected to be applied for the measurement with some adaptations and

minor additions to make them applicable for the specific characteristics of social network site context.

Tie strength was assessed with 15 items adapted from Williams (2006) and Chiu and Wang (2006), homophily was assessed with 14 items adapted from semantic differential scale of McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly (1975), interpersonal trust was assessed with 21 items adapted from Gefen (2000), Kankanhali (2005), Lin and Yu (2006), perceived critical mass was assessed with 3 items adapted from Lou (2000), Hsu and Lu (2004), social network culture was assessed with 9 items adapted from Chiu and Wang (2006), consumers' engagement in eWOM was assessed with 8 items adapted from Goldsmith and Eastman (1996), purchase intention was assessed with 6 items adapted from Dodds (1991) and Teo and Yu (2005). For all the measures except semantic differential scale of homophily construct, a seven-point Likert scale was adopted with anchors ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Double-back translation procedure was applied by translation of questionnaire into Turkish and translation back into English by two different IS expert judges. The questionnaire began with a set of screening questions, which would allow the administrator of the survey to identify who should be included as a participant in the study and who should not. The prerequisite for being a participant in the study was to be a user of one of the social network sites; Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. After satisfying this prerequisite, the second part of the survey asks participants to respond to questions about their regular social network activity enabling the identification of participants' social network site usage depth and intensity. The parts between third and seventh of the survey asks questions relating to the respondents' social network tie structures, their recommendation perceptions, engagement in eWOM activities and related intentions of purchase. Consumer trait

and product type questions are gathered in the eighth and nineth parts of the survey. In addition to scale items derived from literature, the survey included demographic questions in the final part of the survey. This was done in order to allow for the analysis of control variables and their effects on the model.

5.3 Selection of measurement scales

The scales that are used to measure the constructs in the proposed conceptual model of the study are given below. Each construct in the proposed model is targeted to be measured with the most common and widely used validated scales from literature. Each construct is measured with selected a single or a combination of two most apropriate scales in order to overcome the deficiencies of depending on a single measurement tool and utilize the dual-coverage advantage of two scales together. The complete list of scale items are presented in Appendix E, Table 2.

5.3.1 Social network ties

Social network ties concept is operationalized by two constructs, namely tie strength and homophily.

5.3.1.1 Tie strength

Tie strength construct which exists under the social network ties concept in the proposed conceptual model is measured by the combination of two selected scales from literature. The first one is a ten item measure of bonding and bridging social capital scale adopted from Williams (2006) based on Putnam (2000); later on used by Ellison, Stampfeld and Lampe (2007); Yun (2011). Scale items measure the accumulated social capital value generated by both strong tie relationships under the

bonding part and weak tie relationships under the bridging part of the scale. The original bonding and bridging social capital scale of Williams (2006) consists of 20 items from which 10 most relevant ones with the objective and scope of this study is selected to be used in the measurement instrument of this study under the light of literature and prior qualitative study findings. The second one is a five item measure of virtual closeness scale adopted from Kang and Shin (2009) which was developed on bases of studies by Chiu et al. (2006), Tsai and Ghoshal (1998) and Brown and Reingen (1987). Both scales are measured with seven-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). One item of the scale is reverse coded. Tie strength scale items are presented in Appendix E, Table2.

5.3.1.2 Homophily

Homophily construct also exists under the social network ties concept in the proposed conceptual model is measured by 14 item measure of perceived homophily in interpersonal communication scale adopted from McCroskey, Richmond and Daly (1975) which has been widely used in many studies and has been found to be valid and reliable in different contexts (Chiu et al., 2006). Their scale includes four relatively uncorrelated dimensions; attitude homophily, background homophily, morality homophily and appearance homophily measured with 7 points semantic differential scale items. Homophily scale items are presented in Appendix E, Table 2.

5.3.2 Interpersonal trust

Interpersonal trust concept is operationalized by three sub-dimensions; perceived credibility, perceived benevolence/integrity and perceived critical mass. In addition

to the combination of scales of these three constructs, a scale of general trust in recommendation is also included to measure the concept by the widest perspective.

5.3.2.1 Perceived ability

Perceived ability construct which exists under the interpersonal trust concept in the proposed conceptual model is measured by the combination of two selected scales from literature. The first one is a three item measure of perceived ability scale adopted from Gefen (2000), later used by Hsiao, Lin and Lu (2010). The second one is a four item measure of virtual trust scale adopted from Kang and Shin (2009) based on Kankanhali (2005) . Both scales are measured with seven-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Generalized trust is also considered under the perceived ability construct of interpersonal trust concept in the proposed conceptual model and will be measured by a three item measure of trust in recommendation scale adopted from Gefen (2000), later used by Hsiao et al. (2010). The scale is measured with seven-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Perceived ability scale items are presented in Appendix E, Table 2.

5.3.2.2 Perceived benevolence/integrity

Perceived benevolence/integrity construct which exists under the interpersonal trust concept in the proposed conceptual model is measured by the combination of two selected scales from literature. The first one is a four item measure of perceived benevolence/integrity scale adopted from Ridings et al. (2002), later used by Hsiao et al. (2010). The second one is a five item measure of virtual trust scale adopted from Kang and Shin (2009) based on Chiu et al. (2006) . Both scales are measured with

seven-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Perceived benevolence/integrity scale items are presented in Appendix E, Table 2.

5.3.2.3 Perceived critical mass

Perceived critical mass construct which exists under the interpersonal trust concept in the proposed conceptual model is measured by the combination of two selected scales from literature. The first one is a two item measure of perceived critical mass of recommendation scale adopted from Lou et al. (2000), later used by Hsiao et al., (2010). The second one is a two item measure of perceived critical mass scale adopted from based on Hsu and Lu (2004) and Hsiao et al. (2010) based on Lou et al. (2000). Both scales are measured with seven-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Perceived critical mass scale items are presented in Appendix E, Table 2.

5.3.3 Social network culture

Social network culture concept is operationalized by two sub-dimensions, namely shared language and shared vision.

5.3.3.1 Shared language

Shared language construct which exists under the perceived social network culture concept in the proposed conceptual model is measured by five item scale of shared language adopted from Kang and Shin (2009) based on Chiu et al. (2006). The scale is measured with seven-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Shared language scale items are presented in Appendix E, Table 2. One item of the scale is reverse coded.

5.3.3.2 Shared vision

Shared vision construct which exists under the perceived social network culture concept in the proposed conceptual model is measured by four item scale of shared vision adopted from Kang and Shin (2009) based on Chiu et al. (2006). The scale is measured with seven-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Shared vision scale items are presented in Appendix E, Table 2.

5.3.4 Consumers' engagement in eWOM

Consumers' engagement in eWOM construct in the proposed conceptual model is measured by a six item opinion seeking scale of Chu and Kim (2011) based on Flynn et al. (1996). Two items which are relevant to indirect opinion taking behaviour of consumers were created and added to the scale by the researcher based on in depth interview findings and literature support. The scale is measured with seven-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Consumers' engagement in eWOM scale items are presented in Appendix E, Table 2. Three items of the scale are reverse coded.

5.3.5 Purchase intention

Purchase intention construct in the proposed conceptual model is measured by the combination of two selected scales from literature. The first one is a a three item measure of intention to purchase products scale of Hsiao et al. (2010) based on Teo and Yu (2005). The second one ise a three item measure of purchase intention scale of Yun (2011) based on Dodds, Monroe and Grewal (1991). Both scales are measured with seven-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Purchase intention scale items are presented in Appendix E, Table 2.

5.3.6 Perceived self efficacy

Perceived self efficacy consumer trait being applied as the moderating variable in the proposed conceptual model is measured by the three item scale of Yun (2011) based on Widing and Talarzyk (1993). The scale is measured with seven-point Likert scale (1 = *greatly decreased*, 7 = *greatly improved*). Perceived self efficacy scale items are presented in Appendix E, Table 2.

5.3.7 Propensity to trust

Propensity to trust consumer trait being applied as the moderating variable in the proposed conceptual model is measured by the three item scale of Hampton-Sosa and Koufaris (2005), Mayer and Davis (1999) and derived from Rotter's (1967) original trust scale, McKnight et al. (2002), Gefen (2000) willingness to trust and general tendency to trust. The scale is measured with seven-point Likert scale (1 = *totally disagree*, 7 = *totally agree*). Propensity to trust scale items are presented in Appendix E, Table 2.

5.3.8 Hedonic and utilitarian consumer product attitudes

Hedonic and utilitarian type of consumer product attitudes applied as the moderating variables in the proposed conceptual model are measured by the selected six items from hedonic and utilitarian scales of Voss and Spangenberg (2003). The scales are measured with seven-point Likert scales (1 = *totally disagree*, 7 = *totally agree*). Hedonic and utilitarian consumer product attitude scale items are presented in Appendix E, Table 2.

5.3.9 Social network site usage intensity

Social network site usage intensity applied as the moderating variable in the proposed conceptual model is measured by the combination of two selected scales from literature. The first one is a a eight item measure of Facebook usage intensity scale of Choi and Scott (2013) based on Ellison et al. (2007). The second one ise a three item measure of social network site usage scale of Sledgianowski and Kulviwat (2009) based on Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw (1989). First scale is measured with seven-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) except its first item. Second one is measured with nominal scale. Social network site usage intensity scale items are presented in Appendix E, Table 2.

5.4 Sampling and data collection

5.4.1 Sampling plan and procedures

The unit of analysis in this study is the individual and the survey items were designed to capture the responding individual's perception. The geographical extent is limited to biggest three cities of Turkey; İstanbul, İzmir, Ankara which are selected on basis of having highest population and Internet usage rate (Tuik, 2014). Sample group is composed of consumers living in one of these cities and also who are active users of at least one of the social network sites: Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. The definition of active social network site usage is defined as being registered as a member of a social network site and having any kind of active or passive activity on that site at least once a week. Foursquare is removed out of the context of this study at the beginning of third phase of data collection, due to the extremely low preference by only two people in the first 500 respondents sample group. During the

in depth interviews, some complaints were also obtained about the disfunctionality of Foursquare which ensured our decision for leaving it out of the context of the study. Linked in and Pinterest social network sites were also excluded from the scope of the study due to the low usage rate of respondents observed in the qualitative, pre-test and pilot study parts of the study. BAP, Boğazici Research Foundation, also confirmed the decision to exclude these two sites.

The ratio of the dispersion of the sample population is in proportion to the actual population of cities as Istanbul (60%), Ankara (22%) and Izmir (18%). In order to have a more generalizable population sample, representative districts were selected from each city like Bakırköy, Şişli and Kadıköy from Istanbul, Bahçelievler, Çankaya, Keçiören from Ankara and Konak, Bornova from Izmir. Two step sampling method is applied for the research. Main sample group is segmented on quota sampling and each segment is further investigated on basis of convenience sampling method.

5.4.2 Sampling characteristics

This section describes the sample characteristics in this study. During the data collection stage, a total of 1169 completed questionnaires were obtained while 169 of them are excluded from the sample used in the study because they are not users of any social network site or members of social network sites other than Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. Out of 1000 questionnaires, 980 usable data was obtained after elimination of missing and erroneous values. The demographic characteristics of participants can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	486	49.6	49.6	49.6
	Male	494	50.4	50.4	100.0
	Total	980	100.0	100.0	

Age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	247	25.2	25.2	25.2
	25-29	249	25.4	25.4	50.6
	30-39	241	24.6	24.6	75.2
	40+	243	24.8	24.8	100.0
	Total	980	100.0	100.0	

City of Residence					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ankara	212	21.6	21.6	21.6
	Istanbul	595	60.7	60.7	82.3
	Izmir	173	17.7	17.7	100.0
	Total	980	100.0	100.0	

Social Economic Status*					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A	85	8.7	8.7	8.7
	B	233	23.8	23.8	32.4
	C1	453	46.2	46.2	78.7
	C2	195	19.9	19.9	98.6
	DE	14	1.4	1.4	100.0
	Total	980	100.0	100.0	

* Categorization is applied by official SES grouping as presented in Appendix F.

Consistent with our target population, the sample consisted of an even distribution of males and females. Age and gender are evenly distributed as targeted as shown in Table 3. 388 of respondents were married while 592 is single. The social status level and average monthly net income distribution of the sample reflects the

dominance of C1 and B type characteristics of the respondents. 30% of the respondents had a monthly income of minumum 3.000 TL and higher, 60% between 1.000 TL -3.000 TL, 6% had less than 1.000 TL while remaining 4% is unknown.

Aside from demographic information, we asked participants to specify the social network site which they used most intensively, frequently. The participants were then requested to complete the survey for the social network site which they selected as the most intensively used. The dispersion of their preferences was realized as: Facebook by 75% (735 respondents), Instagram by 18% (176 respondents) and Twitter 7% (69 respondents) being heavily dominated by Facebook as expected.

The final question that was significant with regards to defining our sample characteristics was the rate of intensity at which participants used social network sites. As it can be seen from Table 4, approximately 68% of participants stated that they have been using that site for more than three years. 88% of the sample group had 150 or more connections while 81% of them used the site every day. On the other hand, 79% of the sample group spent minumum 60 minutes and more a day.

Considering these indicators, it was observed that our sample group was mostly composed of intensive users who frequently and heavily used the social network sites with a sufficient number of connections. These highlights showed enough support that our participants had enough competency and relevance for social network site usage being a quite appropriate sample group to test and validate our conceptual model.

Table 4. Social Network Site Usage of Participants

How long have you been using this social network site? (yearly basis)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	71	7.2	7.2	7.2
	2	113	11.5	11.5	18.8
	3	131	13.4	13.4	32.1
	4	122	12.4	12.4	44.6
	5	171	17.4	17.4	62.0
	6	96	9.8	9.8	71.8
	> 7	276	28.3	28.3	100.0
	Total	980	100.0	100.0	
How many connections do you have on this social network site?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	10 or less	1	.1	.1	.1
	11 - 50	44	4.5	4.5	4.6
	51 - 100	101	10.3	10.3	14.9
	101 - 150	119	12.1	12.1	27.0
	151 - 200	125	12.8	12.8	39.8
	201 - 250	125	12.8	12.8	52.6
	251 - 300	138	14.1	14.1	66.6
	> 300	327	33.4	33.4	100.0
	Total	980	100.0	100.0	
How many days a week are you using this Social Network Site?					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	1	.1	.1	.1
	2	6	.6	.6	.7
	3	27	2.8	2.8	3.5
	4	21	2.1	2.1	5.6
	5	85	8.7	8.7	14.3
	6	42	4.3	4.3	18.6
	7	798	81.4	81.4	100.0
	Total	980	100.0	100.0	
How much time do you spend in average on this social network site a day? (in minutes)					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	5- 30	168	9.5	9.5	17.1
	35 - 60	358	36.6	36.6	53.7
	65 - 120	247	25.2	25.2	78.9
	> 120	207	21.1	21.1	100.0
	Total	980	100.0	100.0	

5.4.3 Data collection and procedures

Data collection procedures were conducted and applied using the services of an unbiased market research company. Since the completion time of survey questionnaire was about 25 minutes, face to face interview technique was chosen for data collection to obtain more valid and accurate results according to the standards of Turkish Researchers Association. The poll takers of the market research company received a training from the researcher about the objectives of the research, general guidelines of the survey and critical points for attention. During the first day of the pilot study of research, the researcher accompanied the trained poll takers during their data collection in Mecidiyeköy district in order to personally observe them while interacting with the participants and analyze the whole process. Some advices were made to the group afterwards to improve the process and prevent some determined inefficiencies of application. Data was collected in the form of face to face survey interviews, where the survey administrator read the questions loudly to the participants and marked the answers on the online form via their Ipads. In some questions which needed visual representations to facilitate respondents' decisions like selecting a product from certain categories or checking the right preference point on a semantic differential scale item, poll takers used some visual cards to show to respondents which were prepared beforehand. The examples of these visual cards are shown in Appendix G.

While 1169 consumers are approached to respond to the survey, 169 of them are excluded from the sample used in the study because they are not users of any social network site or members of social network sites other than Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. Each of completed cases from 1000 participants are carefully examined for indication of faulty, erroneous or missing responses. 20 invalid cases

are found for different reasons and excluded resulting in 980 valid usable cases with 84 % response rate. In order to make a more accurate categorization of social status of participants, education and occupation information obtained by the poll takers are transformed into official social economic status categories (SES) during the completion of data entries as presented in Appendix F.

Questionnaire started with an entrance question asking respondents to choose the social network site which they use most intensively and answer the rest of the questionnaire for the one they have chosen. The social network site users of the completed survey data was dispersed as 735 Facebook users (75%), 176 Instagram users (18%) and 69 Twitter users (7%) based upon respondents' own preferences naturally which is basically determined after the entrance question. Data collection was realized in three time horizons within a period of 130 days.

5.4.4 Data analysis method

The preferred method for data analysis was Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) by AMOS 22.0 software. It was preferred due to its effectiveness in enabling the analysis of complex models such as the one we have in our final research model. The fact that we have mediators and moderators in our model also adds to the complexity of the theoretical relationship and increases the necessity of SEM to be applied as the data analysis method.

While there is no consensus on the sample size requirement of SEM in literature, Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010) suggest a sample size cutoff of 500 for models such as ours, containing large numbers of observed and unobserved variables. It is generally accepted that larger sample sizes and degrees of freedom result in a more powerful SEM analysis (McQuitty, 2004). On the other hand, an

excessively large sample size tends to inflate CMIN, which in turn causes poor fit of the measurement model. As a result, it is important to maintain a balance between the number of variables and constructs in the measurement model and the sample size in our research design. Suggestion for minumum sample size by Hair et al. (2010) is between 150 and 300 for seven or fewer constructs. However, he also indicates that sample size should be inreased in circumstances of data deviates from normality or in more complex models. While larger samples generally produce more stable solutions, the suggestions for minumum sample sizes are offered on basis of model complexity and basic measurement model characteristics (Hair et al., 2010). As it will be discussed in next sections, our proposed research model has seven constructs with modest communalities and no underidentified constructs. Under these circumstances, a minumum sample size around 300 would be sufficient for testing a model like ours. So, we are confident that our sample size is statistically adequate for the application of SEM method which is 980. Our sample size is certainly adequate to represent the population of interest, to estimate and test our model and conduct multiple group moderation analyses as well.

5.5 Pre-test and pilot study

A pretest of the questionnaire was performed using 17 experienced social network site users to assess its logical consistencies, ease of understanding, sequence of items and contextual relevance. The comments collected from the pretest group led to minor modifications of wording and the item sequences. While scale items were purified, the expressions like some, several, a lot of were eliminated for clarification of the sentences based on the recommendations of pre-test group.

Furthermore, a face to face pilot study was conducted with 100 respondents. EFA are conducted with the pilot study data in which factors are extracted, reliability measures are computed and thus, the constructs and measurement scales are validated, purified and finalized before starting with SEM analyses. The final questionnaire refined to be used in the main survey part is found in Appendix H and I in English and Turkish versions.

CHAPTER 6

DATA ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

Before starting with the multivariate analyses, data should be screened for the accuracy of the relationships among variables (Hair et al., 2010). Data screening includes examination of the data in terms of missing values, outliers and its statistical characteristics such as normality, homoscedasticity and linearity. Following that, exploratory factor analyses and reliability tests are conducted for measure purification and confirmatory factor analyses are performed for measure validation. Finally, results of hypotheses tests by structural equation modeling path analyses are provided.

Data analysis through SEM is conducted using a measurement model and a structural model. The measurement model is identified through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and shows the relationship between the observed and latent variables. It enables the assessment of reliability; convergent and discriminant validity, which reveals construct validity. Once the measurement model is constructed and analyzed, the structural model is built to estimate the casual relationships among latent variables which enables testing of the hypotheses.

6.1 Data screening

6.1.1 Missing data

Since missing data might cause biased results, it is suggested that data should be set free from missing values by one of the data imputation methods (Hair et al., 2010). Additionally, AMOS does not allow to proceed analysis with missing data in any of the items. So, data is checked for determination of missing values. Twenty

responses were detected having missing values in major constructs in the analysis. Traditionally, listwise deletion is mostly used in SEM analyses (Hair et al., 2010). So, since the missing percent of data is 2% below the 10% threshold of SEM, those responses were totally removed from the analysis, instead of imputing data for those missing values. Remaining 980 respondents will be quite statistically sufficient for us to start analysis.

6.1.2 Outliers

Outliers are observations with uniquely different from other observations. An unusually high or low value on a variable might indicate a potential outlier which might then affect the accuracy of data analysis. The reasons for outliers might arise due to data entry errors, extraordinary events, extraordinary observations and unique combination of values which is not visible in any of the variables alone (Hair et al., 2010). Data has been investigated for data entry errors and twelve cases with such human errors are corrected. There are no extraordinary events and no extraordinary observations in the data. Since the sample size is quite large and no other extreme values are detected, the data is taken for further multivariate analyses.

6.1.3 Recoding of reverse statements

When some of the statements in the questionnaire items have negative or reverse meanings, the interpretation of data analyses might be misleading and cause some perplexing consequences. In such circumstances, the scale values of the reverse statements should be recoded. At this stage of data screening, the questionnaire items were scanned in terms of their meanings of statements. Five items in three factors; one in tie strength, one in social network culture and three in consumers' engagement

in eWOM were detected to have negative meanings and reverse coded accordingly to prevent any misinterpretations at future steps of analyses. The list of the items is given in Table 5.

Table 5. List of Reverse Coded Items

Reverse Coded Item	Factor
There is no one on the social networking site that I feel comfortable talking to about intimate personal problems.	Tie Strength
I have difficulties in understanding some terms/languages in the message posted by others.	Social Network Culture
I don't need to talk to my contacts on the social networking site before I buy products.	Cons. Eng. İn EWOM
I rarely ask my contacts on the social networking site about what products to buy.	Cons. Eng. İn EWOM
When choosing products, my contacts' opinions on the social networking site are not important to me.	Cons. Eng. İn EWOM

6.1.4 Normality

Normality is the most fundamental assumption in multivariate data analysis since all statistical significance is based on the normality condition (Hair et al., 2010). In order to check for the normality condition skewness and kurtosis values and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests are used for large samples with more than 2000 cases. Significant test statistics obtained from Kolmogorov-Smirnov test which is used for large sample sizes ($n > 50$) show that data shows a non-normality condition with sig. values of smaller than .05 as presented in Appendix J, Table 6. However, since the sample size is large, negative effects of non-normality are expected to diminish (Hair et al., 2010). However, non-normality of data is considered in choosing the appropriate type of analyses during the study such as applying bootstrapping method in mediation analysis which is a common technique mostly used in non-normal data.

6.1.5 Homoscedasticity

Homoscedasticity refers to the assumption that dependent variables exhibit equal levels of variance across the range of independent variables. In other words, variable's residual or error is required to exhibit consistent variance across different levels of the variable. This condition is desirable because the variance of dependent variable should not be concentrated in only a limited range of independent values (Hair et al., 2010). In order to check for this assumption, Levene tests are conducted to examine the dispersion of the variance in dependent variables of this study (i.e., interpersonal trust, consumers' engagement in eWOM, purchase intention) across groups defined by different demographic characteristics (i.e., age, gender, marital status, SES and income). The results presented in Appendix J, Table 7 partially confirm that the dependent variables have equal variances across groups formed by some of these nonmetric variables. As it is observed from p values of equal variances assumed part of Levene tests, some of them reject the null hypothesis of equal variances assumed by having bigger p values than 0.05. Homoscedasticity is partially achieved in dispersion of variance in dependent variable of eWOM across groups of income, SES and gender and in dependent variable of interpersonal trust across groups of age, gender and income while could not be attained in dependent variable of purchase intention across any of the groups.

6.1.6 Linearity

Linearity assumption is a required element of multivariate analysis (Hair et al., 2010). So, data is checked for any nonlinear patterns. In order to do that, scatterplot matrix among the variables are examined or regression analyses are performed to check residuals since residuals represent the unexplained portion of the dependent

variables. Examination of scatterplot matrix shows that there is no significant linearity problem.

6.1.7 Multicollinearity

High correlation among independent variables reveal a potential multicollinearity problem which indicate the effects of the variables can not be separated on the dependent variable. However, the independent variables should not be correlated among each other but with the dependent variables. There are two ways to identify multicollinearity problem. One of them is performing regression on each of the independent variable as a dependent variable against other independent variables. Another method is just checking the bivariate correlations table for all independent measures in the study (Hair et al., 2010). Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) are used as the statistical measures of multicollinearity. Tolerance reflects the amount of variability of the independent variable not explained by other independent variables and VIF is the inverse of Tolerance.

In order to check for multicollinearity, both methods are used in this study. First of all, all the correlations between variables in our model were examined and some of them were found to be above .5 being between .33 and .84 which might be an indication of the multicollinearity possibility.

So, second method of performing regression was applied to check for the possibility of multicollinearity. Dataset is used to perform linear regression and the independent variable of eWOM is used as the dependent variable whereas tie strength, homophily, perceived critical mass, interpersonal trust are used as the independent variables. Afterwards, each independent variable is regressed over other independent variables one by one to measure VIF scores. According to Hair et al.

(2010), a common threshold for multicolliearity is a detection-tolerance value of 0.10, which corresponds to a variance inflation factor VIF = 10 or above. All VIF values were indeed far lower than 10 and even mostly lower than the conservative VIF threshold of 4 as suggested by Hair et al. (2010). VIF values in general do not indicate a big multicollinearity problem since they are between 1 and 4 except SNS culture in all cases. VIF Values of independent variables for multicollinearity analyses are presented in Appendix K, Table 8.

6.1.8 Common method bias

We ran Harman's single factor test for common method variance on SPSS through factor analysis steps by principal axis factor extraction method in order to see whether our model was affected by common method bias. We ran a factor analysis by forcing all items into a single factor and found that the single factor accounted for 40.5 % (< 50%) of the total variance explained as presented in Appendix L, Table 9 indicating that no significant common method bias existed (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003).

6.1.9 Measure purification

Initial steps for measure purification are exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and reliability tests. The sample size, 980, is adequate for conducting factor analysis of 75 items, being larger than suggested conservative 10:1 ratio of Hair et al. (2010). These tests help to validate items which load highly on desired dimensions and also eliminate those items which do not contribute to factor's reliability.

EFA prepares the variables to be used for cleaner structural equations modelling. Main objective for EFA is extracting the underlying structure among

variables such as dimensionality/unidimensionality. Unidimensionality indicates all the items that form a scale load up on a single construct. Dimensionality on the other hand, indicates a construct is defined by several dimensions (factors). There are two factor extraction methods that can be selected to be used in EFA analysis, namely common factor analyses and principal component analyses. While common factor analysis is more appropriate for data summarization purposes, principal component analysis is more useful when the purpose is data reduction through summarizing most of the original information (variance) in a minimum number of factors for prediction purposes as chosen in this study (Hair et al., 2010).

The appropriateness of data for EFA is checked through Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) and the significance level of Bartlett's test of sphericity. In order to justify the use of EFA, a significant Bartlett's test and a high KMO value, mostly higher than 0.50 are desired (Hair et al., 2010). While the specific purpose of Bartlett's test is for assessing the overall significance of the correlation matrix so that variables of the study are related to each other, on the other hand, KMO measure basically informs about the patterns and intercorrelations between the variables of the study by indicating their factorability. In addition, rotation in EFA causes factor loadings to be more clearly differentiated, which is often necessary to facilitate interpretation. Several types of rotation are available among which Varimax is the most frequently used type of orthogonal rotation as chosen in this study.

Reliability is measured by Cronbach's alpha which shows the extent to which scales produce consistent results on different trials for various samples. Internal consistency requires that individual items or indicators of the scale should all be measuring the same construct and therefore need to be highly intercorrelated. As a

result, a reliability coefficient is produced based on average correlations among items (Hair et al., 2010). The general rule of thumb states the minimum value for Cronbach's alpha should be .70 to indicate a high internal consistency (Churchill, 1979). Also, an item should be considered for elimination if its deletion from the scale improves Cronbach's alpha.

Together with reliability tests, EFA prepares the variables of the study to be used for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which is the first step of structural equation modeling providing the validation of the factor structure of the variables. In contrast to CFA, EFA can be conducted without knowing how many factors really exist or which variables belong to which constructs (Hair et al., 2010). In this study, both EFA and reliability tests are conducted in order to measure the internal consistency estimates and dimensionality of all the measures.

6.2 Exploratory factor analyses

In line with above rules, by using SPSS 22.0 software firstly the appropriateness of the data was checked via Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) and Barlett's Test of Sphericity test which is presented in Table 10. The result of KMO test gives a value of 0.980 that is above the required threshold of 0.50, and Bartlett's test shows a significant result, therefore, the data is shown to be appropriate for conducting EFA in general. As it will be investigated in detail later by EFA, all of the items loaded on the respective seven factors and they overall explain 68.14 % of the total variance.

Table 10. KMO and Bartlett's Test for All Factors

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.980
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	60907.392
	df	2850
	Sig.	.000

As a next step, EFA was conducted by using SPSS 22.0 software to understand the underlying dimensionality of the study variables. The results of EFA are reported in Appendix M, Table 11. In order to assess the reliabilities of the factors, Cronbach's alpha score for each factor was computed. Table 11 in Appendix M includes each factor's Cronbach's alpha scores, as well as factor loadings of each item in that factor.

As it is shown in Table 10, after completing the checks for the overall item set of seven factors, each factor was investigated seperately in detail. KMO, measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) values were checked and found above minumum 0.870 and higher for all of the seven factors showing an excellent adequacy. Bartlett's test of sphericity results were also significant at .000 level demonstrating the existence of correlation among variables of all seven factors. Then, anti-image matrix, communalities and factor loadings were examined according to 0.50 threshold criteria for the seven factors. For measure purification purposes, items that have low anti image correlations, low factor loadings (< 0.5) and high cross-loadings should be excluded from the item groups (Nunnally, 1978). As it is shown in the Table 11 in Appendix M, three items were detected to have anti image values and communalities below the threshold of 0.50. One of these items was in Tie Strength construct which had 0.044 communality and a low factor loading of 0.172. The other two were in consumers' engagement in eWOM construct with 0.474 and 0.331 anti image

correlations. These three items were removed from the measurement factor scales. Two items were also detected as prospects to be removed but still decided to be kept at this initial step of analyses. One of these prospects is in the item set of social network culture factor having low correlations with other items and a low factor loading of 0.065. Reliability analysis of social network culture also indicates that the Cronbach's alpha value of the factor will be increased from 0.932 to 0.953 if this item is eliminated. The other prospect item is in the item set of consumers' engagement in eWOM factor which has low correlations with other factors, a low communality of 0.017 and a low factor loading as -0.132. Reliability analysis of consumers' engagement in eWOM factor also indicates that the Cronbach's alpha value of the factor will be increased from 0.875 to 0.936 if this item is eliminated. So, these two items remained in the item set but will be further investigated to be eliminated in the next step of CFA analyses.

As can be seen from the Table 11 in Appendix M, Cronbach’s alpha scores of all factors are above the threshold limit of 0.70, signifying high internal consistency with minumum 0.866 and higher for seven factors. Finally, concerning validity assessments, EFA results were examined for convergence validity, discriminant validity and face validity. Since, items of each factor were highly correlated with each other, convergent validity was confirmed. Discriminant validity was also ensured because the items loaded significantly on one factor, thus no cross loadings existed, which was, items relates more strongly to their own factor than any other factor. As a final assessment, face validity was ensured by having conceptually consistent item contents for factors which were consistent with the established scales from literature.

Table 11 in Appendix M consolidates the results of EFA, reliability analyses and explained variance by disclosing the factor structure of the items in the proposed research model. Three items removed from the item set and two items detected as suspicious are also indicated in the table as an additional important information.

As presented in Table 11 in Appendix M, results of EFA analysis reveals seven factors in the research model. However, the number of factors in the proposed preliminary research model was nine, which means that EFA and reliability analyses entails a reduction in the number of factors by two. So, after the completion of EFA analyses, a revision need in the preliminary research model rises which necessitates some modifications in the number and title of the factors accordingly. In parallel with revisions in the preliminary research model, some modifications are made in the developed hypotheses. The final version of revised research model and hypotheses list are presented in the next section 6.3.

In addition to analyses of seven factors, EFA and reliability analyses of moderating variables of the proposed research model was also conducted. The results are summarized in Appendix M, Table 12. As it is observed, KMO, Bartlett's Test, Cronbach's Alpha and factor loadings of the five moderating variables are statistically acceptable and explained variance ratios are satisfactory (Hair et al., 2010).

6.3 Final research model and revised hypotheses

In the preliminary research model proposed on basis of literature knowledge, there were nine constructs. social network ties concept was dimensionalized under two constructs tie strength and homophily which was also confirmed by EFA. Social network culture concept had two sub-dimensions in preliminary research model as

shared language and shared vision. EFA revealed social network culture concept as a unidimensional construct by extracting one single factor after the analysis. So, in the research model, these sub-dimensions were unified under a single construct and model was revised accordingly. Another different finding provided by EFA was about trust concept. Trust concept was dimensionalized under three sub-dimensions in the preliminary model as perceived ability, perceived benevolence/integrity and perceived critical mass. However, EFA results indicated that trust concept have two dimensions as interpersonal trust construct and perceived critical mass. So, this concept was revised under the light of EFA findings in the final research model. In parallel with the EFA results, hypotheses developed on the preliminary research model were also revised. The estimated hypotheses list revised in relation to the final research model are listed below. The non-estimated hypotheses due to the non-assurance of measurement invariance in relation to some prospect moderating variables could not be further tested and presented only in Appendix D.

Revised main, mediation and moderation hypotheses of final research model are listed.

Main Hypotheses:

H1: Strength of a social network tie has a positive effect on interpersonal trust.

H2: Strength of a social network tie has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM.

H3: Homophily of a social network tie has a positive effect on dimensions of interpersonal trust.

H4: Homophily of a social network tie has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM.

H5: Social network culture has a positive effect on interpersonal trust.

H6: Social network culture has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM.

H7: Perceived critical mass has a positive effect on interpersonal trust.

H8: Perceived critical mass has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM.

H9: Interpersonal trust has positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM.

H10: Consumers' engagement in eWOM has a positive effect on their intentions to purchase.

H11: Interpersonal trust has positive effect on purchase intentions of consumers.

Mediation Hypotheses:

H12: The relationship between tie strength and consumers' engagement in eWOM is mediated by interpersonal trust.

H13: The relationship between homophily and consumers' engagement in eWOM is mediated by interpersonal trust.

H14: The relationship between social network culture and consumers' engagement in eWOM is mediated by interpersonal trust.

H15: The relationship between perceived critical mass and consumers' engagement in eWOM is mediated by interpersonal trust.

H16: The relationship between interpersonal trust and purchase intention is mediated by consumers' engagement in eWOM.

Estimated Moderation Hypotheses:

H17: Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between tie strength (H17a), homophily (H17b), social network culture (H17c), perceived critical mass (H17d) and interpersonal trust.

H18: Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between tie strength (H18a), social network culture (H18b) and consumers' engagement in eWOM.

H19: Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM.

H20: Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between consumers' engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions.

H21: Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between interpersonal trust and purchase intentions.

H22: The relationships between tie strength (H22a), homophily (H22b), social network culture (H22c), perceived critical mass (H22d) and interpersonal trust is moderated by social network site usage intensity of consumers.

H23: The relationships between tie strength (H23a), social network culture (H23b) and consumers' engagement in eWOM is moderated by social network site usage intensity of consumers.

H24: Social network site usage intensity of consumers moderate the relationship between interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM.

H25: Social network site usage intensity of consumers moderate the relationship between consumers' engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions.

H26: Social network site usage intensity of consumers moderate the relationship between interpersonal trust and purchase intentions.

The final research model including revised hypotheses is presented visually in Figure 3.

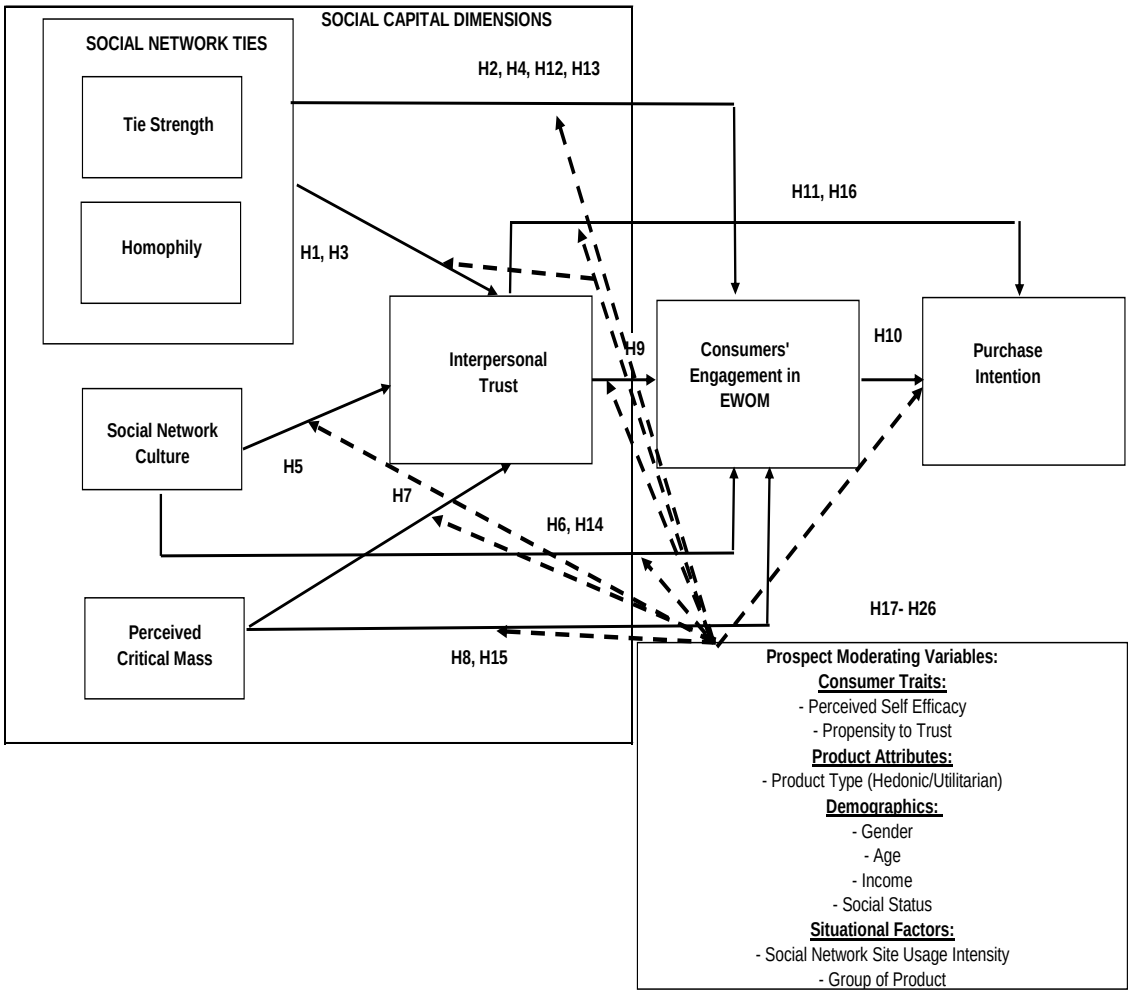

Figure 3. Final research model

6.4 Confirmatory factor analyses

As the next step, in order to confirm the dimensionality, reliability and validity of purified measures obtained by EFA, the CFA analysis is going to be conducted by AMOS 22.0 software on the final research model and the results of CFA are going to be presented in this section of the study.

While researcher does not need to have a priori conceptualization about the item and factor formations in EFA, he needs to specify the number of the factors and their underlying item formations before conducting CFA quite the contrary (Hair et al., 2010). Moreover, CFA serves as the first step in a two-step structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, such that, measurement model is developed and its validity is assessed via CFA. Only after validating the measurement model, researcher can move to the second step in which full structural model is developed and model's overall fit is evaluated.

Before starting the analyses for testing and validating the research model in SEM, the initial checks for any possible identification and estimation problems. There are no exceptions violating three indicator rule of congeneric models in SEM analyses, no single parameters unidentified and not unlinked or multi-linked items to constructs indicating no problems about identification in our meaurement model. Estimation problems are also checked by controlling if there are any correlation estimates between constructs exceeding 1 or any error variance estimates of less than zero which might indicate a problematic Heywood case implying that more than 100 percent of a variance in an item or construct is explained (Hair et.al., 2010). However, no Heywood case was observed allowing us to continue in testing and validation of our measurement model.

In testing and validating the research model in SEM analysis, there are two key issues: 1- Establishing acceptable levels of unidimensionality and goodness of fit for the measurement model 2- Finding evidence for construct validity. So, first we have to look for unidimensionality and assessing goodness of fit of the final research model and then will check for the construct validity.

6.4.1 Assessing unidimensionality of measurement model

Unidimensionality means that a set of variables only has one underlying dimension in common (Hair et al.,2010). CFA results show that all of the variables measures have high loading (>.50) on the latent variables and are all significant (Critical ratio= C.R. = t value >1.96) except two variables; one from Social Network Culture Construct with 1.953 and one from Consumers' Engagement in EWOM construct with -2.784. These two items were the ones which were detected as prospects to be removed during the EFA process. Although they were kept at EFA stage, it was noted that they would be further investigated in the next steps of the study.

Another interpretation is realized on the standardized regression weights. The standardized regression weights for all of the variables are also larger than .50 and they all lie between -1 and +1 as suggested by Hair et al (2010) except the same two problematic items having standardized regression weights of .064 and -.091 respectively.

In order to be sure about determination of which variables must be removed from the model and what effect (decrease) is expected on the Chi-square value, modification indices output is also investigated. It is observed that omitting e63 which is the error term in the problematic item of consumers' engagement in eWOM construct will result a significant decrease in Chi-square value by approximately (161.570+40.398+19.186+16.694+7.236+4.913)= 249.997. Similarly omitting e57 which is error term in the problematic item of Social Network Culture construct will result a big decrease in Chi-square value by approximately (19.634+13.029+11.594+11.428+11.085+7.913+7.522+7.220+5.151+4.872+4.785+ 4.356+4.157)= 112.746. Since these two variables have many statistical deficiencies

and responsible for most of problems in EFA and CFA, it is obvious that they should be removed from the model. Two removed items are listed in Table 13.

Table 13. Removed Items after CFA of Measurement Model

Removed Item	Factor
I have difficulties in understanding some terms/languages in the message posted by others.	Social Network Culture
I rarely ask my contacts on the social networking site about what products to buy.	Cons. Eng. in EWOM

After the removal of these two items, the results of CFA lead us to conclude that the measurement model has unidimensionality, which means that a set of variables has only one underlying dimension in common. The next step will be asssessment of goodness of fit (overall quality) of the measurement model.

6.4.2 Assessing goodness of fit of the measurement model

In SEM, model fit of a model means comparing the theory to reality by assessing the similarity of the estimated covariance matrix (theory) to reality (observed covariance matrix). Any kind of Goodness of Fit (GOF) measure is a comparison of these two matrices. The closer the values of them are to each other, the better the model is said to fit (Hair et al, 2010).

In order to assess model fit, there are several goodness of fit (GOF) indices that can be employed, which are classified into absolute fit indices as chi-square statistics ($\chi 2$), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), root mean square error approximation (RMSEA), root mean square residual (RMR), normed chi-square; incremental fit indices as comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI) and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI); parsimony fit indices as adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) and parsimony normed fit index (PNFI). While absolute fit indices reflect how well the

proposed model reproduces the observed data; incremental fit indices assess the fit between the estimated model and the alternative baseline model where all observed variables are uncorrelated. Parsimony fit indices compare a number of competing models by examining their fit relative to their complexity (Hair et al., 2010). Although there is not a consensus on which GOF indices are best to assess model fit, the general tendency is to use at least one fit indice from each group. As a common practice, researchers only report three to four fit indices due to the redundancy of using all. However, as a rule-of-thumb in any case it is recommended to report $\chi 2$ value with the associated degrees of freedom, CFI and RMSEA to provide sufficient fit information about the model (Hair et al, 2010). As most commonly used indices, chi-square statistic ($\chi 2$), normed ($\chi 2$), RMSEA from Absolute Fit Indices, CFI and TLI from Incremental Fit Indices, PNFI from Parsimony Fit Indices are selected for the assessment of model fit in this study.

Chi square ($\chi 2$) is the fundamental statistical measure for Goodness of Fit in SEM to quantify differences between observed sample matrix and SEM estimated covariance matrix. As a desired outcome of the chi-square test, in order to accept the null hypothesis that observed and estimated covariance matrices are not different, a non-significant p-value is desired. However, as pointed by Hair and colleagues (2010), the chi-square test is sensitive to sample size and to the number of parameters in the model, thus, with the condition that the number of observations is greater than 250 and the model has more than thirty observed variables, a significant chi-square statistic ($\chi 2$) is expected (p. 672). Since the sample size and the total number of observations in the current study are above the threshold values with 980 participants and 75 variables, it is expected that chi-square statistics will be significant and its value will have no relevance in assessing the fit of the models. As expected, p value

appears to be significant with value of .000 in our study which does not indicate a misfit due to the large sample size and high number of observations.

Normed chi-square is a simple ratio of $\chi 2$ to the degrees of freedom for a model. Generally, $\chi 2$:df ratios of 3:1 or less are associated with better fitting models (Hair et al, 2010). In CFA results of our study, chi-square ($\chi 2$) value of the model for main constructs is 6808.868, degrees of freedom value is 2393 and $\chi 2$:df ratio is obtained as 2.845 indicating an acceptable fit in the model. As another Absolute Fit Index, Hair suggests a RMSEA value lower than .70 for models with sample size larger than 250 and 30 or more variables as ours (2010, p.672). In this study, CFA provides a RMSEA value of .043 which is totally acceptable for statistical standards.

For the Incremental Fit Indices, Hair and colleagues (2010) state that CFI and TLI values above .90 indicate acceptable model fit for models with sample size larger than 250 and 30 or more variables. Our CFA results show .929 and .926 values for CFI and TLI indicating a good incremental fit assessment. Relatively high PNFI values near to 1 represent better fit in terms of Parsimony Fit Indices. In our study, CFA results provide a PNFI value of .861 representing a sufficient parsimony fit.

The measurement model fit (GOF) indices for the main constructs of this study obtained from CFA analyses are summarized in Table 14.

Table 14. Goodness of Fit Indices for Assessment of Measurement Model Fit

INDEX	VALUES	THRESHOLD (N>250 ; m>30)*
Normed Chi square (CMIN/df)	2.845	< 3
RMSEA	0.043	< 0.70
CFI	0.929	> 0.90
TLI	0.926	> 0.90
PNFI	0.861	Higher is better
Chi square value (CMIN):	($\chi 2$): 6808.86	df = 2393

* N= sample size m=number of observed variables (Hair,2010, p.672)

6.4.3 Descriptive statistics and correlations for constructs of measurement model

Table 15 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations for all of the constructs in this study. As seen in the Table 15, seven constructs, namely; Tie Strength, Homophily, Social Network Culture, Perceived Critical Mass, Interpersonal Trust, Consumers' Engagement in EWOM, Purchase Intention are significantly ($p < .01$) positively and correlated with each other as expected. Only two exceptions are the insignificant correlations between Homophily and two constructs; Tie Strength and Social Network Culture.

Table 15. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Measurement Model Constructs

		Mean	Std. Dev.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Tie Strength	3.823	1.24384	1						
2	Homophily	3.116	.70325	-0.007	1					
3	Social Network Culture	3.838	1.23182	0.837**	0.039	1				
4	Perceived Critical Mass	4.189	1.15825	0.619**	-0.014	0.617**	1			
5	Interpersonal Trust	3.21	.79362	0.715**	0.171**	0.735**	0.692**	1		
6	Consumers' Engagement in EWOM	3.864	1.33850	0.807**	0.034	0.849**	0.572**	0.597**	1	
7	Purchase Intention	3.706	1.14014	0.444**	0.212**	0.509**	0.337**	0.623**	0.597**	1

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

Table 16 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations for the moderating variables in this study. As seen in the Table 16, five moderators, namely; Perceived Self Efficacy, Propensity to Trust, Utilitarian Consumer Product Attitude, Hedonic Consumer Product Attitude, Social Network Site Usage Intensity are significantly ($p < .01$) positively correlated with each other as expected.

Table 16. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Measurement Model Moderators

		Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2	3	4	5
1	Perceived Self Efficacy	3.9208	1.42637	1				
2	Propensity to Trust	3.6296	1.38809	0.606**	1			
3	Utilitarian Product Attitude	3.9260	1.41629	0.625**	0.392**	1		
4	Hedonic Product Attitude	3.9590	1.44311	0.620**	0.398**	0.897**	1	
5	SNS Usage Intensity	3.9198	1.44641	0.709**	0.526**	0.543**	0.552**	1

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

6.4.4 Assessing construct validity of measurement model

One of the primary aims of conducting CFA is to assess the construct validity of the measurement model, which reflects the extent to which observed variables accurately measure what they are supposed to measure (Hair et al., 2010). In brief, assurance of construct validity provides the confidence that item measures taken from a sample characterize the actual true score that exists in the population (Hair et al., 2010, p. 709).

In order to confirm construct validity, both convergent validity and discriminant validity of the measurements scales should be verified. While convergent validity examines the similarity between related constructs, discriminant validity looks for a divergence between measures of related but conceptually different constructs. (Cook & Campbell, 1979, p. 61).

The convergent validity of the model is investigated by using three criteria suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). First, high convergent validity can be assured by having high loadings on a factor indicating that they converge on a common latent construct. As a rule of thumb, statistically significant standardized loading estimates should be 0.5 or higher and ideally 0.7 or higher (Hair et al., 2010,

p. 709). all factors loadings should be statistically significant and exceed minumum 0.50. In this study all the standardized regression weights confirm this condition by being minumum >0.50. Second, average variance extracted (AVE) by each construct should exceed the variance due to measurement error for that construct and exceed 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Average variance extracted (AVE) is calculated as the mean variance extracted for the items loading on a construct and is a summary indicator of convergence. It is computed as the total of all squared standardized factor loadings divided by number of items manually. This condition is also confirmed in this study as will seen in Table 17. Third, composite reliability measure for every latent variable should be greater than 0.70 to suggest good reliability of the model (Hair, 2010). Hair and colleagues (2010) point that reliability of the construct is also an indicator of convergent validity; such that, high construct reliability means that the measures under the same factor all consistently represent the same latent construct. Besides, both for the assurance of construct reliability and validity, construct reliability value should be greater than 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). In this study, composite reliability values of constructs are above 0.70 as shown in Table 17. Hence, all the three conditions for convergent validity were met showing internal consistency and reliability of the model.

Table 17. AVE and Composite Reliability Values of Measurement Model Constructs

	Construct	AVE > 0.50	Composite Reliability > 0.70
1	Tie Strength	0.6934	0.9693
2	Homophily	0.5008	0.9332
3	Interpersonal Trust	0.6156	0.9711
4	Critical Mass	0.6853	0.8666
5	Social Network Culture	0.7187	0.9533
6	Consumers' Eng. in E-WOM	0.7452	0.9359
7	Purchase Intention	0.6826	0.9279

6.4.5 Assessing discriminant validity of measurement model

Finally, the discriminant validity is assessed using the guidelines suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Discriminant validity is the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs. Thus, discriminant validity provides evidence that a construct is unique and captures some phenomena other measures do not. On the other hand, to ensure discriminant validity, a latent construct should explain more of the variance in its item measures that it shares with another construct. Therefore, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) score for any two constructs should be greater than the squared correlation estimate between these two constructs (Hair et al., 2010). The square of correlation for each couple of constructs is found to be smaller than their corresponding AVE values. In Table 18, the values on the diagonal correspond with the AVE values of the constructs. The non-diagonal elements are calculated as the square of the correlations between the constructs. The square of correlation for each couple of constructs is mostly found to be smaller than their corresponding AVE values. However, there are three exceptions: correlation between SNS Culture and Tie Strength, EWOM and Tie Strength and SNS Culture and E-WOM. In general, discriminant validity is highly attained with these exceptions and it is shown that most of the constructs are conceptually distinct from each other in the model.

Table 18. AVE and Squared Correlations of Measurement Model Constructs

	TIESTR	HOMOP	TRUST	CR MASS	SNS CULT	EWOM	PUR INT
TIESTR	0.6934						
HOMOP	0.000016	0.5008					
TRUST	0.540225	0.031684	0.6156				
CR MASS	0.456976	0.000169	0.5776	0.6853			
SNS CULT	0.755161	0.001681	0.58676	0.461041	0.7187		
EWOM	0.715716	0.001444	0.58064	0.404496	0.806404	0.7452	
P.INT	0.215296	0.048841	0.58064	0.133225	0.287296	0.404496	0.6826

As a result of the first step analysis of the measurement model of the study, it is concluded that unidimensionality, construct validity, including reliability, convergent and discriminant validity criterias are satisfied and overall quality of model fit is found completely statistically acceptable.

6.5 Multiple group confirmatory factor analyses

A moderating effect is defined when a third variable or construct changes the relationship and/or strength between two related variables/constructs (Hair et. al., 2010). Moderating variables being nonmetric or metric, should be chosen with theoretical support or according to previous studies' findings. In this study, a group of nonmetric and metric moderators are considered to be tested based on literature review and qualitative study findings. Nonmetric moderators are determined as the respondent characteristics as gender, age, income, social status and product group characteristics which some are found to have moderation effects in some past studies. Metric moderators are determined as consumer traits as perceived self efficacy, propensity to trust, consumer's utilitarian product attitude, consumer's hedonic product attitude and social network site usage intensity level which are again expected to have moderation effects according to the theoretical knowledge and in depth interview findings. Based on that, multi-group CFA are conducted for the study's measurement model for each possible moderating construct/variable seperately.

6.5.1 Multiple group confirmatory factor analyses for nonmetric variables

Five multi-group CFA analyses are conducted as the initial step to discuss measurement model invariance as a prerequisite for later making further comparisons

at structural model level to test the hypotheses related with gender, age, income, social status and group of product.

Two multigroup CFAs are conducted to examine measurement model invariance; in other words, configural and metric invariance of the data across two median based split groups in each of the five nonmetric demographic and product variables. The process and results are presented in next sections.

6.5.1.1 Multiple group confirmatory factor analyses for gender

The theoretical knowledge and past studies suggest that there could be gender difference in the relationships of constructs where the effect would be greater among women relative to men. Before testing the moderation effect of gender on relationships between our study's constructs, two multigroup CFAs should be conducted in order to examine configural and metric invariance of the study data across two groups of gender as a prerequisite. Multigroup CFA tests will be described in this section, while later steps will be presented in SMA section of the thesis.

In order to do that, sample is divided into two by median split as male (n=494) and female (n=486). In order to continue multiple group analysis, configural and metric invariance should be first tested during the CFA to validate that the factor structure and loadings are sufficiently equivalent across two groups. This assures the latent constructs measure the same thing for both groups. In order to show this measurement model invariance, configural and metric invariance are needed. When the data is split and model fit is assessed adequately within the suggested limit, then it is assured that there is configural invariance for the unconstrained model. For metric invariance, chi square difference test is used between the unconstrained model

(configural invariance model) and the constrained model (metric invariance model). In the metric invariance model, the factor loadings and regression weights are constrained to be invariant across groups. If the chi square difference test between these models is nonsignificant (at a p value of .05), then measurement invariance is assured. According to suggested minumum levels of invariance by Hair et a. (2010), full configural invariance is mandatory while partial metric invariance might be accepted as a less conservative standard for extending the moderation analysis process to next stage. Partial metric invariance is attained when two parameters per construct are equivalent across groups.

Configural invariance confirms that the same basic factor structure exists in all groups with same number of constructs and items. It is also shown that each group model meets appropriate levels of model fit and construct validity. This model is referred as totally free multiple group model (TF) in which all free parameters are estimated seperately and freely take different values in each group becoming baseline model for comparison (Hair et al., 2010).

The results of the unconstrained two gender group analysis support the existence of configural invariance of the measures across groups ($\chi 2$ (4786) = 11149.463, CMIN/DF = 2.33, CFI = .90, RMSEA = .037, PNFI = 0.807) with all GOF indices within acceptable levels.

Metric invariance stage confirms the empirical comparison between MCFA models groups and involves the equivalence of factor loadings. The chi-square difference test ($\Delta\chi_{2)}$ is computed between this model and the previous TF model with the degrees of freedom equaling the number of constrained loading estimates across the groups (Hair et al., 2010). This is a critical test of invariance and the degree to which this is met determines cross group validity beyond basic factor structure. The

results of constrained two gender group analysis is (χ2 (4858) = 11244.189, CMIN/DF = 2.315, CFI = .90, RMSEA = .037, PNFI = 0.818) with all GOF indices within acceptable levels.

Metric invariance of the measures is investigated by chi-square difference test between this model and previous TF model. The chi-square difference test for the configural and metric invariance models is insignificant as desired which signals that the additional variance constraint on the factor loadings does not significantly affect the fit of the CFA model, compared to the unconstrained configural invariance model ($\Delta\chi$2 (72) = 94.7, p > .01). Thus, the existence of the metric invariance for both gender groups is ensured by the insignificant chi-square difference and the model shows measurement model invariance indicating the model structures are the same for both gender groups fully satisfying configural and metric invariance. So, as the prerequisite measurement invariance condition is attained, the moderation effects of genders on constructs' interrelationships can be further analyzed during the SMA analysis stage.

6.5.1.2 Multiple group CFA for age, income, social status and product type

Although past knowledge suggest that there could be differences by the moderating effect of demographic characteristics, multigroup CFAs of these prospect moderators provided only configural invariance across groups while metric invariance could not be fully or partially attained. So, although there exists configural invariance in basic factor structures of groups, there is not sufficient metric invariance for the equivalence of factor loadings of these groups. Table 19 presents the results for multigroups based on median split values of age, income, social status and product types as prospect nonmetric moderating variables.

Table 19. Measurement Invariance Results of Multigroup CFA for Age, Income, Social Status and Product Type

AGE (young/old) Median Split value:29 Young:496 Old:484	$\chi 2$	Df	$\chi 2$/Df	CFI	RMSEA	PCFI	Config. Invariance (Full)	Metric Invariance (Full or partial)	Measurement Invariance
Unconstr. Model (TF)	11337.59	4786	2.369	0.898	0.037	0.865	Assured		
Constrained Model	11450.20	4857						Not assured	
Difference	113	71	$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.01$ so metric invariance is not achieved						Not assured
INCOME (high/low income) Median Split Value: 3 High income:507 Low income:473	$\chi 2$	Df	$\chi 2$/Df	CFI	RMSEA	PCFI	Config. Invariance	Metric Invariance	
Unconstr. Model (TF)	11078.63	4786	2.315	0.896	0.037	0.863	Assured		
Constrained Model	11193.04	4857						Not assured	
Difference	115	71	$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.01$ so metric invariance is not achieved						Not assured
SOCIAL STATUS (high/low status) Median Split Value: 3 High status: 490 Low status:490	$\chi 2$	Df	$\chi 2$/Df	CFI	RMSEA	PCFI	Configural Invariance	Metric Invariance	
Unconstr. Model (TF)	11063.91	4786	2.312	0.900	0.037	0.867	Assured		
Constrained Model	11169.94	4857						Not assured	
Difference	106	71	$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.01$ so metric invariance is not achieved						Not assured
PRODUCT TYPE(game/clothing) Based on highest # of two product groups Game/hobby: 298 Clothing/shoes: 215	$\chi 2$	Df	$\chi 2$/Df	CFI	RMSEA	PCFI	Configural Invariance	Metric Invariance	
Unconstr. Model (TF)	10611.88	4786					Assured		
Constrained Model	10716.81	4857						Not assured	
Difference	105	71	$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.01$ so metric invariance is not achieved						Not assured

As it is presented in the Table 19, configural invariance was achieved for all groups, but metric invariance, which is a precondition of measurement invariance was not fully or partially achieved for any of them. Although full metric variance conditions were not satisfied by significance of chi-square difference tests, partial variance conditions were also investigated in all of the model groups. Minumum two constraints on each factor that are expected to make greatest differences in $\Delta\chi 2$ as to make it insignificant are set free systematically by examining the modification indices for the fully constrained model. Equality constraints with largest modification indices were set free first and analyses were renewed for each multigroup accordingly to achieve some partial invariance at some point. However, although a series of constraint eliminations are applied based on modification indices, none of the groups could succeed in attaining partial metric invariance. As the result, the only nonparametric moderating variable which assured measurement invariance in multigroup CFA analyses remained as the gender characteristic. So, moderation effects of gender on the path relationships of the final research model constructs will be further analyzed at Structural Model Analysis stage.

6.5.2 Multiple group confirmatory factor analyses for metric variables

Afterwards, five multigroup moderation analyses are conducted to test as the initial step of measurement model invariance as a prerequisite for later making comparisons at structural model level to test the hypotheses related with Perceived Self Efficacy, Propensity to Trust, Hedonic and Utilitarian Product Attitudes, Social Network Site Usage Intensity which are prospect metric moderating variables.

Two multigroup CFAs are conducted to examine measurement model invariance; in other words, configural and metric invariance of the data across two

median based split groups in each of the five metric consumer traits, attitudes and social network site usage intensity variables. The process and results are presented in next sections.

6.5.2.1 Multiple group CFA for social network site usage intensity

The theoretical knowledge and past studies suggest that there could be difference in the relationships of constructs where the effect would be greater for higher intensity internet users. Before testing the moderation effect of social network site usage intensity on relationships between our study's constructs, two multigroup CFAs should be conducted in order to examine configural and metric invariance of the study data across two groups of different level of users as a prerequisite. In order to do that, sample is divided into two in terms of usage intensity level as high intensity users (n=488) and low intensity users (n=492) according to a median split. The split was conducted, based on the median value of 11.90 (Low intensity users = values lower than 11.90 and High intensity users = values higher than 11.90).

The results of the unconstrained two social network site usage intensity group analysis support the existence of configural invariance of the measures across groups ($\chi 2$ (4786) = 11288.592, CMIN/DF = 2.359, CFI = .898, RMSEA = .037, PCFI = 0.865) with all GOF indices within acceptable levels.

The results of constrained two social network site usage intensity group analysis is ($\chi 2$ (4857) = 11364.254, CMIN/DF = 2.340, CFI = .898, RMSEA = .037, PCFI = 0.878) with all GOF indices within acceptable levels.

Metric invariance of the measures is investigated by chi-square difference test between this model and previous TF model. The chi-square difference test for the configural and metric invariance models is insignificant as desired which signals that

the additional variance constraint on the factor loadings does not significantly affect the fit of the CFA model, compared to the unconstrained configural invariance model ($\Delta\chi 2$ (71) = 75.667, $p > .05$). Thus, the existence of the metric invariance for both SNS usage intensity groups is ensured by the insignificant chi-square difference and the model shows measurement model invariance indicating the model structures are the same for both intensity user groups fully satisfying configural and metric invariance. So, as the prerequisite measurement invariance condition is attained, the moderation effects of social network site usage intensity on constructs' interrelationships can be further analyzed during the SMA path analysis stage.

6.5.2.2 Multiple group CFA for perceived self efficacy, propensity to trust, consumer's utilitarian and hedonic product attitude

Although the theoretical knowledge and past studies suggest that there could be differences in the relationships of constructs by the moderating effect of consumer traits like perceived self efficacy, propensity to trust and attitudes like utilitarian and hedonic product attitudes, multigroup CFAs provided only configural invariance across groups while metric invariance could not be fully or partially attained for any of them. So, although there exists configural invariance in basic factor structures of groups, there is not sufficient metric invariance for the equivalence of factor loadings of the groups. Table 20 presents the results of unconstrained, constrained model and chi-square difference analyses for multigroups based on median split values of consumer traits; perceived self efficacy and propensity to trust, consumer attitudes; utilitarian and hedonic product attitude prospect metric moderating variables.

Table 20. Measurement Invariance Test Results of Multigroup CFA for Consumer Traits and Attitudes

PERCEIVED SELF EFFICACY (high/low self efficacy) Median Split value: 4.33 High S.E.:466 Low S.E.:514	$\chi 2$	Df	$\chi 2$/Df	CFI	RMSEA	PCFI	Config Invar. (Full variance)	Metric Invar. (Full or partial)	Measurement Invariance
Unconstrained Model (TF)	11452.02	4786	2.393	0.859	0.038	0.827	Assured		
Constrained Model	11805.79	4857						Not assured	
Difference	354	71	$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.01$ so metric invariance is not achieved						Not assured
PROPEN. TO TRUST (high/low propensity to trust) Median Split Value: 4.33 High P.T:518 Low P.T:462	$\chi 2$	Df	$\chi 2$/Df	CFI	RMSEA	PCFI	Config Invariance	Metric Invar	
Unconstrained Model (TF)	11128.85	4786	2.325	0.882	0.037	0.849	Assured		
Constrained Model	11405.11	4857						Not assured	
Difference	276	71	$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.01$ so metric invariance is not achieved						Not assured
HEDONIC PRODUCT ATTITUDE (high/low hedonistic) Median Split Value: 4.33 High hedonist: 509 Low hedonist:471	$\chi 2$	Df	$\chi 2$/Df	CFI	RMSEA	PCFI	Config Invar	Metric Invar	
Unconstrained Model (TF)	11023.77	4786	2.303	0.882	0.037	0.779	Assured		
Constrained Model	11252.10	4857						Not assured	
Difference	229	71	$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.01$ so metric invariance is not achieved						Not assured
UTILITAR PRODUCT ATTITUDE (high/low utilitarian) Median Split Value: 4.33 High utilitarian: 514 Low utilitarian:466	$\chi 2$	Df	$\chi 2$/Df	CFI	RMSEA	PCFI	Config Invar	Metric Invar	
Unconstrained Model (TF)	11110.17	4786					Assured		
Constrained Model	11339.20	4857						Not assured	
Difference	229	71	$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.01$ so metric invariance is not achieved						Not assured

As it is presented in the Table 20, configural invariance was achieved for all groups, but metric invariance which is a precondition of measurement invariance was not fully or partially achieved for any of them. As the result, the only metric moderating variable which assured measurement invariance in multigroup CFA analyses remained as the social network site usage intensity. So, moderation effects of social network site usage intensity on the relationships of research model constructs will be further analyzed at structural model analysis stage.

6.6 Structural model analyses

As our measurement model was validated and achieved an acceptable model fit, we can turn into the test of structural relationships by using the structural equation modeling methodology with AMOS 22.0.

We constructed our structural model using the 7 latent variables and 70 observed variables identified and validated in the CFA as presented in previous sections. Social capital dimensions of tie strength, homophily, social network culture and perceived critical mass were modeled as exogenous constructs, purchase intention as endogenous construct, interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM constructs as both exogenous and endogenous constructs. The maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) method is used, as it provides unbiased, more consistent and efficient estimates (Hair et al, 2010). Mediation analyses are also conducted after path analyses. The relationships between the constructs are assessed independent of the effects of the moderator variables which are tested for multigroup CFA analyses of measurement model invariance (configural and metric invariance) at the previous CFA section. The moderator variable effects; effects of gender and social network

site usage intensity will be further tested in later sections of structural model analyses.

6.6.1 Goodness of fit (overall quality) of the structural model

The goodness of fit (GOF) measures used in confirmatory factor analyses are also selected for the structural model assessment of the study. These measures were chi-square statistic ($\chi 2$), normed ($\chi 2$), RMSEA from absolute fit indices, CFI and TLI from incremental fit indices, PNFI from parsimony fit indices. The reasons for preferring these measures and their respective cut off values were discussed in confirmatory factor analyses section of this study. Goodness of fit (GOF) indices for the constructs of this study's structural model obtained from structural model analyses are summarized in Table 21.

Table 21. Goodness of Fit Indices for Assessment of Structural Model Fit

INDEX	VALUES	THRESHOLD (N>250 ; m>30)*
Normed Chi square (CMIN/df)	2.890	< 3
RMSEA	0.044	< 0.70
CFI	0.927	> 0.90
TLI	0.924	> 0.90
PNFI	0.861	Higher is better
Chi square value (CMIN):	($\chi 2$): 6926.14	df = 2397

* N= sample size m=number of observed variables (Hair,2010, p.672)

The model fit indices displayed in Table 21 for the structural model show that the model of the study provides a good fit with all acceptable levels. Although the p-values of the $\chi 2$ statistics are statistically significant (p = 0.000) in both measurement and structural models, as explained in the above sections, this can be referred to the study's sample size being over 250 with more than thirty observed variables (Hair et

al., 2010). Overall, we can conclude that the hypothesized model fits the data well. If a problem of model fit existed, it likely would be revealed through a high standardized residual or a high modification index. Our analysis of these values did not also signal any problem of fit. However, good fit alone is insufficient to support a proposed structural theory (Hair et al., 2010).

These overall fit indices establish the validity of the structural model but comparisons between the overall fit indices should be also made with the measurement model (Hair et al., 2010). In a structural model, the relationships between some constructs are assumed to be zero that's why the $\chi 2$ GOF for the measurement model will be less than the $\chi 2$ GOF for the structural model for almost all conventional SEM models as in this study being $\chi 2$: 6808.86 for measurement model less than $\chi 2$: 6926.14 of the structural model. Generally, the closer the structural model GOF comes to measurement model, the better the structural model fit because the measurement model fit provides an upper bound to the GOF of a conventional structural model. By this comparison view, our research model again presents a good fit in which structural model GOF is pretty close to the GOF of the measurement model.

6.6.2 Hypotheses testing by structural model path analysis

So, as the overall fit conditions are satisfied, the individual parameter estimates against the corresponding predictions or paths, each representing a specific hypothesis, are examined as the next step of structural model analysis. The parameter estimates for the hypothesized paths are presented in Table 22.

Table 22. Parameter Estimates and Hypotheses Testing Results of Structural Model

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Path	Non-stand parameter estimate	Standardized Parameter estimate	t Value	Results of Hypothesis Testing
H1	Tiestrength → Interpersonal Trust	0.120	0.157	3.532***	Supported
H2	Tiestrength → Cons.Eng.EWOM	0.223	0 .231	5.940***	Supported
H3	Homophily → Interpersonal Trust	0.224	0.173	8.342***	Supported
H4	Homophily → Cons.Eng.EWOM	- 0.030	- 0.018	- 1.005	Not supported
H5	Social Network Culture → Interpersonal Trust	0.259	0.330	7.175***	Supported
H6	Social Network Culture → Cons.Eng.EWOM	0.595	0.599	13.717***	Supported
H7	Perceived Critical Mass → Interpersonal Trust	0.379	0.430	12.823***	Supported
H8	Perceived Critical Mass → Cons.Eng.EWOM	- 0.094	- 0.084	-2.657*	Not Supported
H9	Interpersonal Trust → Cons.Eng.EWOM	0.255	0.202	5.786***	Supported
H10	Cons.Eng.EWOM → Purchase Intention	0.295	0.304	7.024***	Supported
H11	Interpersonal Trust →Purchase Intention	0.507	0.413	9.428***	Supported

***p < .01 (one sided), **p < .05 (one sided), *p<.1 (one sided)

The results of the hypotheses testing regarding the path relationships in structural model show that hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H5, H6, H7, H9, H10 and H11 are supported, while hypothesis H4 and H8 not supported**.** Explained variance (R2)

of endogenous constructs are also obtained by squared correlations of dependent variables and shown in the Figure 4. The highest explanation portion is in consumers' engagement in eWOM construct by 83%, followed by interpersonal trust by 72% and purchase intention by 45.5%.

The results show that the relationship between homophily and consumers' engagement in eWOM has no mediation but a slight indirect effect (no significant direct paths between exogenous and endogenous constructs) by interpersonal trust since the paths from homophily to interpersonal trust (H3) and from interpersonal trust to consumers' engagement to eWOM (H9) are both significant whereas the direct path from homophily to consumers' engagement to eWOM (H4) is insignificant and rejected. This relationship will be also discussed in mediation analyses section.

On the other hand, the relationships between tie strength, perceived critical mass, social network site culture and consumers' engagement in eWOM are partially mediated by interpersonal trust since the paths from tie strength to interpersonal trust (H1), from perceived critical mass market to interpersonal trust (H7), from social network site culture to interpersonal trust (H5), from interpersonal trust to consumers' engagement in eWOM (H9) are all significant, while there are also significant paths supported from tie strength to consumes' engagement in eWOM (H2), from perceived critical mass market to consumers' engagement in eWOM (H8) and from social network site culture to consumers' engagement in eWOM (H6). However, the significant direct path between perceived critical mass and consumers' engagement in eWOM is negative in contrary to the developed hypothesis (H8) which results in rejection of it. The details of this relationship will be also further discussed in mediation analyses section.

The last hypotheses H(10) and H(11) are supported by significant paths between interpersonal trust, consumers' engagement in eWOM and purchase intention which also signifies a partial mediation between interpersonal trust and purchase intention by the mediator of consumers' engagement in eWOM. The significant path estimates for structural model are visually summarized in Figure 4.

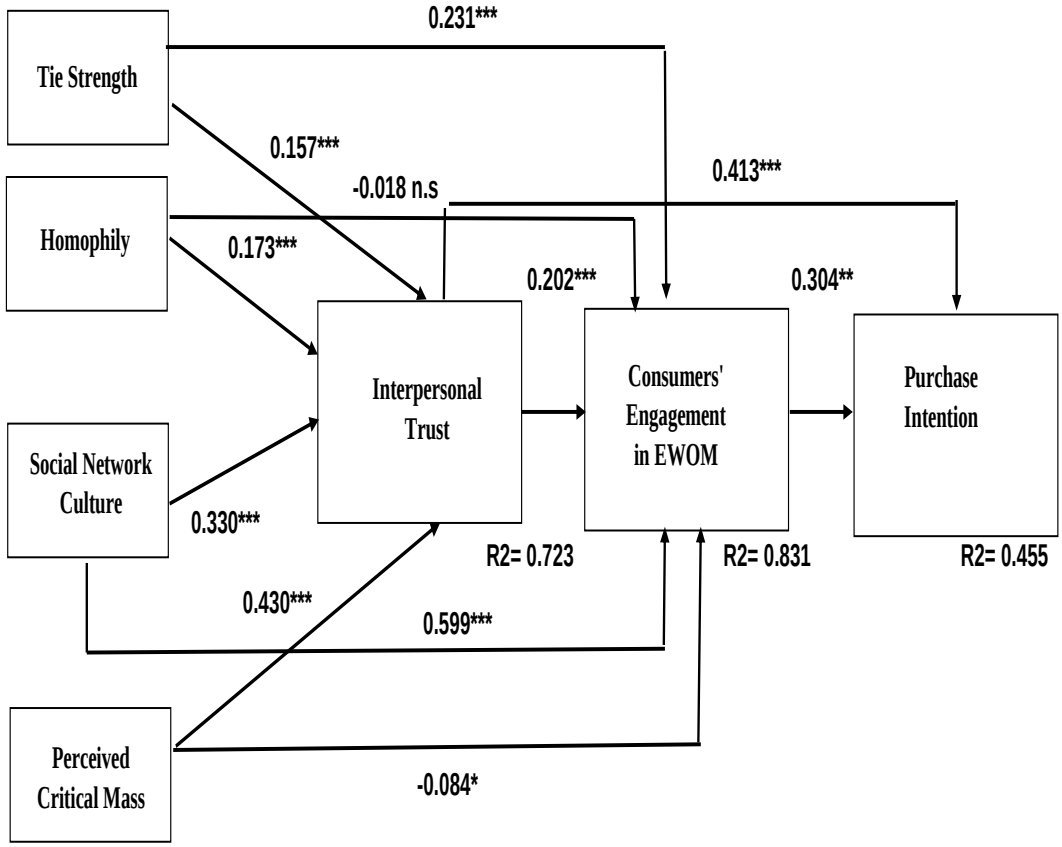

Figure 4. Summary of path analyses results for the structural model

*** p < .01 (one sided), ** p< .05(one sided), * p<.1 (one sided), n.s=not significant (p>.1)

6.7 Analyses of control variables

As the next step in our structural model testing analyses, the path relationships in the research model are re-tested with including the possible control variables, which are

demographics as gender, age, income, social status, situational factors as social network site usage, type of the social network site and product. The control variables which are significantly correlated with the variables of interest and so would change the path relationships would be included in the subsequent analyses (Becker, 2005). The results of SEM model analysis for the research model with integrated control variables are displayed in Table 23. According to these results the research model provides a good fit ($\chi 2$ = 7551.27, df= 2845, CMIN/DF= 2.654, p=0.000; CFI = 0.925; TLI= 0.920; RMSEA = 0.041).

Table 23. Model Fit for Structural Model with Control Variables

INDEX	VALUES	THRESHOLD (N>250 ; m>30)*
Normed Chi square (CMIN/df)	2.654	<3
RMSEA	0.041	<0.70
CFI	0.925	>0.90
TLI	0.920	>0.90
PNFI	0.838	Higher is better
Chi square value (CMIN):	7551.27	df = 2845

* N= sample size m=number of observed variables (Hair,2010, p.672)

Gender, age, social status, income, social network site usage, type of social network site and product are integrated to the structural research model of the study testing for their possible effects as control variables. None of them have a significant path estimates with the variables of interest in the model, except four of the relationships; income - engagement in eWOM, social status - purchase intention, sns type - purchase intention and gender - purchase intention as presented in Table 24. None of the control variables have effect on dependent variables and no significant group differences were observed with these three exceptions. This shows us that the effects on dependent variables (endogenous variables) of our research model are

solely generated by our independent variables (exogenous variables) not by any outer effect like control variables as desired.

Table 24. Parameter Estimates of Structural Model with Control Variables

Hypothesized Path	Non standardized parameter	Standardized parameter estimate	t value
Trust - Gender	-0.056	-0.025	0.201
Trust - Age	0.004	0.031	0.123
Trust - Income	-0.001	-0.015	0.44
Trust - SES (Social Status)	0.01	0.008	0.667
Trust - Product Type	0.002	0.006	0.748
Trust - SNS Usage Intensity	0.007	0.006	0.753
Trust - SNS Type	0.047	0.034	0.075
Eng. in EWOM- Gender	-0.058	-0.02	0.229
Eng. in EWOM- Age	-0.001	-0.007	0.685
Eng. in EWOM - Income	0.003	0.034	0.043**
Eng. in EWOM - SES	0.011	0.007	0.692
Eng. in EWOM- Product type	-0.012	-0.025	0.138
Eng. in EWOM- SNS Usage Int	0.002	0.001	0.946
Eng. in EWOM - SNS Type	0.022	0.013	0.452
Purchase Intention - Gender	-0.233	-0.085	0.001***
Purchase Intention - Age	-0.004	-0.03	0.268
Purchase Intention - Income	0.002	0.027	0.286
Purchase Intention - SES	-0.111	-0.072	0.005***
Purchase Intention - Product Type	0.004	0.009	0.714
Purchase Intention - SNS Usage Int	-0.004	-0.003	0.912
Purchase Intention - SNS Type	0.113	0.067	0.01***

*** = $p < .01$ (two-tailed), ** = $p < .05$ (two-tailed)

As can be seen by the path estimates exhibited in Table 25, the integration of the control variables to the structural model of the study does not make any

difference in the significance structure of the hypothesized paths as well as their comparative effects in the model. However, these control variables will be later used and tested in further moderation effect analyses on the path estimates of the constructs of the research model. Social network site type will be seperately analyzed by post hoc structural model analyses on bases of three social network site user sample groups seperately; Facebook, Instagram and Twitter in the next post-hoc tests section.

Table 25. Parameter Estimates of Structural Model Path Relationships

			Non Standardized Estimate	Standardized Estimate	P
TRUST	<---	SNSCUL	0.264	0.336	***
TRUST	<---	TIESTR	0.121	0.158	***
TRUST	<---	CRITMA	0.371	0.42	***
TRUST	<---	HOMOP	0.225	0.174	***
ENGAG	<---	TRUST	0.254	0.201	***
ENGAG	<---	CRITMA	-0.089	-0.08	0.013**
ENGAG	<---	SNSCUL	0.598	0.603	***
ENGAG	<---	TIESTR	0.219	0.227	***
ENGAG	<---	HOMOP	-0.033	-0.02	0.264
PURCHA	<---	ENGAG	0.296	0.305	***
PURCHA	<---	TRUST	0.491	0.4	***

*** = $p < .01$ (two-tailed), ** = $p < .05$ (two-tailed)

6.8 Analyses of post hoc tests

6.8.1 Post hoc analyses of competitive fit testing by comparing alternative nested models with our original research model

Good fit statistics do not always show that the theory is the best way to explain our observed sample covariance matrix and any number of equivalent models may exist for our proposed model and may also produce good fits. So, the primary objective in SEM analysis is to ensure that our proposed model has not only acceptable model fit

but also it performs better than some alternative models. If not, then the alternative model may be supported. A powerful test of alternative models is to compare models of similar complexity through nested models, where a model is nested within another model if it contains the same number of constructs and variables and can be formed from the other model by altering the relationships, such as either adding or deleting paths (Hair et al., 2010). Competing nested SEM models are compared based on chi-square ($\chi 2$) difference statistic ($\Delta\chi 2$). The $\chi 2$ value from the baseline model (B) is compared with the $\chi 2$ value of a lesser or higher constrained alternative nested model (A). The difference in degrees of freedom is found, with one more degree of freedom for each additional path deleted or one less degrees of freedom for each additional path added. The statistical significance for given $\Delta\chi 2$ value and difference in degrees of freedom (Δdf) is tested.

6.8.1.1 Comparison with alternative nested model 1

In this study, an an alternative nested model 1, having the same number of constructs and variables as our research model, is suggested with deletion of a structural path from interpersonal trust construct to purchase intention construct. This deleted path would increase degrees of freedom by one and the new alternative model is re-estimated and $\Delta\chi 2$ is calculated. For a model with one degree of freedom difference (Δdf), a $\Delta\chi 2$ of 3.84 or more means significance at the .05 level. The results in Table 26 show that the chi-square difference test for our research model and alternative nested model 1 is significant ($\Delta\ \chi^2_{(1)} = 91$, at type I error rate of .05) showing a statistically significant worsening fit than our original research model.

Table 26. Chi-square Difference Test of the Research Model and Alternative Nested Model 1

	$\chi 2$	Df
$\chi 2$ of Research Model	6926.14	2397
$\chi 2$ of Alternative Nested Model 1	7017.42	2398
$\Delta\chi 2$ (Chi-square difference)	91.28	1

As it is observed from Table 26, $\chi 2$ worsenes significantly by deletion of one path in the alternative nested model, which confirms the good fit of our original research model in comparison to other alternative nested model.

6.8.1.2 Comparison with alternative nested model 2

Another alternative nested model 2, having the same number of constructs and variables as our research model, is suggested with deletion of four structural paths from tie strength, homophily, social network culture and perceived critical mass constructs to consumers' engagement in eWOM construct. These deleted paths would increase degrees of freedom by four and the new alternative model is re-estimated and $\Delta\chi 2$ is calculated. For a model with four degree of freedom difference (Δdf), a $\Delta\chi 2$ of 9.49 or more means significance at the .05 level. The results in Table 27 show that the chi-square difference test for our research model and alternative nested model 2 is significant ($\Delta\ \chi^2_{(4)} = 618$, at type I error rate of .05) showing a statistically significant worsening fit than our original research model.

Table 27. Chi-square Difference Test of the Research Model and Alternative Nested Model 2

	$\chi 2$	Df
$\chi 2$ of Research Model	6926.14	2397
$\chi 2$ of Alternative Nested Model 2	7544.64	2401
$\Delta\chi 2$ (Chi-square difference test)	618.50	4

As it is observed from Table 27, $\chi 2$ worsenes significantly by deletion of four paths in the alternative nested model 2, which again confirms the good fit of our original research model in comparison to the second alternative nested model 2. So, we are assured that our research model has an overall good fit quality and also competitive good quality compared to other alternative nested models.

6.8.2 Post hoc structural model path analyses on bases of three social network site user groups; Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

While the moderation effects of some variables like gender and social network site usage intensity will be further investigated in moderation analyses section, the type of social network site is specifically analyzed on bases of three SNS user groups of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter within the total population of our research. So, seperate structural model analyses were conducted by AMOS 22.0 on three seperate social network site user groups with sample sizes of 735 Facebook, 176 Instagram and 69 Twitter users.

6.8.2.1 Facebook sample group structural model analyses

Goodness of fit (GOF) indices for 735 Facebook users' structural model obtained from SM analyses are summarized in Table 28. As it will be observed, normed chi square of Facebook user group is better than the normed chi square of total sample population. Other indices are also within acceptable levels which indicates an overall good quality of Facebook user group.

Table 28. Goodness of Fit Indices for SM Assessment of Facebook Users

INDEX	VALUES	THRESHOLD (N>250 ; m>30)*
Normed Chi square (CMIN/df)	2.496	< 3
RMSEA	0.045	< 0.70
CFI	0.918	> 0.90
TLI	0.915	> 0.90
PNFI	0.839	Higher is better
Chi square value (CMIN):	(χ2): 5982.15	df = 2397

* N= sample size m=number of observed variables (Hair,2010, p.672)

As the overall fit conditions are satisfied, the individual parameter estimates against the corresponding predictions or paths, each representing a specific hypothesis, are examined as the next step of structural model analysis for Facebook user group. The parameter estimates for the hypothesized paths are presented in Table 29. As it will be observed, the values and directions of parameter estimates are in parallel with the total sample population. In parallel with the main sample of the study, social network culture is again observed to have the highest effect on consumer's engagement in eWOM in Facebook user group.

Table 29. Parameter Estimates and Hypotheses Testing of Facebook User Group

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Path	Non-stand. parameter estimate	Standardized Parameter estimate	t Value	Results of Hypotheses Testing
H1	Tiestr → Int. Trust	0.107	0.147	2.992**	Supported
H2	Tiestr → EWOM	0.225	0 .241	5.717***	Supported
H3	Homp → Int. Trust	0.223	0.179	7.020***	Supported
H4	Homp → EWOM	- 0.030	- 0.019	- 0.884	Not supported
H5	SNC → Int. Trust	0.218	0.289	5.728***	Supported
H6	SNC → EWOM	0.582	0.600	12.689***	Supported
H7	PCM → Int. Trust	0.383	0.461	11.350***	Supported
H8	PCM → EWOM	- 0.134	- 0.126	-3.370***	Not supported
H9	Int.Trust →EWOM	0.302	0.235	5.909***	Supported
H10	EWOM→ Pur. Int.	0.263	0.267	5.370***	Supported
H11	Int. Trust→Pur.Int.	0.517	0.409	8.034***	Supported

***p < .01 (one sided), **p < .05 (one sided), *p<.1 (one sided)

6.8.2.2 Instagram sample group structural model analyses

Goodness of fit (GOF) indices for 176 Instagram users' structural model obtained from SM analyses are summarized in Table 30. As it will be observed, normed chi square of Instagram user group is better than the normed chi square of total sample population. However, other fit indices like RMSEA, CFI, TLI and PNFI are below the acceptable thresholds which might be probably because of the insufficient number of respondents as 176. The minumum sample size for the group should be 300 and more in order to conduct a more meaningful analysis with AMOS 22.0 and enable to compare Instagram user group with Facebook user group which will be mentioned in limitations and future research suggestions section.

Table 30. Goodness of Fit Indices for SM Assessment of Instagram Users

INDEX	VALUES	THRESHOLD (N>250 ; m>30)*
Normed Chi square (CMIN/df)	2.738	< 3
RMSEA	1.000	< 0.70
CFI	0.726	> 0.90
TLI	0.716	> 0.90
PNFI	0.607	Higher is better
Chi square value (CMIN):	(χ2): 6563.43	df = 2397

* N= sample size m=number of observed variables (Hair,2010, p.672)

6.8.2.3 Twitter sample group structural model analyses

Goodness of fit (GOF) indices for 69 Twitter users' structural model could not be obtained from SM analyses probably due to the low number of data. AMOS 22.0 output indicates that sample moment matrix is not positive definite and observed variables could not be analyzed probably because the sample size is too small compared to number of constructs and variables which should be at least 300 and more. So, Twitter user group could not be analyzed and compared to Facebook and

Instagram user groups and sample size should be increased to enable comparison analyses which is also mentioned in limitations and future suggestions section.

6.8.3 Post hoc tests for analyses of differences of consumer traits and product attitudes

Our last post-hoc tests focused on whether consumer trait and product attitude differences had an effect on the interpersonal trust, engagement in eWOM and purchase intention level of consumers. We classified our sample of social network site users into two groups on basis of each trait and attitude by using median split as applied in moderation analyses. Then, the following consumer trait and attitude differences were tested by conducting independent sample t-tests on our data. The results of the four Levene tests can be found in Appendix N, Table 31-34, which shows group differences between consumers having high perceived self efficacy/low perceived self efficacy, high propensity to trust/low propensity to trust, high hedonic product attitude/low hedonic product attitude, high utilitarian product attitude/low utilitarian product attitude.

After confirming that there are differences between groups by the results of Levene tests as presented in Appendix N, Table 31-34, the means of groups in each consumer trait and attitude analyses are compared. Finally, as shown in Appendix N, Table 35, it is observed from the mean analyses of Levene group tests that interpersonal trust, eWOM and purchase intention levels are higher for high efficacy consumer groups (3.70 > 2.72; 4.74 > 3.24; 4.35 > 2.99). Interpersonal trust, eWOM and purchase intention levels are higher for high propensity to trust consumer groups (3.59 > 2.83; 4.59 > 3.26; 4.22 > 3.14). Interpersonal trust, eWOM and purchase intention levels are higher for high utilitarian product attitude consumer groups (3.68

> 2.83; 4.66 > 3.24; 4.48 > 3.03). Interpersonal trust, eWOM and purchase intention levels are higher for high hedonic groups (3.60 > 2.83; 4.53 > 3.28; 4.39 > 3.01).

6.9 Mediation analyses

Mediation analysis is mainly used for understanding the mechanisms through which an independent variable (X) and a dependent variable (Y) are related, specifically by providing a more accurate explanation for the chain of causation via clarifying how, or why, an independent variable (X) affects a dependent variable (Y) (Hair et al., 2010). Mediation requires significant correlations among the all three constructs and a mediating construct facilitates the relationship between the other two constructs involved. If the mediating construct completely explains the relationship between the two original constructs, it is termed as complete (full) mediation, if there is still some relationship that is not explained by the mediator, then it is denoted as partial mediation (Hair et al., 2010).

In our study, the observed mediations between the constructs are listed below. In order to further test the existence of these mediations, two approaches can be applied. The traditional casual steps approach advocated by Baron and Kenny (1986) and also suggested by Hair et al. (2010) are commonly used in the extant literature. Besides this traditional approach, Sobel's test (1982) and the bootsrapping method (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) have been used to the test the existence of mediation through validating the statistical significance of indirect effects. Among these methods, bootsrapping has been commonly used by the researchers due to its strength in statistical validation as well as its ease by not forcing the assumption of normality of the sampling distribution (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). So, each possible mediation relationship is tested by both Baron and Kenny (1986); Hair et al. (2010)

approach and by bootstrapping method (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) simultaneously. First, the mediation relationship is tested if interpersonal trust fully or partially mediates the relationships between tie strength, homophily, social network culture, perceived critical mass and consumers' engagement in eWOM. Secondly, the mediation is tested if consumers' engagement in eWOM fully or partially mediates the relationship between interpersonal trust and purchase intention.

Before starting with testing these mediation relationships, the required correlations between constructs were examined as previously presented in Table 15 and all were confirmed as significant except the one between homophily and eWOM.

6.9.1 Test of relationship between tie strength and consumers' engagement in eWOM mediated by interpersonal trust:

In accordance with Baron and Kenny (1986) approach which is also suggested by Hair et al. (2010), first, correlations among three constructs; tie strength, interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM are confirmed. Then, the existence of a mediation can be further evaluated by testing the difference between the chi-square values of the re-specified and initial mediation models. First, an initial model with only direct effect between tie strength and consumers' engagement in eWOM is estimated. Then, a second model is estimated adding in the mediating variable interpersonal trust and two additional path estimates (tie strength to interpersonal trust) and (interpersonal trust to consumers' engagement in eWOM). Then, the extent of mediation is assessed. If the effect between tie strength and consumers' engagement in eWOM remains significant in the second estimated model when interpersonal trust is added as an additional predictor, then partial mediation is supported. The chi–square difference test between two models presented in

Appendix O, Table 36 supports that the re-specified partial mediation model has a significantly better fit than the initial model without mediation.

In order to confirm the existence and nature of the mediation through, a second method; bootstrapping is applied. According to bootstrapping method, full mediation exists if indirect effect is significant and direct effect with mediator is not significant, given the direct effects were significant prior to adding the mediator to the analysis. Partial mediation exists if indirect effect is significant and direct effect with mediator is also significant (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). There will be no mediation if indirect effect is not significant. Moreover, the insignificance of the direct effects either from independent variable to mediator or from mediator to dependent variable also show that there is no mediation. In case, both direct effects are insignificant, but indirect effect is significant, then there is an indirect effect. In performing bootstrapping, 2000 bootstrapping samples are used and ninety five percent bias corrected confidence interval is used.

When bootstrapping method was applied, the indirect effect between tie strength and consumers' engagement in eWOM and direct effect with mediator was found significant indicating a partial mediation between tie strength and consumers' engagement in eWOM by the mediator of interpersonal trust as in Table 37.

Table 37. Mediation Analyses Results for Tie Strength - Int. Trust - EWOM

Hypothesized Path	Direct Effects Without Mediation	Direct Effects with Mediation	Indirect Effects with Mediation	Total Effect with Mediation	Results of Hypothesis	Type of Mediation
Tiestr - Int. Trust - EWOM	.231***	.231***	.032**	.262***	Supported	Partial Mediation

*** = p < .01, **= p < .05, * = p < .1

6.9.2 Test of relationship between homophily and consumers' engagement in eWOM mediated by interpersonal trust:

In our initial model, the direct effect between homophily and consumers' engagement in eWOM is insignificant as presented before. Also, there is no correlation between homophily and consumers' engagement in eWOM constructs. By this respect, the first prerequisites of a mediation relationship are not satisfied according to first step investigations. So, although a comparison was still made between initial and respecified mediation models in Appendix O, Table 38, a mediation relationship possibly does not exist between these constructs according to the results of these first step investigations. However, the non-existence of a mediation will be again tested and confirmed by bootstrapping method additionally.

According to bootstrapping method, if both direct effects are insignificant, but indirect effect is significant, then there is an indirect effect instead of a mediation relationship. In our model, the indirect effect between homophily and consumers' engagement in eWOM was significant while direct effects with or without mediator was found insignificant indicating only a slight indirect effect relationship between homophily and consumers' engagement in eWOM instead of a mediation relationship as presented in Table 39.

Table 39. Mediation Analyses Results for Homophily - Int. Trust - EWOM

Hypothesized Path	Direct Effects Without Mediation	Direct Effects with Mediation	Indirect Effects with Mediation	Total Effect with Mediation	Results of Hypothesis	Type of Mediation
Homop- Int. Trust - EWOM	-.018	-.018	.035***	.017	Not supported	Indirect Effect

*** = p < .01, **= p < .05, * = p < .1

6.9.3 Test of relationship between social network culture and consumers' engagement in eWOM mediated by interpersonal trust:

In accordance with Baron and Kenny (1986) approach suggested by Hair et al. (2010), three constructs; social network culture, interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM are correlated. The direct effect between social network culture and consumers' engagement in eWOM is significant as presented. So, prerequisites to test mediation between social network culture and consumers' engagement in eWOM are satisfied. First, an initial model with only direct effect between social network culture and consumers' engagement in eWOM is estimated. Then, a second model is estimated adding in the mediating variable interpersonal trust and two additional path estimates (social network culture to interpersonal trust) and (interpersonal trust to consumers' engagement in eWOM). Then, the extent of mediation is assessed. If the effect between social network culture and consumers' engagement in eWOM is reduced but remains significant in the second estimated model when interpersonal trust is added as an additional predictor, then partial mediation is supported. The chi–square difference test between two models also supports that the re-specified partial mediation model has a significantly better fit than the initial model without mediation as can be seen in Appendix O, Table 40.

When bootstrapping method was applied, the indirect effect between social network culture and consumers' engagement in eWOM and direct effect with mediator was found significant indicating a partial mediation between social network culture and consumers' engagement in eWOM by the mediator of interpersonal trust as presented in Table 41.

Table 41. Mediation Analyses Results for SN Culture - Int. Trust - EWOM

Hypothesized Path	Direct Effects Without Mediation	Direct Effects with Mediation	Indirect Effects with Mediation	Total Effect with Mediation	Results of Hypothesis	Type of Mediation
SNS Culture - Int. Trust - EWOM	.608***	.599***	.067***	.666***	Supported	Partial Mediation

*** = p < .01, **= p < .05, * = p < .1

6.9.4 Test of relationship between perceived critical mass and consumers' engagement in eWOM mediated by interpersonal trust:

In accordance with Baron and Kenny (1986) approach as suggested by Hair et al. (2010), three constructs; perceived critical mass, interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM are correlated. The direct effect between perceived critical mass and consumers' engagement in eWOM is significant as presented. So, prerequisites to test mediation between perceived critical mass and consumers' engagement in eWOM are satisfied. First, an initial model with only direct effect between perceived critical mass and consumers' engagement in eWOM is estimated. Then, a second model is estimated adding in the mediating variable interpersonal trust and two additional path estimates (perceived critical mass to interpersonal trust) and (interpersonal trust to consumers' engagement in eWOM). Then, the extent of mediation is assessed. The chi–square difference test between two models also supports that the re-specified partial mediation model has a significantly better fit than the initial model without mediation as presented in Appendix O, Table 42.

When bootstrapping method was applied, the direct and indirect effects between perceived critical mass and consumers' engagement in eWOM were found significant but in opposite signs still indicating a partial mediation relationship between them with the inclusion of interpersonal trust as presented in Table 43.

However, the final total effect of perceived critical mass on consumers' engagement in eWOM with the partial mediation of interpersonal trust becomes insignificant being neutralized by the combination of a negative direct significant effect (-.084*) and a positive indirect significant effect (.087***). The partial mediation process causes the combined effects to diminish on the dependent variable, consumers' engagement in eWOM.

Table 43. Mediation Analyses Results for Per.Cr.Mass - Int.Trust - EWOM

Hypothesized Path	Direct Effects Without Mediation	Direct Effects with Mediation	Indirect Effects with Mediation	Total Effect with Mediation	Results of Hypothesis	Type of Mediation
Per.Cr. Mass - Int.Trust - EWOM	-.086**	-.084*	.087***	.003	Supported	Partial Mediation

*** = p < .01, **= p < .05, * = p < .1

6.9.5 Test of relationship between interpersonal trust and purchase intention mediated by consumers' engagement in eWOM:

In accordance with Baron and Kenny (1986) approach as suggested by Hair et al. (2010), three constructs; interpersonal trust, consumers' engagement in eWOM and purchase intention are correlated. The direct effect between interpersonal trust and purchase intention is significant as presented. So, prerequisites to test mediation between interpersonal trust and purchase intention are satisfied. First, an initial model with only direct effect between interpersonal trust and purchase intention is estimated. Then, a second model is estimated adding in the mediating variable consumers' engagement in eWOM and two additional path estimates (interpersonal trust to consumers' engagement in eWOM) and (consumers' engagement in eWOM to purchase intention). Then, the extent of mediation is assessed. If the effect

between interpersonal trust and purchase intention is reduced but remains significant in the second estimated model when consumers' engagement in eWOM is added as an additional predictor, then partial mediation is supported. The chi–square difference test between two models also supports that the re-specified partial mediation model has a significantly better fit than the initial model without mediation as presented in Appendix O, Table 44.

When bootstrapping method was applied, the indirect effect between interpersonal trust and purchase intention and direct effect with mediator was found significant indicating a partial mediation between interpersonal trust and purchase intention by the mediator of consumers' engagement in eWOM as presented in Table 45.

Table 45. Mediation Analyses Results for Int.Trust - EWOM - Purc.Int.

Hypothesized Path	Direct Effects Without Mediation	Direct Effects with Mediation	Indirect Effects with Mediation	Total Effect with Mediation	Results of Hypothesis	Type of Mediation
Int. Trust - EWOM - Purc. Int.	.423***	.413***	.061***	.475***	Supported	Partial Mediation

*** = p < .01, **= p < .05, * = p < .1

6.10 Multigroup SEM moderation analyses

The multi-group moderation analysis in SEM is used to determine if the significant path estimates of relationships hypothesized in a model will differ by the dichotomous values of a moderator. As the first step of multigroup moderation analysis, the measurement model invariance of the model variables need to be confirmed across two groups of the moderator variables. In this study, measurement invariance across groups for each alternative moderator variable was investigated in

the previous multigroup confirmatory factor analyses section. Among the list of moderator variables group, only two moderators; gender and social network site usage intensity were found to have measurement invariance and confirmed to continue on to the second step for further analysis of moderating effects on construct relationships of the structural model analysis.

6.10.1 Assessment of moderation effects of gender on the structural model paths

As the measurement invariance established for two gender groups during multigroup CFA analysis, now the structural model estimate will be assessed for moderation by a comparison of group testing like invariance testing. The first group model is estimated with path estimates calculated seperately for each group which is identical to TF (totally free) model described before. Then, a second group model is estimated where the path estimates of interest is constrained to be equal between groups. Comparison of differences between models with a chi-square difference test ($\Delta\chi 2$) indicates if the model fit significantly decreases (increase) when the estimates were constrained to be equal. A statistically significant difference between models indicates that the path estimates were different and moderation exists (Hair et al., 2010). If the models are not statistically significantly different, then there is no support for moderation. So, we should look for significant difference in the two models to support hypothesis of differences in path estimates when testing for moderation.

After validating measurement model invariance across two gender groups, multigroup moderation analysis was conducted in AMOS by testing the moderating effects of genders for the paths between constructs of research model in order to test hypotheses H17- H21. Similar to the steps used in multi group CFA model testing, a

two group structural model was set up for female and male respondents. The TF structural estimates an identical structural model in both groups simultaneously. Then a second group model is estimated the only difference being that nonsignificant path estimates are constrained to be equal in both groups. The fit results are shown in Table 46.

Table 46. Testing for Gender as a Moderator in Research Model

	$\chi 2$	Df
Unconstrained Group Model (TF)	11276.39	4796
Constrained Group Model	11383.54	4870
$\Delta\chi 2$	107.15	74

*** = p < .01, **= p < .05, * = p < .1

The chi-square difference is significant at .01 level and the result suggests that gender does have a moderation effect in general. Now, the moderation effect of gender is investigated for each significant path in the research model seperately. The Table 47 represents the significance of differences between unconstrained and constrained models for each path indicating the presence or nonpresence of moderating effects.

As it is observed from Table 47, gender has a moderating effect on relationships between tie strength, homophily, perceived critical mass and interpersonal trust by having greater impact for women than men. The relationship between interpersonal trust and purchase intention is again greater for women. Men only has a slightly bigger effect on the relationship between consumers' engagement in eWOM and purchase intention.

Table 47. Moderating Effect of Gender on Each Path of Research Model

Relationship Between Constructs	Model Comparison	$\chi 2$	Df	Sig. of $\Delta\chi 2$	Moderation Effect of Gender	Path Estimate for Gender	Result of Hypothesis
	Unconstr Model (TF)	11276.39	4796				
Tiestr - Int. Tr.	Constr Model	11282.87	4797				
	Difference	6	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.05$*	Assured	Male - .197** Female - .208**	Supported
Homoph - Int. Tr.	Constr Model	11285.47	4797				
	Difference	9	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.01$*	Assured	Male - .146*** Female - .177***	Supported
C. Mass - Int. Tr.	Constr Model	11287.86	4797				
	Difference	11	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.01$*	Assured	Male - .397*** Female - .408***	Supported
SN Cul. - Int. Tr.	Constr Model	11276.46	4797				
	Difference	.073	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is insignificant at $p < 0.05$*	Not assured		Not supported
Tiestr - EWOM	Constr Model	11277.05	4797				
	Difference	.1	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is insignificant at $p < 0.05$*	Not assured		Not supported
SN Cul.- EWOM	Constr Model	11277.91	4797				
	Difference	1	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is insignificant at $p < 0.05$*	Not assured		Not supported
C.Mass - EWOM	Constr Model	11277	4797				
	Difference	1	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is insignificant at $p < 0.05$*	Not assured		Not supported
Int. Tr - EWOM	Constr Model	11281.48	4797				
	Difference	5	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.05$*	Assured	Male - .189** Female - .185**	Supported
EWOM - Pur. Int.	Constr Model	11278.10	4797				
	Difference	2	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is insignificant at $p < 0.05$*	Not assured		Not supported
Int. Tr - Pur. Int.	Constr Model	11281.20	4797				
	Difference	5	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.05$*	Assured	Male - .406** Female - .410**	Supported

6.10.2 Assessment of moderation effects of SNS usage intensity on the structural model paths

As the measurement invariance established for SNS usage intensity groups as high intensity users and low intensity users,during multigroup CFA analysis, now the structural model estimate will be assessed for moderation by a comparison of group testing. Multigroup moderation analysis was conducted in AMOS by testing the moderating effects of two usage intensity groups for the paths between constructs of research model in order to test hypotheses H22 - H26.

Similar to the steps used in multi gorup CFA model testing, a two group structural model was set up for high usage intensity and low usage intensity respondents. The TF structural estimates an identical structural model in both groups simultaneously. Then a second group model is estimated the only difference being that nonsignificant path estimates are constrained to be equal in both groups. The fit results are shown in Table 48.

Table 48. Testing for SNS Usage Intensity as a Moderator in Research Model

	$\chi 2$	Df
Unconstrained Group Model (TF)	11413.51	4794
Constrained Group Model	11518.64	4869
$\Delta\chi 2$	105.13	75

*** = p < .01, **= p < .05, * = p < .1

The difference is significant at .05 level and the result suggests that SNS usage intensity does have a moderation effect in general. Now, the moderation effect of SNS usage intensity is investigated for each significant path in the research model seperately. The Table 49 represents the significance of differences between

unconstrained and constrained models for each path indicating the presence or nonpresence of moderating effects.

Table 49. Moderating Effect of SNS Usage Intensity on Each Path of Research M

Relationship Between Constructs	Model Comparison	$\chi 2$	Df	Sig of $\Delta\chi 2$	Moderation Effect of SNS Usage Intensity	Path Estimate for SNS Usage Intensity	Result of Hypothesis
	Unconst Model	11413.51	4794				
Tiestr. - Int. Tr.	Constr Model	11416.60	4795				
	Difference	3	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.1$*	Assured	High User - .152* Low User - .164*	Supported
Homop. - Int. Tr.	Constr Model	11414.18	4795				
	Difference	0.67	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is insignificant at $p < 0.05$*	Not Assured		Not Supported
C. Mass - Int. Tr.	Constr Model	11416.68	4795				
	Difference	3	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.1$*	Assured	High User- .492* Low User - .409*	Supported
SN Cul. - Int. Tr.	Constr Model	11413.51	4795				
	Difference	0.002	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is insignificant at $p < 0.05$*	Not assured		Not supported
Tie Str. - EWOM	Constr Model	11421.24	4795				
	Difference	8	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.01$*	Assured	High User- .229*** Low User - .237***	Supported
SN Cul. - EWOM	Constr Model	11423.15	4795				
	Difference	10	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.01$*	Assured	High User- .646*** Low User - .572***	Supported
C. Mass - EWOM	Constr Model	11414.28	4795				
	Difference	1	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is insignificant at $p < 0.05$*	Not assured		Not supported
Int. Tr. - EWOM	Constr Model	11419.18	4795				
	Difference	6	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is significant at $p < 0.05$*	Assured	High User - .211** Low User - .205**	Supported
EWOM - Pur. Int.	Constr Model	11413.60	4795				
	Difference	0.09	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is insignificant at $p < 0.05$*	Not assured		Not supported
Int. Tr. - Pur. Int.	Constr Model	11413.96	4795				
	Difference	0.4	1	*$\Delta\chi 2$ test is insignificant at $p < 0.05$*	Not assured		Not supported

As it is observed from Table 49, SNS usage intensity has a moderating effect on relationships between tie strength and interpersonal trust by having greater impact for low users; perceived critical mass and interpersonal trust by having greater impact for high users. The relationships between social network culture, interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM are again affected more for the high user group.

6.11 Summary of all hypotheses testing and path analyses results

Table 50 and Figure 5 summarizes all of the estimated hypothesis testing results including structural model path analyses, mediation and moderation analyses. As seen in Table 50, 23 hypotheses were supported out of 34 hypotheses in total.

Table 50. Summary of Hypotheses Tests - SM, Path, Mediation and Moderation

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Relationship	Results of Hypothesis Testing
H1	Strength of a social network tie has a positive effect on Interpersonal Trust.	Supported
H2	Strength of a social network tie has a positive effect on Consumers' Engagement in EWOM.	Supported
H3	Homophily of a social network tie has a positive effect on Interpersonal Trust.	Supported
H4	Homophily of a social network tie has a positive effect on Consumers' Engagement in EWOM.	Not supported
H5	Social Network Culture has a positive effect on Interpersonal Trust.	Supported
H6	Social Network Culture has a positive effect on Consumers' Engagement in EWOM.	Supported
H7	Perceived Critical Mass has a positive effect on Interpersonal Trust.	Supported
H8	Perceived Critical Mass has a positive effect on Consumers' Engagement in EWOM.	Not supported
H9	Interpersonal Trust has a positive effect on Consumers' Engagement in EWOM.	Supported
H10	Consumers' engagement in eWOM has a positive effect on their intentions to purchase.	Supported
H11	Interpersonal Trust has positive effect on purchase intentions of consumers.	Supported
H12	The relationship between Tie strength and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is mediated by Interpersonal Trust.	Supported

H13	The relationship between Homophily and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is mediated by Interpersonal Trust.	Not supported
H14	The relationship between Social Network Culture and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is mediated by Interpersonal Trust.	Supported
H15	The relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is mediated by Interpersonal Trust.	Supported
H16	The relationship between Interpersonal Trust and Purchase Intention is mediated by Consumers' engagement in EWOM.	Supported
H17a	Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between Tie Strength and Interpersonal trust.	Supported
H17b	Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between Homophily and Interpersonal trust.	Supported
H17c	Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between Social Network Culture and Interpersonal Trust.	Not supported
H17d	Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Interpersonal trust.	Supported
H18a	Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between Tie Strength and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM.	Not supported
H18b	Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between Social Network Culture and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM.	Not supported
H19	Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM.	Supported
H20	Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between Consumers' Engagement in EWOM and purchase intentions.	Not supported
H21	Gender of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and purchase intentions.	Supported
H22a	The relationship between Tie Strength and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by social network site usage intensity of consumers.	Supported
H22b	The relationship between Homophily and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by social network site usage intensity of consumers.	Not supported
H22c	The relationship between Social Network Culture and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by social network site usage intensity of consumers.	Not supported
H22d	The relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by social network site usage intensity of consumers.	Supported
H23a	The relationship between Tie Strength and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by social network site usage intensity of consumers.	Supported
H23b	The relationship between Social Network Culture and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by social network site usage intensity of consumers.	Supported
H24	Social network site usage intensity of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM.	Supported
H25	Social network site usage intensity of consumers moderate the relationship between Consumers' Engagement in EWOM and purchase intentions.	Not supported
H26	Social network site usage intensity of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and purchase intentions.	Not supported

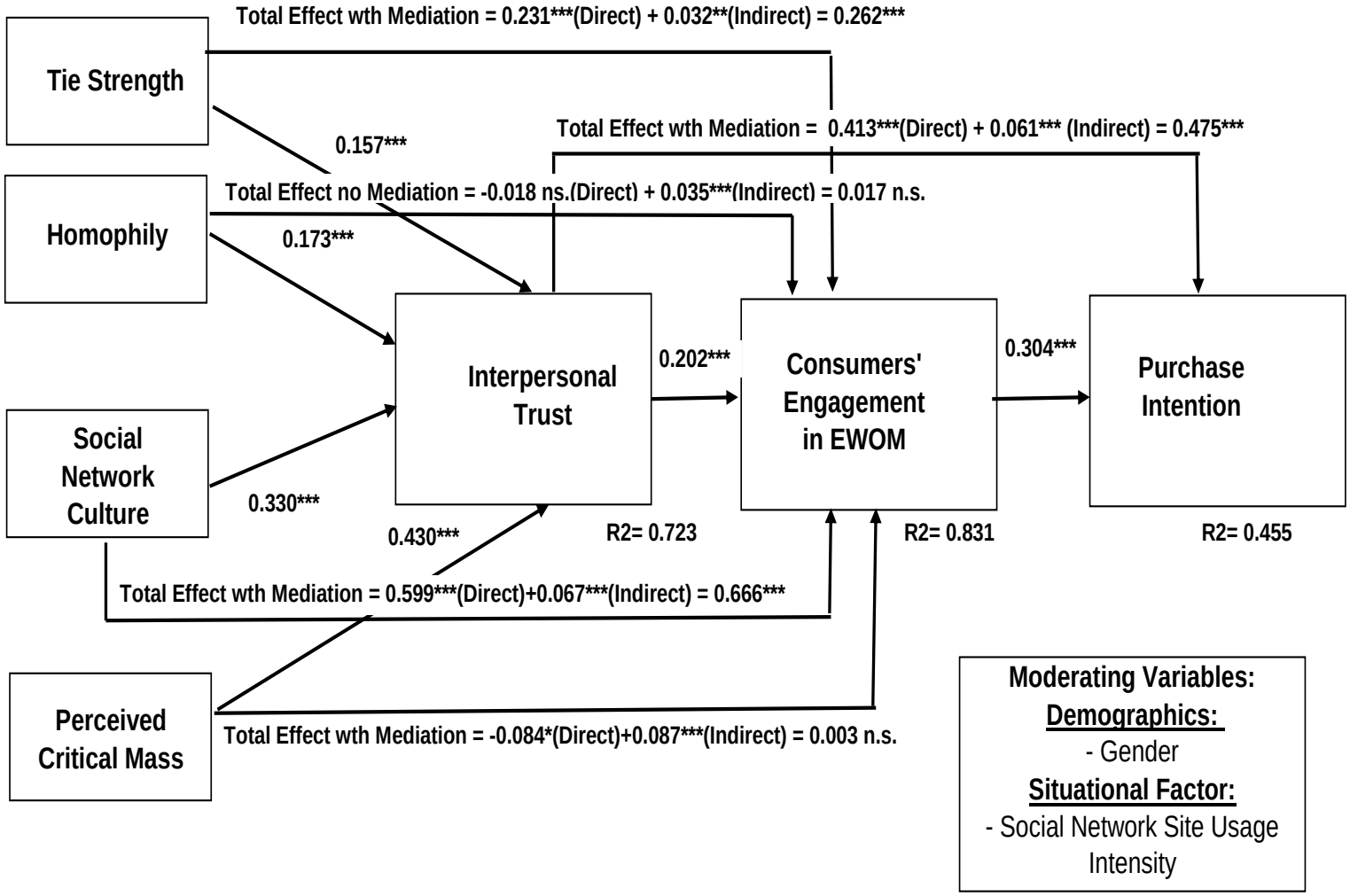

Figure 5. Results of direct and indirect effect results by path analyses

*** p < .01 (one sided), ** p< .05(one sided), * p<.1 (one sided), n.s=not significant (p>.1)

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The evolution of social network sites has brought to digital advertisers and social media professionals the need to redesign their brand communication strategies via platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In a recent report released by Forrester Research, Owyang, Tran and Weber (2010) found that more than half of marketers (53%) indicated that they would increase their spending in social network marketing in 2010. As social network sites have become a popular phenomenon increasingly and enjoy great popularity worldwide, socializing and collaboration presents wide opportunities for consumers to actively engage in peer group product recommendations and community participations, which in turn increases their eWOM behaviors. Considering the important consequences such as development of purchase intentions, it is crucial to understand the determinants of consumer engagement in eWOM emerging via these sites. At this point, social capital of consumers is expected to be the most compherensive and influential driver of consumers' engagement in eWOM on these platforms which is further assumed to shape their purchase intentions consequently. As a result, promoting eWOM conversation in consumers' social networks will become an important technique for marketers to develop strong brand relationships and enhance consumer engagement (Smith, 2002). In order to achieve this, they should know the effects of social capital dimensions on consumers' engagement in eWOM and want to be assured if this engagement really transforms into purchase intentions at the end. So, there is still a big gap for both theoretical and empirical knowledge about social capital determinants of eWOM on social network site context. There is also an apparent

need for an integrated conceptual model representing all of the relationships between social capital dimensions, eWOM engagement and purchasing intentions of consumers which is tried to be filled under the scope of this study.

This dissertation examines social capital determinants of eWOM engagement in three emerging online social channels, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter social network sites. Underpinned by social capital theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) which forms the theoretical basis of the conceptual model of the study, this research raises questions about the roles of social capital dimensions like tie strength, homophily, interpersonal trust, perceived critical mass and social network culture into eWOM phenomena and explores their effects on engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions of consumers.

Social capital dimensions suggested by social capital theory of Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) provide theoretical support for the research. Tie strength and homophily representing social network ties, social network culture, perceived critical mass and interpersonal trust are proposed as antecedents of consumers' engagement in eWOM. Consumers' purchase intentions are modeled as the final consequence of consumers' engagement in eWOM representing the final DV (dependent variable - endogenous variable) of the research. However, interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM constructs act as both independent and dependent variables (both exogenous and endogenous) in the research model. Interpersonal trust is at the heart of social capital concept and acts as a dependent variable being affected by constructs like tie strength, homophily, social network culture and perceived critical mass. On the other hand, interpersonal trust itself affects consumers' engagement in eWOM construct acting as an independent variable. Consumers' engagement in eWOM acts also both as independent and dependent variable, being affected by

social capital dimensions and affecting purchase intentions of consumers simultaneously.

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings of my dissertation research. Descriptive results generated from data collected by a face to face survey from a large sample of 980 respondents being social network site users of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter in three big cities; Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir are analyzed by structural equation modelling procedure in AMOS 22.0 and discussed on bases of relationships between the research model constructs seperately, followed by the interpretation of hypothesis testing findings in comparison to past research in literature. First section will present and discuss the relationships between constructs including mediating effects. Second section will discuss the moderation effects of some demographics and situational factors on the research model. Third section will interpret the results of post hoc tests.

Overall, the results of this study support the majority of the hypotheses proposed in the conceptual model of the research. As it is presented in Figure 4, social network culture dimension of social capital reveales highest significant impact (.666**) in explaining consumers' engagement in eWOM on social network site context. Tie strength and interpersonal trust constructs have the second (.262) and third (.202) highest impacts on consumers' engagement in eWOM consecutively. Additionally, partial mediation effects of interpersonal trust on relationships between social network culture, tie strength, perceived critical mass and consumers' engagement in EWOM are also supported by the results of three different mediation tests.

Perceived critical mass does not have any significant total effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM while it has some significant direct effect on

interpersonal trust. The significant indirect positive and direct negative effects of perceived critical mass on consumers' engagement in eWOM combines, turns into insignificant and causes the total effect to diminish on engagement in eWOM at the end by the mediation of interpersonal trust. Interpersonal trust partially mediates the relationship between perceived critical mass and consumers' engagement in eWOM and plays an important role in the neutralization of its direct negative effect on engagement in eWOM by contributing an indirect positive effect itself.

There is no mediation effect of interpersonal trust between homophily construct and consumers' engagement in eWOM although homophily itself has a positive significant direct effect on interpersonal trust by (.173) alone which does not later transforms into purchase intention. The discussion of their relationships with direct and indirect effects will be further discussed and interpreted in detail in next sections.

Among the three dependent variables (endogenous variables) of the model, the highest explanation level belongs to consumers' engagement in eWOM by 83.1%, followed by interpersonal trust 72% and purchase intention by 45.5%.

When the impacts of two constructs; interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM, on purchase intention are analyzed, it is observed that they both have significant effects on the final dv, purchase intention. Interpersonal trust has a total significant effect of .475*** on purchase intention by partial mediation of consumers' engagement in eWOM while consumers' engagement in eWOM has also a significant direct effect of .304*** on purchase intention.

In general, the results reveal strong support for this study's main arguments on the impacts of social capital dimensions on consumers' engagement in eWOM and

also purchase intentions. The detailed analysis of each relationship between constructs of the research model will be presented in the next subsections.

7.1 Effects of tie strength on interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM

According to the results of our study, tie strength has significant impacts on both interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM. Tie strength has a direct significant positive effect on interpersonal trust by .157*** and a direct significant positive total effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM by .262*** partially mediated by interpersonal trust. These findings are in parallel with majority of the literature knowledge supporting the hypothesis of H1: Strength of a social network tie has a positive effect on interpersonal trust and hypothesis 2 of: Strength of a social network tie has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM. Past research suggests that strong tie sources are perceived as more credible than weak tie sources (Rogers, 1983). In line with findings with Rogers (1983), Weimann (1983), Brown and Reingen (1987) suggest that information from strong tie referrral sources are perceived to be more influential in receiver's decision making than weak tie sources. However, Weimann (1983) contends that the influence of information arises from strong ties whereas the weak ties have a bridging function limited with only the flow of information not its influence. When thinking about the context of our study which is social network site such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, our finding about the positive effect of tie strength on interpersonal trust is understandable. Strong ties such as family and closer friends form stronger relationships in an individual's social network and since the individual interacts them often and takes

emotional and material support, the interpersonal trust level including perceived credibility and honesty within the strong ties might increase accordingly.

Another finding indicates that tie strength has a positive significant direct (.231***) and indirect (.032**) effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM partially mediated by interpersonal trust. This supports our hypothesis 12 of: The relationship between tie strength and consumers' engagement in eWOM is mediated by interpersonal trust. This finding is again mostly in parallel with literature knowledge with only one exception of the study of Steffes and Burgee (2009) who claimed that strength of strong ties does not hold in people's decision making. Steffes and Burgee (2009) suggest that tie strength may not influence people's decision process by generating trust and credibility. Except this study, many researchers in past literature suggested the influentiality of strong ties in networks. Leonard-Barton (1985) suggests that a strong tie is perceived to have more influence on his partner's decision making. Duhan et al. (1997) indicates that strong tie recommendations are more custom tailored to decision maker's preferences and that's why fits better to their tastes. However, Duhan et al. (1997) points out another contradictory finding in the same study stressing the advantage of weak tie recommendation sources being more numerous and varied. Duhan et al. (1997) differentiates the people's preferences of strong or weak tie sources based on their prior knowledge and the difficulty of the task. If they have some subjective knowledge and the task is easy, it might be better for people to approach to instrumental to weak tie route to have more novel, various and rich source of ideas. However, if the task is difficult and have no prior knowledge, then it might be safer to trust in strong ties who are already well known. This understanding resembles the popular motto of Granovetter (1974), strength of weak ties, which considers the increasing possibility of newcoming information from

weak ties such as in the new job search situations in his study. Brown and Reingen (1987) also proposes that power and influence of information coming from strong ties are higher. Since our consumers' engagement in eWOM construct does not simply represent the flow of information and has a more compherensive meaning of directly or indirectly taking the recommendation from social network ties, considering it cognitively and transforming it into a behavioural intention, our findings are in conformity with the majority of literature knowledge. Anyway, we mostly take recommendations or consider opinions of our strong ties in our social networks whom we find more trustworthy, credible, honest and benevolent as our results also support. As the tie is more closer to us like our family or closest friends, we trust them more and engage in eWOM activity more regarding our product or service decisions by either actively taking opinions or passively following their posts, photos, tweets, likes or recommendations on the social network sites.

7.2 Effects of homophily on interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM

According to the results of our study, homophily has a positive significant direct impact on interpersonal trust by .173***. This finding is in accordance with some past research in literature. Ruef et al. (2003) also found that similarity of individuals predisposes them toward a greater level of interpersonal attraction, trust and understanding than would be expected among dissimilar individuals. So, our hypothesis 3 is supported as: Homophily of a social network tie has a positive effect on interpersonal trust.

On the other hand, homophily has no direct significant effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM construct. So, hypothesis 4: Homophily of a social network

tie has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM is not supported. In addition to this, when mediation role of interpersonal trust between homophily and consumers' engagement in eWOM relationship was investigated, it was observed that there is also no full or partial mediation effect according to both Baron and Kenny (1986) approach and bootstrapping method of Preacher and Hayes (2004). There is only a slight indirect positive significant effect (.035***) of homophily on consumers' engagement in eWOM construct through interpersonal trust which can not be termed as a mediation relationship according to literature (Preacher & Haynes, 2004). So, hypothesis 13: The relationship between homophily and consumers' engagement in eWOM is mediated by interpersonal trust is not again supported due to the lack of a direct significant relationship between homophily and consumers' engagement in eWOM and again because of the non-existence of a mediation role of interpersonal trust between their relationship.

This finding is intriguing and partially contradictory with some of the past research in literature. According to literature, the exchange of information mostly occurs between two people who are similar with respect to certain attributes, in other words, homophilous (Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970). Brown and Reingen (1987) also found that as the tie is more homophilous, the more likely it is utilized as an information source, however this information may not be perceived as more influential or credible over the heterophilic ties. In parallel with this direction, Steffes and Burgee (2009) found clues that students utilized information from homophilic sources in their networks more frequently than heterophilic information sources. So, as in the situation of weak ties, homophily is mostly shown as responsible for an increasing flow of information between partners in networks but has no significant effect on the influence of information over the decision making of individuals. One

exception for this general view of literature is the study of Rogers (1983) who proposed that heterophilous communication between nonsimilar individuals facilitates the flow of information between diverse segments of a social system.

In our study findings, there was no support of influence that homophilous ties have on the engagement in eWOM of consumers. Past literature suggests that homophilous ties mostly facilitate the flow of information but do not have any effect on believability of the information. So, since engagement in eWOM construct in our study has a compherensive meaning as the consideration of the recommendations and being influenced by them, the result of insignificant path between homophily and consumers' engagement in eWOM should not be seen as a totally incompatible finding with past research. Within the context of our study, being one of the social network sites; Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, people might directly or indirectly obtain recommendations from their strong, weak, homophilic and heterophilic ties but might not consider all of them seriously when taking decisions. It might be convenient for them to obtain opinions from people who have similar characteristics with them, however, a homophilic tie is not always taken seriously for consideration in most of their decision situations.

Another reason for the insignificance of relationship between homophily and consumers' engagement in eWOM constructs can be because of the people's general inclinations and curiosity to learn dissimilar opinions and perspectives in order to improve themselves by overcoming the stability in their life styles. So, although people do have trust in their similar ties as supported in our hypothesis 3, they may not give enough credit to their ideas when looking for a product or service recommendation in order to try new things, to be more dynamic and to be open to new ideas of people who are totally different from them. Dispositional factors like

personality trait differences might be another reason of making people refrain from homophilous tie recommendations. For example, a person who has a high need for uniqueness personality characteristic can be aware of his peer group's opinions and even trust in them but still might not want to be a mediocre member of this popular culture by giving his own authentic decisions and differentiating himself from his similar social ties.

7.3 Effects of social network culture on interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM

According to the results of our study, social network culture has significant impacts on both interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM constructs. Social network culture has a high direct significant positive effect on interpersonal trust by .330*** and a highest direct positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM by .666***. Although there are implications signifying the importance of cultural elements in some past studies, our finding differentiates from them by uncovering the outstanding contribution of social network culture construct to our conceptual model. As an extraordinary result, social network culture reveals to have the highest effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM surpassing the impacts of all other constructs in the model like tie strength, homophily and interpersonal trust. So, H5: Social network culture has a positive effect on interpersonal trust and H6: Social network culture has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM are supported. Another finding indicates that social network culture has a positive significant direct (.599**) and indirect (.067**) effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM partially mediated by interpersonal trust. This supports our hypothesis 14 of: The relationship

between social network culture and consumers' engagement in eWOM is mediated by interpersonal trust.

Past research has some parallel findings about the relationship between elements of social network culture and knowledge exchange. Social network culture has manifestations of theory like shared vision, shared language, narratives, interpretations, jargons, codes, values and common perceptions. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) stated that shared language influences conditions for combination and exchange of intellectual capital which is basically knowledge exchange. Chiu et al. (2006) suggests that shared language enhances the efficiency of eWOM between people and shared codes facilitate a common understanding of goals and proper ways of acting in social networks. Shared vision, common goals and aspirations are bonding mechanisms that combines and facilitates exchange of knowledge (Orton & Weick, 1990). These literature findings explain the results of our study presenting the impact of social network culture to some extent. However, unlike many other past studies, our study reveals much higher effect of social network culture on interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM. The reason for this effectual increase might be due to the context of our study, which is social network site. Three social network sites, which are chosen by participants' preferences have cultural elements different from each other. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have different vision and goals, jargons, languages and codes. During the in depth interviews in the qualitative part of our study, participants explained their goals and aspirations for using these social network sites. From the transcribed phases, it was clearly observed that these three social networks were totally distinct from each other in terms of vision, jargon and user motivations. As it was explained in detail in related Chapter 3, Facebook has the highest diversity of goals and activities having a

rich and saturated cultural environment as the oldest social network site among all three. People can track friends' check ins, social lives, favourite restaurants, places, dressing styles, parties, accessories, comments, daily news, political and social agenda at the same time on the consolidated platform of Facebook. Instagram has the second largest diversity of interests and goals like seeing celebrities, friends, fashion, cosmetics, shopping sites, hobbies, sports, wine, food, photography, places, clubs, pets. Twitter is used for mostly following daily political, economic, social agenda of country or following celebrities or journalists, writers. When each social network in our survey sample group was examined seperately; it was observed that the SES (social economic status) classification of Facebook group (735 respondents) in our sample was dominated with C1, C2, D and E type users by 71% who were termed as middle and lower middle social status while Twitter group (69 respondents) was consisted of A and B type middle and upper middle segment users by 70% quite the contrary. Instagram users (176 respondents) were evenly distributed being occupied 56% by A and B type and 54 % by middle and lower middle segments. This socio-economic and cultural profile distinction between the three social network site users also shows that Facebook culture is more generic and appeals to a broader public while Twitter and Instagram have relatively more niche cultures with more users from A and B types (middle / upper middle). When the socio-cultural and economic conditions of Turkey is remembered as being an emerging market and developing economy, the general population characteristics of the country gives us clues about the reasons for the high preference and acceptance level of Facebook culture by most of the population.

On the other hand, in terms of shared language and jargon elements of social network culture, Facebook has an overwhelming advantage by its simplicity and use

of easiness compared to other social networks. In addition to its user friendly language and jargons, it has also advantages in terms of a wide range of shared vision and goals by its members. While it has a diversified range of goals and vision in general, in some specific time periods like Gezi protests or natural disasters, people are unified around the same themes and goals. During Gezi protests, it was observed that people who normally shared their travel photos or parties changed their posts concentrating on sharing political ideas.

7.4 Effects of perceived critical mass on interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM

According to the results of our study, perceived critical mass has significant direct impacts on both interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM. However, perceived critical mass has a big direct significant positive effect on interpersonal trust by .430*** and a slight negative direct effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM by -.084*. So, hypothesis H7: Perceived critical mass has a positive effect on interpersonal trust is supported while hypothesis H8: Perceived critical mass has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM is rejected. On the other hand, when mediation effect of interpersonal trust was tested, findings indicate that perceived critical mass has a negative significant direct (-.084*) and positive significant indirect (.087***) effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM which shows partial mediation. So, hypothesis 15 is accepted: The positive relationship between perceived critical mass and consumers' engagement in eWOM is mediated by interpersonal trust. However, the total effect with partial mediation of interpersonal trust is insignificant which diminishes by interaction of negative direct and positive indirect effects consequently.

Past research found that the actions of crowds serve as a source of trust (Hsu & Lu, 2004). The finding of our study is in parallel with literature indicating the high significant positive effect of perceived critical mass on interpersonal trust. When the effects of all constructs on interpersonal trust are analyzed, it is observed that perceived critical mass construct has the highest positive effect even more than social network culture and tie strength. This finding was not very surprising because during the in depth interviews in the qualitative part of the study, majority concept, in other words, critical mass was often stressed by the respondents as highly inspiring trust. The reason of this effectual significance might be caused by a version of bandwagon effect on social network site context which is related with people's psychology to do something when others do so (Leibenstein, 1950). On the other hand, direct negative slight but significant effect of perceived critical mass on consumers' engagement in eWOM might be due to the inefficiency of transformation of generated trust of people into eWOM engagement. Perceived critical mass is a kind of affective satisfaction point where the adopter perceives that the site has a significant and enough number of members that he can associate with. Even if they generate some kind of trust in this critical mass, they might not implement what they receive from this group. There might be a couple of reasons for this issue. First, they are not enable to ask specific tailor made recommendations to this majority group so that their perception of trust remains at an artificial level which does not transform into their decision making process. Second, as in the homophily and eWOM relationship, dispositional factors like personality traits might again be influential. For example, a person having a high need for uniqueness personality trait might refrain himself from imitating the actions a group of people and take just opposite actions with the majority of his social ties.

7.5 Relationship between interpersonal trust, consumers' engagement in eWOM and purchase intention

According to the results of our study, interpersonal trust has significant direct impacts on both consumers' engagement in eWOM and purchase intention. Interpersonal trust has a direct significant positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM by .202*** and a direct significant positive effect on purchase intention by .413***. So, hypothesis H9: Interpersonal trust has a positive effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM and hypothesis H11: Interpersonal trust has a positive effect on purchase intentions of consumers are supported. On the other hand, when mediation effect of consumers' engagement in eWOM was tested, findings indicate that interpersonal trust has a positive significant direct (.413***) and positive significant indirect (.061***) effect on purchase intention by partial mediation of consumers' engagement in eWOM. The total effect of interpersonal trust on purchase intention is also significant by .475*** with partial mediation of consumers' engagement in eWOM. So, hypothesis 16 is also supported: The positive relationship between interpersonal trust and purchase intention is mediated by consumers' engagement in eWOM.

The impact of trust on both eWOM and purchase intention is common in literature. So, our results are in conformity with past research at this point. However, the effects of interpersonal trust has more importance in our study's online social network context when compared to hundreds of trust based studies in literature. The reason for this might be that social network technologies depend heavily interactions between users and a user's belief in trustworthiness of other social network members might influence his intentions more than in any other context. On the other hand, the creators of social capital theory which constitute the theoretical background of this

study also recognize interpersonal trust as an important antecedent of intellectual capital exchange which is knowledge exchange transaction (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In parallel with this knowledge, our finding that interpersonal trust has a direct effect on consumers' engagement in eWOM is an expected result in accordance with past research. But the more interesting issue is that interpersonal trust has even a more stronger total effect on purchase intention of consumers which shows us that their recommendation taking activity is cognitively processed, accepted and transformed into behaviour intention to a greater extent. The reason of this difference between the effect of interpersonal trust on engagement in eWOM and the effect of interpersonal trust on purchase intention might be explained by some of the findings generated by the qualitative study part of the research. As we remember, when we asked directly to the participants if they took recommendations from their social network ties most of them answered this question as they did not need asking opinions from their ties instead they mostly made their product search from google or ecommerce sites. However, during the continuing conversations in the interviews, they gave many clues about some instances in which they bought products or services that they saw in the posts of their friends' pages on social network sites. Since there was a kind of hidden indirect effect of their friends' recommendations, they sometimes bought or considered to buy products on basis of recommendations even without realizing they were really considering their advices, in other words rather realizing their preferences at a subconsious level. This situation might be an alternative explanation of why the effect of interpersonal trust is even much higher on purchase intention of consumers than on their engagement activities. They do not appearantly take recommendations or do not think that they consider any

recommendations but in fact they really do and this affects their intentions to purchase consequently.

Another relationship found support in our study in parallel with literature findings is relationship between engagement in eWOM and purchase intention. According to the results of our study, consumers' engagement in eWOM has a positive direct effect (.304***) on purchase intention. So, hypothesis H10 is supported: Consumers' engagement in eWOM has a positive effect on purchase intention. According to literature, engagement goes beyond a simple involvement including both cognitive and affective elements and behavioural intention mostly follows engagement (Mollen & Willson, 2010). In the scope of our study, our concept of engagement in eWOM is closer to this understanding. Engagement in eWOM construct includes both affective, cognitive and behavioural aspects of recommendation taking and is expected to be transformed into purchase intention which is our final DV. However, as it is observed from the results, the effect of engagement in eWOM (.304***) is not very high as expected although being significant and positive. On the other hand, the direct effect of interpersonal trust on purchase intention (.413***) is even higher than the transformation of engagement into intention. As explanation due to some qualitative study insights might be that participants sometimes develop purchasing intentions instinctively even without being aware of this. They may think that they do not actively engage in opinion taking, but they are exposed to some ideas, opinions and posts while hanging on the social network site and they are being affected by these without consciously knowing it.

7.6 Moderation effects on the relationships between model constructs

According to the multigroup CFA and SMA results, two moderating variables were found to be effective. Gender and social network site usage intensity were determined to have moderation effects on some of the relationships between constructs. As the result of examination of moderation effects on each path, gender was found effective in the majority of relationships, especially for the female group with one exception of the path between interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM. More specifically, moderation effects were perceived on relationships between tie strength-interpersonal trust; homophily-interpersonal trust; perceived critical mass- interpersonal trust, interpersonal trust -consumers' engagement in eWOM and interpersonal trust- purchase intention. So, hypotheses H17a, H17b, H17d, H19 and H21 are supported for the related path relationships as presented in summary of hypotheses testing section.

According to past literature, gender differences were noticed in many studies in different areas like online shopping, social media usage habit. General implications of past studies have clues that female mostly considered the strength of their ties, homophily of their ties while trusting in recommendations and there was more transformation of trust into behavioural intentions for female. During our in depth interviews, it was also observed that women gave more importance to homophily of their ties especially when establishing interpersonal trust. The moderation analysis findings of our study supported past research and qualitative findings in most cases and showed that female participants trusted their strong and homophilic ties more than men. Female group also had more inclination to transform interpersonal trust into purchase intention which may be perhaps tied to women's general inclination for purchasing at first sight. If they trust in their opinion givers,

they may develop purchase intention more than men as expected. On the other hand, the relationship between interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM was stronger for men which might be because of the reason that men mostly ask advice only if they really trust in their social ties otherwise try to give their decisions by their own. As a traditional characteristic of Turkish culture, men do not like to ask opinions or advices very much unless they're really sure about the competence of the opinion giver. A very common daily example for this might be their reluctancy in asking address description of a location in contrary to women who never bother to ask demand on this issue. During the in depth interviews, it was also observed that men mostly gave importance to the expertise and credibility of their peer groups and were more reluctant to trust in anonymous recommendations.

The second moderating variable which has effects on some of the path relationships was social network site usage intensity. Moderation effects were perceived on relationships between tie strength - interpersonal trust, perceived critical mass - interpersonal trust, tie strength - consumers' engagement in eWOM, social network culture - consumers' engagement in eWOM and interpersonal trust - consumers' engagement in eWOM. So, hypotheses H22a, H22d, H23a, H23b and H24 are supported for the related path relationships as presented in the summary of hypotheses testing section.

In the high intensive user group of social network sites, moderation effects were stronger between perceived critical mass - interpersonal trust, social network culture - consumers' engagement in eWOM and interpersonal trust - consumers' engagement in eWOM. This is in parallel with literature findings which indicates that as the usage intensity increases, the members are more attached and integrated to the cultural environment of the social network site and start to feel themselves like a part

of it. So, even if they do not know every member personally in the social network group, they trust them more and take more recommendations from them as well as considering these recommendations seriously. The culture, vision, goals, language and theme of the social network site also becomes important for them in developing trust in the information provided. As an example, a person might feel unsecured and distrustful in a social network environment which he rarely engages in. In such a case, even if a million of people advices a product, he wouldn't take this advice into consideration as long as he will feel comfortable with the environment. So, these three moderation effect findings are reasonable and parallel with the findings of our qualitative study insights and literature. The more interesting finding in the results was that moderation effect was higher for low intensive users for some of the paths like tie strength - interpersonal trust and tie strength - consumers' engagement in eWOM. However, this finding can be reasonably explained in parallel with the same logic. Low intensive users of social network site mostly feel uncomfortable in the online environment since they are not fully integrated to the culture and interactions on that social network. So, they are suspicious to trust advices and opinions coming from their ties and they are even reluctant to ask advices to the members. This situation changes when the strength of their tie increases. In other words, when they know their tie very well, their Interpersonal Trust level increases and further directs them to engagement in eWOM more. So, these two contradictory finding are quite reasonable when considering the fact that newcomers or low intensive users in a social network site trust their strong ties more for asking recommendations.

7.7 Discussion of post hoc tests

Different types of post hoc tests were conducted to gather additional insights under the objectives and scope of this study. Four additional independent tests were conducted on basis of consumer trait characteristics and consumer product attitudes. First independent t test was conducted to observe the differences between two groups having high propensity to trust and low propensity to trust. As the result of this independent test, high propensity to trust group was observed to have higher levels of interpersonal trust, engagement in eWOM and purchase intention. This result is in parallel with general expectations and literature because people having higher tendency to trust others might develop more interpersonal trust on social network sites and can be more inclined to take recommendations from others and consequently being more closer to purchasing behaviour.

Second independent test was conducted to observe the differences between two groups having high self efficacy and low self efficacy. As the result of this independent test, high self efficacy group was observed to have higher levels of interpersonal trust, engagement in eWOM and purchase intention. This result is rather contradictory to literature. Because according to past research, individuals with low self efficacy are expected to depend more on other's judgements and opinions in social interaction contexts (Kankanhalli, 2005). In our study, the reason of the finding that people who have high self efficacy have higher levels of interpersonal trust, engagement in eWOM and purchase intention might be explained by the recommendation taking habits of self efficate people. The possible reason might depend on their personal principles in selection their opinion givers when a recommendation is needed. High self efficate mostly people believe that they are able to solve problems by their own competence and knowledge. However, they

seldom need others' advices in complicated decision making situations. In such situations, they apply to people to whom they find expert and competent in the related areas. As they are much more selective in approaching the right people for recommendation, they are mostly confident about the information which they collect from these trusted parties. They trust in the received recommendation, consider it with confidence and utilize it in their decision making for purchase. This might be the reason for the higher level of interpersonal trust, eWOM and purchase intention level of these people in our sample.

Third independent test was conducted to observe the differences between two groups having high utilitarian product attitude and low utilitarian product attitude. As the result of this independent test, high utilitarian product attitude group was observed to have higher levels of interpersonal trust, engagement in eWOM and purchase intention. This result can be explained with the insights of past research which revealed that consumers having high utilitarian attitudes are mostly influenced by both tie strength and expertise level of recommenders (Smith, 2002). By this respect, we can investigate the tie strength level of high utilitarian consumer group which is 4.46 being above the average. So, a possible explanation for this finding might be that high utilitarian consumers might me using more closer ties in which they can feel more trust in their recommendations.

Fourth independent test was conducted to observe the differences between two groups having high hedonic product attitude and low hedonic product attitude. As the result of this independent test, high hedonic product attitude group was observed to have higher levels of interpersonal trust, engagement in eWOM and purchase intention. This result can be explained with the insights of past research which revealed that consumers having high hedonic attitudes are more influenced by

hedonic type of products (Smith, 2002). When the type of products were analyzed in high hedonic product attitude group, it was observed that 163 of 509 products in the hedonic group was game and hobby products while 118 were clothing and shoes, which were completely attractive for them having hedonic characteristics. The social network site dispersion in the high hedonic consumer product attitude group was realized as: Facebook users (343); Instagram users (131) and Twitter users (35). It is observed that majority of Instagram users in our total sample group exists in this group by 75% which also indicates a higher level of hedonic context on Instagram than Facebook (47%) and Twitter.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Summary and conclusion

Companies mostly believe that they can use digital marketing strategies on social media to increase their brands' awareness and improve their customer base. However, as one of the recent contradictory research on this issue, the findings of Gallup survey written by Elder (2014) suggest that consumers are highly accustomed to brand-related Facebook and Twitter content. These channels do not motivate prospective customers to consider trying a brand or recommending a brand to others anymore. Company sponsored Facebook, Instagram pages or Twitter feeds have almost no persuasive power on customers and all of them are perceived as some kind of commercial marketing activities just like advertising. Gallup research written by Elder (2014) shows that consumers are much more likely to turn to friends, family members and experts when seeking advice about companies, brands, products or services. This reality shows us that eWOM phenomenon generated by social networks is probably referred as a more genuine, honest and trustworthy source of information by consumers than company sponsored pages. As a limited number of studies explored the drivers of eWOM phenomenon on social network sites, the crucial concept, social capital, as the generator of this engagement is targeted to be focused and dimensionalized on social network site context.

By this respect, social capital concept was dimensionalized and integrated into the conceptual framework of this study as the driver of eWOM on social network sites on the basis of social capital theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). Its effects on consumers' engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions of consumers were

further explored by testing and validating our research model and hypotheses. So, the theoretical need for an integrated model testing these relationships being concentrated on the antecedents of eWOM engagement was tried to be fulfilled under the scope of this study.

The results indicate that social capital based drivers have a significant role underlying eWOM engagement of consumers in general while engagement in eWOM do has a further effect on purchase intentions of consumers. Among the social capital drivers, social network culture dimension has the highest effect as an intriguing result when compared to past studies in literature. In past research, tie strength, homophily and interpersonal trust were mostly met as the most significant predictors of knowledge exchange in communities while cultural effects were rather neglected. In our study, social network culture construct which symbolizes all the cultural elements in the social network context appears as the most dominant factor in terms of its effect on engagement in eWOM. In addition to direct effects of social network culture on engagement in eWOM and interpersonal trust, there is also a partial mediation effect of interpersonal trust on the relationship between social network culture and engagement in eWOM. The content of social network culture construct includes elements like language, vision, ideas, jargons, codes, narratives, representations, goals, interests and values on the social network sites. As it is remembered, the quantitative part of this study was based on the results of a survey conducted on respondents who were users of one of the social network sites; Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. Each of these social network sites has its own culture by its own language, goals, vision and interests. For example, Instagram is based on the goal and vision of visual sharings mostly aiming at following photos of hobbies, events, places, people, fashion, food or touristic places. Twitter, on the other

hand have a completely different culture representing a more refined taste, is mostly based on textual sharings or tweet "floods", which allow people to reach goals like receiving daily news and political agenda, sharing opinions about various kinds of issues and discussing on hot topics. Facebook is a more consolidated and generic platform enabling a diversified cultural environment to its members which merges both visual and textual sharings on various kinds of areas and interests in the most practical way. Considering that our sample size was heavily composed of Facebook users by 735 people out of 980 total respondents, social network culture of Facebook mostly demonstrated the highest impact on development of interpersonal trust and eWOM engagement by its omnidirectional structure. It is clearly observed that members of Facebook are affected by sometimes diversified goals and interests, sometimes shared visions during some specific periods of political protests, user friendly language, jargons and values ongoing in the network activities. As they are affected more by these cultural elements, they trust their network ties more, follow posts and ideas of them more or request their opinions and recommendations directly. This process ends up in generation of the purchase intentions of consumers regarding to the recommendations taken. This result reveals the importance of cultural environment in context of social media platforms which gives many important implications to marketing theoreticians and practitioners which will be presented in the implications section.

Tie strength construct, which is heavily discussed in literature by its various aspects is observed as the second highest impact contributor to engagement in eWOM of consumers. In addition to direct effects of tie strength on engagement in eWOM and interpersonal trust, there is also a partial mediation effect of interpersonal trust on the relationship between tie strength and engagement in

eWOM. As it is defined and conceptualized by different views of researchers in literature, this study defines and operationalizes tie strength basically as the combination of temporal and emotional closeness and connectivity of social network ties which includes duration, frequency and diversity of interactions as well as the emotional depth and integrity. Under this scope, tie strength appears to have the second biggest effect on both interpersonal trust and consumers' engagement in eWOM which indicates that people trust in their closer ties more and consider their recommendations more seriously than others. Despite some literature findings about the high level of diversity and speed of the flow of information among weak ties more than strong ties just as Granovetter's (1974) and Dunhan et al.'s (1997), weak ties are not found to be influential as strong ties in terms of generating trust in recommendations of others in this study. It is understood that people might collect information from both strong and weak ties from their networks but trust in the closer ones which further motivates in considering these recommendations valuable.

Interpersonal trust, is a very compherensive concept which is studied by many different aspects in literature. Construct of interpersonal trust was found as significantly important in virtual communities and social media studies since it is expected to affect the levels of interaction and sharing of knowledge among the members of communities. So, interpersonal trust construct was included in our study's framework constituting a backbone of social capital concept which often acts as a partial mediator between the dimensions of social capital and engagement in eWOM construct. In addition to its partial mediating roles between constructs of social network culture, tie strength and consumers' engagement in eWOM, it has a seperate direct positive effect on engagement in eWOM as the third highest contributor after social network culture and tie strength. So, as it is highly expected,

it is observed from the findings of our study that when people trust in their social network ties, they are more inclined to consider their recommendations in shaping their buying decisions. As another important finding which develops important implications for practitioners as will be described in implications section, interpersonal trust construct has a direct and indirect positive effect on purchase intention construct indicating that the trust level of social network site members initiate a relationship with eWOM activities and then convinces them to purchase the products recommended. Within this chain of relationship, engagement in eWOM partially mediates the relationship between interpersonal trust and purchase intention. So, interpersonal trust is a critical concept affecting the final DV(dependent variable) of our study and found as to be influential in parallel to literature findings.

Homophily construct, referring to the degree of similarity between people on certain attributes like demographics, perceptions, values, lifestyles and appearances is frequently investigated in literature by its effects on information exhange. Past research demonstrated that homophily might increase the frequency and effectiveness of communication between people. In our study, although a significant effect on Interpersonal trust is demonstrated, no significant direct effect of Homophily is found on engagement in eWOM construct. So, although it is observed that people trust in others who are similar to them in terms of different criterias, this does not make a sufficient contribution to their recommendation taking and considering activities. An explanation for this diminishing effect of homophily on engagement in eWOM might be that people are attracted to their similar ties at first, might develop some trust in them whether they are close or not and might interact with them more frequently but then when they have to give decisions and take recommendations, they may want to hear more diversified views and opinions from

people having different perspectives and lifestyles who are rather dissimilar to them. Another possible explanation for the lack of a causal relationship between these two constructs can depend on the personality characteristics of the sample group. For example, if the sample is composed of people with the personality trait of high need for uniqueness, then they might disregard similarities in their social network ties. As another possible explanation, social network culture, being an influential factor in eWOM might also affect people's perceptions about their homophilic ties. For example, in the cultural environment of Twitter which respects unbiased and courageous ideas in general, members might give more credit to creative and unique opinions more than the congruent thoughts of their homophilic ties. So, homophily construct appear to have only a positive significant effect on Interpersonal trust which does not later transform into engagement in recommendations.

Perceived critical mass is another construct which is added into the conceptual framework of our study due to the insights of in depth interviews conducted under the scope of qualitative study part and suggestions of some past studies in literature. Perceived critical mass was started to be mentioned more in some recent studies of online interactions and social networks. As most of the interviewees stressed the importance of majority perception in our interviews, this construct was added to our conceptual framework to be tested in terms of its effects on interpersonal trust and engagement in eWOM. According to the results, perceived critical mass has a quite low significant negative effect on engagement in eWOM. Quite the contrary, its direct effect on interpersonal trust is the highest and positive among all constructs. This contradiction might be due to the fact of the difference between people's trust levels and recommendation considering attitudes. While it is observed from our study results that people's trust level significantly increases when they perceive a

majority of people gives the similar opinions and ideas about an issue, their recommendation taking and considering might not be so strong and in the same positive direction. Because seeing hundreds of people giving the same opinion may not be enough to initiate people in engagement in eWOM towards development of behavioural intentions like purchasing. So, the strong positive effect of perceived critical mass construct on interpersonal trust diminishes while transforming into engagement in eWOM activities.

When looked at the moderation effects of our prospect moderating variables in this study, only two moderators are determined to have significant moderation effects on relationships between the constructs of our conceptual model. These moderators are gender and social network site usage intensity variables which are tested on each path of the relationships between the constructs. Female participants are observed to have more moderation effects on some relationships between tie strength, homophily, perceived critical mass and interpersonal trust; interpersonal trust and purchase intention than male participants. As it's partially expected from some of literature insights, women are generally more affected by the closeness, similarity and majority of ties when evaluating the recommendations and shaping purchasing decisions. Another moderating variable being effective in some relationship paths was social network usage intensity which was often mentioned in past studies as affecting the frequency, effectiveness and trustworthiness of communications between people. Our study findings also indicate that heavy users of social network site have more moderation effects on their relationships between tie strength, perceived network culture and interpersonal trust; social network culture and engagement in eWOM which shows that being a frequent and heavy user makes people feel more attached to the social network community, integrated to the network

culture and trust their ties more while taking recommendations. However, low intensive users were found to have more interpersonal trust and engagement in eWOM when their tie strength increased. This shows that since they are not much integrated to the social network culture as low frequent users, they rely more on their close ties whom they know well instead of the network itself.

A series of post hoc tests were conducted to gather additional insights to the objectives of our study. One of the most interesting one was the comparison of structural modelling tests of the research model on bases of three social network sites seperately. The results show that research model is reliable, valid and has good quality fit for Facebook users group, while does not attain satisfactory results for Instagram and Twitter users. Although the number of sample groups is not evenly distributed due to the preferences of respondents as determined in the elimination entrance questions of the research survey, this quality fit differences might be caused by a couple of factors depending on the distinct characteristics of these social network sites. As mentioned before, Facebook has a wide diversity of user motivations and goals for its members with social network ties composed of mostly people's friends and acquaintances whom they personally know in real life. However, this situation completely differs on Instagram and Twitter. They have more niche user motivations and interests like following different categories of photos or daily news and agenda. On the other hand, the social network tie structure on Instagram and Twitter is composed of a more diversified number of people as celebrities, opinion leaders, hobby groups, companies and also real friends. These differences might cause the blurring of relationships in our model and might decrease the level of trust and engagement in these sites since some of the posts and recommendations come from almost strangers. Also, general cultural environment of these three social

network sites are distinct from each other which is proved to be the highest predictor of eWOM on the networks. By this respect, it is not surprising to confirm that our research model has a better reliability, validity and fit quality in Facebook user group, being the oldest, most consolidated, multi-cultured and multi-application user friendly social network site when compared to two others. However, this comparison should be further investigated by sufficient number of new sample groups of other site users which will be mentioned in the suggestions section.

8.2 Implications for theory

This thesis examines social capital factors which drive eWOM in social network sites and further investigates their effects on purchase intentions. Theoretical implications drawn from the results of this study are threefold. First, this study goes beyond previous research contributing to social media marketing research domain focusing on the determinants of eWOM in the emerging, important online social mediums like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. This research confirms that certain social capital variables can contribute to our understanding of eWOM use in social network sites. For example, users who gain a higher level of tie strength via these sites may have a greater likelihood to use eWOM as a source of product recommendation. This study will contribute a theoretical understanding of consumers' use of social network ties as an information vehicle for eWOM.

Second, through a theoretical and empirical investigation, this study helps to disclose the differential effect of social factors based on a theoretical framework at overall. This leads to a better understanding of this study which attempts to fill an important theoretical gap in marketing literature by proposing an integrated conceptual research model underpinned by the social capital theory (Nahapiet &

Ghoshal, 1998). Although there have been prior independent research about social ties, trust, eWOM and online recommendations in literature, there is no unified model investigating the interrelationships of these in a complete robust conceptual model and relating them to an expected desired outcome like purchase intention.

Third, as Orton and Weick (1990) and Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) pointed out the significance of shared vision, language and other cultural elements in communities, the empirical findings of this study highlights that social network culture has much higher effect than expected on eWOM engagement in social network sites. Our findings contributes to the stream of literature by showing that there is a strong link between culture of a social network site and eWOM engagement of consumers which was rather neglected by past researchers.

Additionally, the findings contributed to the literature, by showing that although constructs like homophily and critical Mass are important predictors of interpersonal trust on social network sites, they do not really have any contribution in the engagement of either eWOM process or purchase decisions. This gives valuable insights to literature by adding additional empirical findings to studies of Brown and Reingen (1987), Duhan et al. (1997) and Hsu and Lu (2004).

This study followed a theory-testing approach by use of maximum likelihood estimation method of SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) similar to other empirical studies (Chiu et al., 2006; Hsu & Hu, 2013) in this area of research. By the help of structural equation modelling technique, investigating the relationships among variables of the study within a model, rather than evaluating coefficients separately or conducting seperate regression analyses, enables us to better understand the overall mechanism. The study findings reinforce the literature which argues that

social capital is the necessary set of resources embedded in social networks to achieve development and engagement in eWOM.

Our final contribution is that the scales measuring all constructs in our model were selected, constructed and tested through a survey-based quantitative study, providing academics with strong measurement instruments to be used in future empirical studies. Studies within the social media context have always used student samples till today which was continuously criticized by its limitations in academia. This study unified and operationalized social capital under five main constructs and tested and validated research model through a large scale survey on a heteregenous sample from a diversified range of age, income, social status, gender and location as the three big cities of Turkey; Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir.

8.3 Implications for practice

From a managerial perspective, findings from my dissertation can also yield many significant insights for practitioners in developing their social media marketing strategies. First, our study certainly supports that social network sites provide an essential channel for eWOM. Our findings also reveals that within the context of social network sites, accumulated social capital is a significant predictor of individuals' knowledge sharing which is called as engagement in eWOM in this research. Among the social capital dimensions, the strongest predictor of engagement in eWOM is social network culture which gives an important implication for social media marketers. Because before constructing their social media strategies, marketers should investigate the congruence between the culture of the social network channel in which they will develop their company page and the positioning of their marketed products and services in depth. If the positioning and category of

their products and services is mismatched with the cultural environment of the social media channel, then they should be prepared for the failure of their marketing efforts beforehand.

Second managerial implication of this study is that the results indicate that tie strength affects members' eWOM engagement in social network sites. Under the light of this finding, marketing managers being interested in developing and sustaining knowledge exchange through social network sites should develop strategies or mechanisms that encourage the interaction and the strength of the relationships among members. For example, some social network sites often held face-to-face meetings or seminars and invite top knowledge contributors and professional instructors to share their knowledge and experience with members of the community, as a way of enhancing the social interaction ties among its members. Some communities also provide personal message boards and blogs as tools for enhancing online communication and interaction among members. Marketers should try to identify “social influencers” or “market mavens” within the social network ties of people and encourage them to spread positive product information regarding selected brands or discourage them from sharing negative information with their personal networks.

Third managerial implication of the study is the results showing that perceived critical mass and homophily are effective in developing Interpersonal Trust on the social network site context. Although they do not have a direct effect on the generation of eWOM, their relationship with the interpersonal trust level is an important insight to be considered for marketers. Since interpersonal trust is one of the significant predictors of eWOM as social network culture and tie strength, it is important for the marketers knowing how to establish it. This implication signifies

that social network site users mostly feel trust in members who are similar to them and/or when they are exposed to a significantly high number of recommendations from them at once. So, marketing managers should be aware of the impact of recommendations on people when they are taken from their similar counterparts in terms of appearance, perceptions or way of thinking. For example, some people having low self efficacy and high propensity to trust traits might be more inclined to depend on their homophilic tie recommendations or on the opinions of the majority of their connections as an evidence of critical mass impact. EWOM marketing through these network ties may be a good online communication technique, as these social network site users are more likely to follow social influences. Quite the contrary, people who have high need for uniqueness consumer trait might disregard the recommendations of the majority of the audience or their homophilic ties since they want to stay as unique and give their decisions by self dependency. As another implication of moderation analyses, marketers should know that high intensive social network site users are more inclined to trust in majority of recommenders while low intensive users give more credit to their close ties. So, they should reach low intensive users through their close ties instead of creating a majority effect. Female customers are also expected to have more inclination to be affected by their close and homophilic ties while men are more selective in choosing their recommenders. However, men believe in their recommenders more when compared to women which is again an important strategic implication for marketers.

The introduction of social media has often been referred to as a new phenomenon but, in reality, consumers have always talked about what they like and don’t like in the past. Social media just made it easier for them to have these discussions on a more public and widespread scale. Consumers are drawn to

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and similar social network sites because they want to take part in these conversations and make connections in different informal ways. Yet, many companies continue to treat social media as a one way communication vehicle and are largely focused on how they can use these sites to push their marketing agendas by mostly developing company sponsored Facebook or Instagram pages and Twitter feeds. But since social media does not exist in a vacuum and consumers rarely interact with companies through these company sponsored channels alone, marketing managers should be aware that social media initiatives may actually be the least effective method for influencing consumers' buying decisions. Instead, consumers are more likely to engage with companies through social media when they really believe those companies' intentions are genuine. They look for real people and real communities. Among many practical implications of this study, the most important contribution is disclosing this reality to marketers by theoretical and empirical findings. The practical implications of the results of this study might convince companies to search and find new opportunities in building intimate connections with their customers through their real social network ties in ways which they did not try before. Therefore, companies that want to become part of an interactive conversation with their consumers must try to be their real friends or friends of their friends of and shift their social media initiatives to be more authentic, responsive and compelling in this direction.

8.4 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Despite the encouraging and contributive findings of this study in building and testing a holistic theoretical model by defining the relationships between social

capital dimensions, eWOM and purchase intentions of consumers, it also has several limitations.

First, it is unclear whether our findings could be generalized to all types of social network sites. Although there are some common characteristics of online communities, mechanisms of knowledge sharing and the cultural environment in social network sites are different from each other in some aspects. Our sample distribution is heavily composed of Facebook users by 735 people, followed by Instagram users by 176 people and Twitter users by 69 people solely depending on the preferences of the respondents themselves. As seperate structural path analyses were conducted for each social network site group, it was observed that overall quality fit ratio for Instagram group did not provide acceptable quality of fit results like Facebook group while Twitter group could not be analyzed by AMOS 22.0 due to the its small sample sizeas 69. So, further research is necessary by a minumum amount of 500 people for each social network site group to verify the generalizability of our findings. Additionally, other social network sites having different user motivations and goals like Linked in, Swarm and Pinterest might also be investigated in future studies. Same study can also be replicated in another country to compare the results. A cross cultural comparison of the results might enable us having applicability in other domains.

Second, our survey sample is heteregenous consisted of an evenly distributed age and gender groups from different income and social status levels. This diversification was an attempt to overcome the limitation of past studies which mostly used only student groups as samples. Within our sample group, we also investigated self efficacy, propensity to trust consumer traits and hedonistic and utilitarian product attitudes of our respondents and analyzed these attitude and trait

characteristics on bases of moderation effects on our constructs. However, there were no significant moderation effects observed on the relationships of our model constructs by our survey data. Additionally, some independent t tests were conducted to check differences on respondents' interpersonal trust, eWOM and purchase intention levels on bases of these consumer traits and attitudes. Although there were some differences observed by post hoc independent t tests, some future studies might be fruitful in specifically determining the impact of consumer traits and attitudes on social capital, eWOM and purchase intentions of consumers. Some other related traits might be added such as need for uniqueness or susceptibility to interpersonal influence in order to enable a more compherensive evaluation of interactions between personality characteristics and constructs like homophily and critical mass.

This study used cross-sectional data, which limits inferences to causality. The lack of a demonstration of causality means that the actual change in engagement in eWOM as a result of the dimensions of social capital could not be demonstrated or observed through an experiment. While we addressed this limitation in our post-hoc tests by using some control variables like age, gender, social status and income showing that they did not have significant effects on the dependent variables of the research model and confirmed that our independent variables which are social capital dimensions were the only responsible factors on the effect of eWOM engagement and purchase intentions. However, causality can be demonstrated in future studies through experiments both in controlled environments like social network site simulations and also in real life situations. In light of our findings and the limitations of the current dissertation, future research might focus on building an experimental design so as to demonstrate the validity of the hypothesized relationships in real life

settings and test whether significant changes are observed on effects of social capital dimensions.

Another limitation of the cross sectional data is its static status. On the other hand, the development of social capital leading to knowledge sharing is an ongoing phenomenon. Our social capital factors were measured at a static point rather than as they were developing and losing time richness of explanation. A future empirical design for testing the proposed model can be a longitudinal comparison of social network users' initial use and long-term use for sharing knowledge, in order to faithfully capture the complex, dynamic interrelationships between initial and long-term knowledge sharing decisions. As longitudinal research captures temporal order by assessing the influence of a predictor at a time subsequent to its cause and is more likely lead to superior causal inferences (Jap & Anderson, 2004). Therefore, a future longitudinal study would be also useful to provide the ability to examine causality in social capital - eWOM- purchase intention relationship.

Additionally, cross-sectional design is prone to common method variance limitation. As the measures of both the independent and the dependent variables come from the same source, common method variance may inflate the structural relationships (Hair et al., 2010). However, this limitation was tried to be overcome by common method bias tests like Harman's Single Factor Test as presented in Appendix ... (Podsakoff et. al., 2003). On the measurement side, a normative scale, like the Likert scale used in this study is prone to social desirability bias and can inflate the construct reliabilities (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998).

This study examined only one aspect of engagement in eWOM concentrating on only opinion taking party excluding opinion giving and pass along behaviour from the scope of the research. However, as all aspects of knowledge sharing is key

to sustaining virtual communities and might give valuable insights to social media marketers, a future research suggestion might be the inclusion and testing of other aspects of eWOM engagement activity into the research model. By this respect, it will be more easier to understand the mechanism of whole process of knowledge sharing in social network site context.

A last suggestion for future research might be useful especially for the marketing professionals. The renewal of this research on a sample of the real customer database of a social media company can be fruitful for practitioners enabling the comparison of the purchasing intention construct with realized sales figures. A future study with the same research model including real sales figures of the same sample group in addition to their intention measurements will provide more realistic results and probably considered as a highly valuable contribution especially for the marketing managers in terms of analyzing the concrete performance of their social media strategies transforming into cash.

APPENDIX A

PAST STUDIES OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

Table 1. Past Studies of Social Capital

Study	Research Methods	Context	Social Capital Dimension	Dependent Variable(s)	Results(Direction of effects)
Tsai and Ghoshal (1998)	Survey	Directors or senior managers	SSC: social interaction ties RSC: trust and trustworthiness CSC: shared vision	Resource exchange and combination	SSC --- CSC (Not significant) SSC --- RSC (+) CSC --- RSC (+)
Wasko and Faraj (2005)	Survey and content analysis	Members of a national legal professional association in the United States	SSC: centrality RSC: trust CSC: self-rated expertise; tenure in the field	Knowledge contribution	Helpfulness of contribution - Centrality (+) - Commitment (-) Volume of contribution - Centrality (+) - Tenure in field (+) Reciprocity (-)
Chiu, Hsu and Wang (2006)	Survey	Members of one IT oriented professional virtual community	SSC: social interaction ties RSC: trust; norm of reciprocity; identification CSC: shared language; shared vision	Quantity of knowledge sharing; knowledge quality	Quantity of knowledge sharing - Social ties (+) - Reciprocity (+) - Identification (+) - Shared vision (-) Knowledge quality - Social ties (+) - Trust (+) - Shared language (+) Shared vision (+)
Atuahene-Gima and Murray (2007)	Interview and survey	TMT Members	SSC: intraindustry ties, extraindustry managerial ties and power RSC: trust CSC: solidarity; strategic consensus	Exploitative and exploratory learning	Exploitative learning - Power (+) - Intraindustry ties (+) - Extraindustry ties (-) - Trust (+) - Solidarity (+) Exploratory learning - Power (+) - Intraindustry ties (+) - Extraindustry ties (+) Strategic consensus (+)
Robert, Dennis and Ahuja (2008)	Experiment	Junior-level business school students	Structural social capital Relational social capital Cognitive social capital: shared common understanding	Knowledge integration	Direct effects - Relational social capital (+) - Cognitive social capital (+) Moderating effects SSC*Medium (+) CSC*Medium (+)

Van den Hooff and Huysman (2009)	Survey	541 respondents online survey in six different organizations	SSC: connections between actors RSC: trust, norms and sanctions, obligations and expectations, identity and identification CSC: shared language, codes and narratives	Knowledge sharing	SSC --- RSC (+) SSC --- CSC (+) CSC --- RSC (+)
Wang and Chiang (2009)	Survey	202 users in the largest online auction website in Taiwan	SSC: social interaction RSC: trust in actor CSC: shared vision	Auction continuance intention	SSC --- CSC (+) SSC --- RSC (not significant) CSC --- RSC (+)
Kirsch, Ko and Haney (2010)	Survey	ISD team members	Structural social capital Relational social capital Cognitive social capital	Clan control	All three social capital (+)
Lin and Lu (2011)	Survey	Instant messenger users	SSC: centrality, network ties RSC: commitment, reciprocity CSC: shared code, language, narratives	Instant messenger usage	Commitment (+) Shared code and language (+) Centrality (+)
Van den Hooff and de Winter (2011)	Interviews and Survey	28 interviews 236 participants in the online survey from IT department and business organization	SSC: the overall pattern of connections between actors RSC: trust and trustworthiness, norms, obligations and expectations, identity and identification CSC: shared language and codes; shared narratives	Knowledge sharing; perceived IT performance	SSC --- RSC (+) SSC --- CSC (+) CSC --- RSC (+)
Hsu and Hung (2013)	Survey	Information system development projects	SSC:institutionalized formal mechanism RSC: mutual trust, respect, reciprocity CSC: business knowledge	Product performance Process performance	All three direct effects on product performance (+) All three interaction effects on process performance(+)

APPENDIX B

IN DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH

Please indicate your age, gender, occupation, residential city and district, educational and marital status.

1- Are you a social network site user? How many SNS are you actively using?

2- Please indicate two or three of the ones which you use most intensively among all SNS? How long have you been using them?

3- How many connections do you have on these SNS?

4- How often do you log on to these SNS? How many days a week and how mant hours a day?

5- For what purpose do you log on these SNS? (socializing, taking/giving information, just spending time)

6- Have you ever used social media for information taking purpose? Product/service information or news?

7- Have you ever asked/taken product/service information from your connections on these SNS? If yes, on which of them?

8- When you need a product/service recommendation, do SNS connections come into your mind in the first place or if not, in which ranking?

9- If you seek information/recommendation from your SNS connections, which way do you prefer? (by posting or asking by direct mail/messaging channels?)

10- Even if you don't directly ask product/service recommendations on SNS, have you ever seen/been exposed to product/service information or recommendations? Mostly on which SNS?

11- How are you getting exposed to these? (By the way of others' recommending a friend option, by seeing posts of other people on their wall or seeing your friends being a member or fan of a group/brand/company)

12- What are the products/services which you have most frequently directly taken/been indirectly exposed to information/recommendations? (Clothing, travel, restaurant, hotel, party, health, sports, consultancy, electronics, white goods)

13- Have you ever recently investigated on, tried, considered for purchase, purchased or started to rethink using while previously not using, a product/service by going to the physical store or through other online channels based on a direct or indirect recommendation provided by your social network site connections? If so, what are these and do such cases occur very frequently?

14- Have you ever quitted using any product/servive after getting negative WOM about it on SNS? Does this happen very frequently?

15- Do you think that the information/recommendations you take from SNS are more trustworthy than traditional media sources?

16- What factors do you think play more important role in the cases that you trust in direct/indirect information/recommendations provided by your SNS connections?

17- Is it the credibility or expertise of the recommenders on SNS? Or is it the benevolence, honesty or integrity of them or any other personality characteristics? On which cases and related to which products?

18- Bilgi/tavsiyelerin çok kişi tarafından verilmesi önemli mi? Hangi durum ve ürünlerde?

19- On which SNS do you feel higher level of trust in the information you obtain from your connections and does it really happen?

20- Do the common vision and culture of your connections on SNS affect your trust in recommendations? On which SNS and related to which products?

21- Do the common communication patterns and jargons on SNS affect your trust in recommendations or affect in some any other ways?

APPENDIX C

IN DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN TURKISH

Yaşınız, mesleğiniz, yaşadığınız il ve semt, cinsiyet, eğitim, medeni durumunuzu belirtiniz.

1- Sosyal Ağ kullanıcısı mısınız? Kaç tane?

2- En yoğun kullandığınız iki veya üç tanesi? Ne kadar zamandır kullanıyorsunuz?

3- Bu ağlarda networkunuzde kaç kişi var?

4- Bu ağlara ne sıklıkla giriyorsunuz? Haftada kaç kez ve günde kaç saat?

5- Ne amaçla giriyorsunuz? (sosyalleşme, bilgi alma/verme, vakit geçirme)

6- Sosyal medyayı hiç bilgi alma amacıyla kullandığınız oldu mu? Ürün/hizmet veya haber?

7- Bu ağlarda ürün/hizmetler konusunda networkunuzden bilgi istediğiniz/aldığınız oluyor mu? Oluyorsa hangilerinde?

8- Bir ürün /hizmet hakkında tavsiye ihtiyacınız olduğunda ilk aklınıza gelen sosyal ağ mı oluyor, olmuyorsa hangi sırada?

9- Sosyal ağınızdan bilgi/tavsiye istemeniz halinde bu nasıl oluyor? (post edip, sorarak mı, mail/mesaj yoluyla mı)

10- Bilgi istemeseniz bile ürün/hizmetler hakkında bilgi aldığınız, tavsiyeler gönderdiğiniz oluyor mu, hangi ağlarda?

11- Bunlara nasıl maruz kalıyorsunuz? (Recommend a friend yoluyla mı, birileri bir post ediyor o şekilde mi, bir arkadaşının likelaması ile mi, bir arkadaşınız bir gruba girmiş veya fanı olmuş ise)

12- En çok isteyerek veya istemeyerek bilgi ve tavsiye aldığınız/maruz kaldığınız ürün/hizmetler nelerdir? (Giyim, seyahat, restoran, otel, parti, sağlık, spor, danışmanlık, beyaz eşya, elektronik)

13- Son zamanlarda sosyal ağlardaki networkunuzun direkt veya indirekt tavsiyesine dayanarak bir ürün/hizmet hakkında fiziki mağazaya giderek veya diğer kanallardan ilave araştırma yaptığınız, mağazada denediğiniz, gelecekte almayı düşündüğünüz, satın aldığınız veya hazlihazırda kullanmayıp kullanmayı düşündüğünüz bir şey oldu mu? Nelerdir, çok sık mıdır?

14- Sosyal ağlarda hakkında negatif şeyler duyduktan sonra kullanmayı bıraktığınız ürün/hizmet oldu mu? Çok sık mıdır?

15- Sosyal ağlardan aldığınız bilgi/tavsiyeler klasik medyaya göre daha güvenilir midir sizce?

16- Sosyal ağlarda bilgi aldığınız yada tavsiyelerinden direkt/indirekt etkilendiğiniz durumlarda güveninizi sağlayan şeyler neler olabilir?

17- Ağlardaki kişilerin konularında uzman, bilgili olması mı? İçten, iyi niyetli, adil olmaları mı yoksa başka kişilik özellikleri mi? Hangi durumlarda ve ürünlerde?

18- Bilgi/tavsiyelerin çok kişi tarafından verilmesi önemli mi? Hangi durum ve ürünlerde?

19- Hangi ağda güven duygunuz daha fazla oluyor edindiğiniz bilgilere, oluyor mu?

20- Ağınızdaki insanların ortak vizyonu ve kültürü tavsiyelerden etkilenmenizi etkiler mi? Hangi ağlarda, ürünlerde?

21- Sosyal ağlardaki ortak communication patternleri, jargonlar sizi bir şekilde etkiler mi? Yada tavsiyeye güveninizi etkiler mi?

APPENDIX D

HYPOTHESES NOT ESTIMATED

Hypothesis	Hypothesized Relationship
H27a	The relationship between Tie Strength and Interpersonal trust is moderated by Perceived Self Efficacy of consumers.
H27b	The relationship between Homophily and Interpersonal trust is moderated by Perceived Self Efficacy of consumers.
H27c	The relationship between Social Network Culture and Interpersonal trust is moderated by Perceived Self Efficacy of consumers.
H27d	The relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Interpersonal trust is moderated by Perceived Self Efficacy of consumers.
H28a	The relationship between Tie Strength and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by Perceived Self Efficacy of consumers.
H28b	The relationship between Homophily and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by Perceived Self Efficacy of consumers.
H28c	The relationship between Social Network Culture and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by Perceived Self Efficacy of consumers.
H28d	The relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by Perceived Self Efficacy of consumers.
H29	Perceived self efficacy of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and engagement in eWOM.
H30	Perceived self efficacy of consumers moderate the relationship between engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions.
H31	Perceived self efficacy of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and purchase intentions.
H32a	Propensity to trust of consumers moderate the relationship between Tie Strength and Interpersonal trust.
H32b	Propensity to trust of consumers moderate the relationship between Homophily and Interpersonal trust.
H32c	Propensity to trust of consumers moderate the relationship between Social Network Culture and Interpersonal trust.
H32d	Propensity to trust of consumers moderate the relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Interpersonal trust.
H33a	Propensity to trust of consumers moderate the relationship between Tie Strength and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM.
H33b	Propensity to trust of consumers moderate the relationship between Homophily and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM.
H33c	Propensity to trust of consumers moderate the relationship between Social Network Culture and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM.
H33d	Propensity to trust of consumers moderate the relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM.
H34	Propensity to trust of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and engagement in eWOM.

H35	Propensity to trust of consumers moderate the relationship between engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions.
H36	Propensity to trust of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and purchase intentions.
H37a	Hedonic product attitudes of consumers moderate the relationship between Tie Strength and Interpersonal trust.
H37b	Hedonic product attitudes of consumers moderate the relationship between Homophily and Interpersonal trust.
H37c	Hedonic product attitudes of consumers moderate the relationship between Social Network Culture and Interpersonal trust.
H37d	Hedonic product attitudes of consumers moderate the relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Interpersonal trust.
H38a	Hedonic product attitudes of consumers moderate the relationship between Tie Strength and consumers' engagement in eWOM.
H38b	Hedonic product attitudes of consumers moderate the relationship between Homophily and consumers' engagement in eWOM.
H38c	Hedonic product attitudes of consumers moderate the relationship between Social Network Culture and consumers' engagement in eWOM.
H38d	Hedonic product attitudes of consumers moderate the relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and consumers' engagement in eWOM.
H39	Hedonic product attitudes of consumers moderate the effect of their Interpersonal Trust on their engagement in eWOM.
H40	Hedonic product attitudes of consumers moderate the effect of their engagement in eWOM on their purchase intentions.
H41	On social network sites. hedonic product attitudes of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and purchase intentions.
H42a	Utilitarian attributes of the products moderate the relationship between Tie Strength and Interpersonal trust.
H42b	Utilitarian attributes of the products moderate the relationship between Homophily and Interpersonal trust.
H42c	Utilitarian attributes of the products moderate the relationship between Social Network Culture and Interpersonal trust.
H42d	Utilitarian attributes of the products moderate the relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Interpersonal trust.
H43a	Utilitarian attributes of the products moderate the relationship between Tie Strength and Consumers' engagement in eWOM.
H43b	Utilitarian attributes of the products moderate the relationship between Homophily and Consumers' engagement in eWOM.
H43c	Utilitarian attributes of the products moderate the relationship between Social Network Culture and Consumers' engagement in eWOM.
H43d	Utilitarian attributes of the products moderate the relationship between Perceived Social Network Culture and Consumers' engagement in eWOM.
H44	Utilitarian attributes of the products moderate the effect of Interpersonal Trust on consumers' engagement in eWOM.

H45	Utilitarian product attitudes of consumers moderate the effect of their engagement in eWOM on purchase intentions.
H46	Utilitarian attributes of the products moderate the effect of Interpersonal Trust on purchase intentions.
H47a	The relationship between Tie Strength and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by age of consumers.
H47b	The relationship between Homophily and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by age of consumers.
H47c	The relationship between Social Network Culture and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by age of consumers.
H47d	The relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by age of consumers.
H48a	The relationship between Tie Strength and Consumers' engagement in eWOM is moderated by age of consumers.
H48b	The relationship between Homophily and Consumers' engagement in eWOM is moderated by age of consumers.
H48c	The relationship between Social Network Culture and Consumers' engagement in eWOM is moderated by age of consumers.
H48d	The relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Consumers' engagement in eWOM is moderated by age of consumers.
H49	Age of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and engagement in eWOM.
H50	Age of consumers moderate the relationship between engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions.
H51	Age of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and purchase intentions.
H52a	The relationship between Tie Strength and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by income of consumers.
H52b	The relationship between Homophily and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by income of consumers.
H52c	The relationship between Social Network Culture and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by income of consumers.
H52d	The relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by income of consumers.
H53a	The relationship between Tie Strength and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by income of consumers.
H53b	The relationship between Homophily and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by income of consumers.
H53c	The relationship between Social Network Culture and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by income of consumers.
H53d	The relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by income of consumers.
H54	Income of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and engagement in eWOM.
H55	Income of consumers moderate the relationship between engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions.
H56	Income of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and purchase intentions.

H57a	The relationship between Tie Strength and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by social status of consumers.
H57b	The relationship between Homophily and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by social status of consumers.
H57c	The relationship between Social Network Culture and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by social status of consumers.
H57d	The relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by social status of consumers.
H58a	The relationship between Tie Strength and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by social status of consumers.
H58b	The relationship between Homophily and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by social status of consumers.
H58c	The relationship between Social Network Culture and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by social status of consumers.
H58d	The relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by social status of consumers.
H59	Social status of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and engagement in eWOM.
H60	Social status of consumers moderate the relationship between engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions.
H61	Social status of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and purchase intentions.
H62a	The relationship between Tie Strength and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by product group of consumers.
H62b	The relationship between Homophily and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by product group of consumers.
H62c	The relationship between Social Network Culture and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by product group of consumers.
H62d	The relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Interpersonal Trust is moderated by product group of consumers.
H63a	The relationship between Tie Strength and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by product group of consumers.
H63b	The relationship between Homophily and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by product group of consumers.
H63c	The relationship between Social Network Culture and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by product group of consumers.
H63d	The relationship between Perceived Critical Mass and Consumers' Engagement in EWOM is moderated by product group of consumers.
H64	On social network sites, product group of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and engagement in eWOM.
H65	On social network sites, product group of consumers moderate the relationship between engagement in eWOM and purchase intentions.
H66	On social network sites, product group of consumers moderate the relationship between Interpersonal Trust and purchase intentions.

APPENDIX E

FULL LIST OF SCALE ITEMS IN THE SURVEY

Table 2. Full List of Scale Items in Survey Questionnaire

#	DIMENSION	SOURCE
	SOCIAL NETWORK TIES	
	TIE STRENGTH	
1	There is a member of the social networking site I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions. (Bonding)	Williams (2006)
2	When I feel lonely. there are members of the social networking site that I can talk to. (Bonding)	Williams (2006)
3	The people I interact with on the social networking site would be good job references for me. (Bonding)	Williams (2006)
4	The people I interact with on the social networking site would help me fight an injustice. (Bonding)	Williams (2006)
5	If I needed an emergency loan of USD 500.- I know someone at the social networking site I can turn to. (Bonding)	Williams (2006)
6	There is no one on the social networking site that I feel comfortable talking to about intimate personal problems (Bonding).	Williams (2006)
7	Interacting with people on social networking sites makes me want to try new things. (Bridging)	Williams (2006)
8	Interacting with people on social networking sites makes me interested in what people different from me are thinking. (Bridging)	Williams (2006)
9	Talking with people on the social networking sites makes me curious about other places in the world. (Bridging)	Williams (2006)
10	Interacting with people on social networking sites makes me feel like part of a larger community. (Bridging)	Williams (2006)
11	I maintain close relationships with members in this virtual community.	Chiu et al. (2006)
12	I know members in this virtual community on a personal level.	Chiu et al. (2006)
13	I spend a lot of time interacting with members in this virtual community.	Chiu et al. (2006)
14	I have frequent communication with members in this virtual community.	Chiu et al. (2006)
15	I have known members in this virtual community for a long time.	Chiu et al. (2006)
	HOMOPHILY	
16	In general, the contacts on my friends list on the social networking site..	McCroskey et al. (1975)

17	Don't think like me/Think like me.	McCroskey et al. (1975)
18	Don't behave like me/Behave like me.	McCroskey et al. (1975)
19	Different from me/Similar to me.	McCroskey et al. (1975)
20	Unlike me/Like me.	McCroskey et al. (1975)
21	From social class different from mine/From social class similar to mine.	McCroskey et al. (1975)
22	Economic situation different from mine/Economic situation like mine.	McCroskey et al. (1975)
23	Status different from mine/Status like mine.	McCroskey et al. (1975)
24	Background different from mine/Background similar to mine.	McCroskey et al. (1975)
25	Morals unlike mine/Morals like mine.	McCroskey et al. (1975)
26	Sexual attitudes unlike mine/Sexual attitudes like mine.	McCroskey et al. (1975)
27	Look different from me/Look similar to me.	McCroskey et al. (1975)
28	Different size than I am/Same size I am.	McCroskey et al. (1975)
29	Appearance unlike mine/Appearance like mine.	McCroskey et al. (1975)
30	Don't resemble me/Resemble me.	McCroskey et al. (1975)
	INTERPERSONAL TRUST	
	I think...	Gefen (2000)
31	The members of this virtual community have knowledge about the subject we discuss.	Gefen (2000)
32	The members of this virtual community are capable of participating in the subject we discuss.	Gefen (2000)
33	The members of this virtual community are well qualified in the subject we discuss.	Gefen (2000)
34	I believe that people in this community give credit for others knowledge where it is due.	Kankanhalli (2005)
35	I believe that people in this community do not use unauthorized knowledge.	Kankanhalli (2005)
36	I believe that people in this community use other's knowledge appropriately.	Kankanhalli (2005)
37	I believe that people in this community share the best knowledge that they have.	Kankanhalli (2005)
38	I think that the product recommendations of this SNS are credible.	Gefen (2000)
39	I trust the product recommendations of this SNS.	Gefen (2000)
40	I believe the product recommendations of this SNS are trustworthy.	Gefen (2000)

	I think...	Ridings et al. (2002)
41	The members of this virtual community are concerned about what is important to others.	Ridings et al. (2002)
42	The members of this virtual community will do their best to help others.	Ridings et al. (2002)
43	The members of this virtual community are fair to others.	Ridings et al. (2002)
44	The members of this virtual community are honest with others.	Ridings et al. (2002)
45	Members in this community will not take advantage of others even when the opportunity arises.	Chiu et al. (2006)
46	Members in this community will always keep the promise they make to one another.	Chiu et al. (2006)
47	Members in this community would not knowingly do anything that may harm others.	Chiu et al. (2006)
48	Members in this community behave in a consistent manner.	Chiu et al. (2006)
49	Members in this community are truthful in dealing with one another I believe that people in this community give credit for others knowledge where it is due.	Chiu et al. (2006)
	PERCEIVED CRITICAL MASS	
	I think...	Lou et al. (2000)
50	There are many members in this virtual community.	Lou et al. (2000)
51	The members of this virtual community participate in product evaluation enthusiastically.	Lou et al. (2000)
52	Many of the people that I know use this SNS.	Hsu and Lu (2004)
53	A lot of my friends use this SNS.	Hsu and Lu (2004)
	SOCIAL NETWORK CULTURE	
54	Members in this community use common terms or jargon.	Chiu et al. (2006)
55	Members in this community use understandable communication patterns during the discussion.	Chiu et al. (2006)
56	Members in this community use understandable narrative forms to post messages.	Chiu et al. (2006)
57	I have no problem understanding terms/words in messages posted by others.	Created by author
58	I have difficulties in understanding some terms/languages in the message posted by others.	Chiu et al. (2006)
59	Members in this community share the vision of helping others solve their problems.	Chiu et al. (2006)
60	Members in this community share the same goal of learning from each other.	Chiu et al. (2006)
61	Members in this community share the same values and goals.	Chiu et al. (2006)
62	In general. the people in this community are working toward the same goal.	Chiu et al. (2006)

	CONSUMERS' ENGAGEMENT IN EWOM	
63	When I consider new products. I ask my contacts on the social networking site for advice.	Flynn et al. (1996).
64	I don't need to talk to my contacts on the social networking site before I buy products.	Flynn et al. (1996).
65	I like to get my contacts' opinions on the social networking site before I buy new products.	Flynn et al. (1996).
66	I rarely ask my contacts on the social networking site about what products to buy.	Flynn et al. (1996).
67	I feel more comfortable choosing products when I have gotten my contacts' opinions on them on the social networking site.	Flynn et al. (1996).
68	When choosing products. my contacts' opinions on the social networking site are not important to me.	Flynn et al. (1996).
69	My contacts' liking behaviours, posts and recommendations about some new products and services catch my interest on this social networking site.	Created by author
70	I follow my contacts' liking behaviours. posts and recommendations on this SNS to have opinions about new products and services.	Created by author
	PURCHASE INTENTION	
71	With regard to the products that this virtual community recommends..	Teo and Yu (2005)
72	I would consider buying them.	Teo and Yu (2005)
73	I am likely to buy them.	Teo and Yu (2005)
74	I am willing to buy them.	Teo and Yu (2005)
75	When shopping. I would..	Dodds (1991)
76	Try the product in a store.	Dodds (1991)
77	Buy the product if I happened to see it in a store.	Dodds (1991)
78	Actively seek out the product in a store in order to purchase it.	Dodds (1991)
	PERCEIVED CRITICAL MASS	
79	How do you feel the use of other consumers' reviews and recommendations as shopping advice affects the accuracy of your decisions?	Widing and Talarzyk (1993)
80	How do you feel the use of other consumers' reviews and recommendations as shopping advice affects the degree of certainty of your decisions?	Widing and Talarzyk (1993)
81	How do you feel the use of other consumers' reviews and recommendations as shopping advice affects the amount of confidence of your decisions?	Widing and Talarzyk (1993)
	PROPENSITY TO TRUST	
82	It is easy for me to trust people.	Rotter (1967)
83	I tend to trust people even though I know little of them.	Rotter (1967)
84	One should be very cautious with strangers.	Rotter (1967)

	HEDONIC CONSUMER PRODUCT ATTITUDE	
85	The product/service is enjoyable for me.	Voss et al. (2003)
86	The product/service is exciting for me.	Voss et al. (2003)
87	The product/service is pleasant for me.	Voss et al. (2003)
	UTILITARIAN CONSUMER PRODUCT ATTITUDE	
88	The product/service is functionable for me.	Voss et al. (2003)
89	The product/service is usable for me.	Voss et al. (2003)
90	The product/service is necessary for me.	Voss et al. (2003)
	SOCIAL NETWORK SITE USAGE INTENSITY	
91	About how many total Facebook friends do you have at MSU or elsewhere?	Ellison et al. (2007)
92	I am proud to tell people I'm on this social network site.	Ellison et al. (2007)
93	This social network site has become part of my daily routine	Ellison et al. (2007)
94	I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto this social network site for a while.	Ellison et al. (2007)
95	I feel I am part of the this social network site community.	Ellison et al. (2007)
96	I would be sorry if this social network site shuts down.	Ellison et al. (2007)
97	I always contact with new people on this social network site.	Ellison et al. (2007)
98	How long have you been using this SNS? (year basis)	Davis et al. (1989)
99	How frequently do you use this SNS? (how many days a week)	Davis et al. (1989)
100	In a week, on average, approximately how many minutes per day have you spent on this SNS?	Davis et al. (1989)

APPENDIX F

OFFICIAL SES CLASSIFICATION

SES TABLOSU

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
ASIL GELİR GETİREN KİŞİ		**İlkokul Terk**	**İlkokul Mezunu**	**Ortaokul Mezunu**	**Lise Mezunu Normal**	**Lise Mezunu Meslek**	**2 yıllık Y.Okul**	**Üniversite Açıköğr.**	**Üniversite Normal**	**Lisans Üstü**
EMEKLİ ise:										
**	Emekli - çalışıyor	(Önceki işine göre aşağıda kodlanacak, SES atanacak)								
**	Emekli - çalışmıyor	(Önceki işine göre SES'in 1 kademe aşağısına atanacak: TABLO 2 Emekli Çalışmıyor tablosu)								
KISIM A -- GELİR GETİREN BİR İŞİ YOK, ÇALIŞMIYOR										
1a	İşsiz - şu an çalışmıyor - ek gelir yok, yardım alıyor	E	E	D	D	D	C2	C2	C2	C2
1b	İşsiz - şu an çalışmıyor - düzenli ek gelir var	D	D	C2	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1	C1
2a	Ev kadini - ek gelir yok, yardim aliyor	E	E	D	D	D	C2	C2	C2	C2
2b	Ev kadini - düzenli ek gelir var	D	D	C2	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1	C1
3	Öğrenci (gelir getirici bir işi olmayan)			D	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2	C2
KISIM B - ÜCRETLİ - MAAŞLI ÇALIŞIYOR										
4a	İşçi/hizmetli - parça başı işi olan (düzensiz, zaman-zaman çalışan)	E	D	D	C2	C2	C2	C1	C1	B
4b	İşçi/hizmetli - düzenli işi olan (özel bir sebep olmadıkça aynı işi yapan)	D	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1	B	B	B
5	Ustabaşı/kalfa - kendine bağlı işçi çalışan	D	C2	C2	C1	C1	B	B	B	B
6	Yönetici olmayan memur / teknik eleman / uzman vs	D	C2	C2	C1	C1	B	B	B	B
7	Yönetici (1-5 çalışanı olan)	C2	C1	C1	C1	C1	B	B	A	A
8	Yönetici (6-10 çalışanı olan)	C2	C1	C1	C1	B	B	B	A	A
9	Yönetici (11-20 çalışanı olan)	C1	C1	C1	B	B	B	A	A	A
10	Yönetici (20'den fazla çalışanı olan)	C1	C1	B	B	B	A	A	A	A
11	Ordu mensubu (uzman er, astsubay, subay)		C2	C2	C1	C1	B	B	A	A
12	Ücretli Kıdemli Nitelikli uzman (avukat, doktor, mimar, Mhendis, Akademisyen vs)							A	A	A
KISIM C - KENDİ HESABINA ÇALIŞIYOR - SERBEST MESLEK - NİTELİKLİ UZMAN										
13	Çiftçi (kendi başına/ailesiyle çalışan)	D	D	D	C2	C2	C2	C1	B	B
14	Seyyar - Kendi isi (free lance dahil), dükkanda hizmet vermiyor	C2	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1	B	B	B
15	Tek başına çalışan, dükkan sahibi, esnaf (taksi şoförü dahil)	C2	C1	C1	C1	C1	B	B	A	A
16	İsyeri sahibi- 1-5 calisanli (Tic, Tarım, İmalat, Hizmet)	C2	C1	C1	B	B	B	B	A	A
17	İsyeri sahibi- 6-10 calisanli (Tic, Tarım, İmalat, Hizmet)	C1	C1	C1	B	B	B	A	A	A
18	İsyeri sahibi -11-20 calisanli (Tic, Tarım, İmalat, Hizmet)	C1	C1	B	B	B	B	A	A	A
19	İşyeri sahibi - 20'den dazla calisanli (Tic, Tarım, İmalat, Hizmet)	C1	C1	B	B	B	A	A	A	A
20	Serbest nitelikli uzman (avukat, mühendis, mali müşavir, doktor, eczacı vs)							A	A	A

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
AGG - EMEKLİ, ÇALIŞMIYOR Tablosu		**İlkokul Terk**	**İlkokul Mezunu**	**Ortaokul Mezunu**	**Lise Mezunu Normal**	**Lise Mezunu Meslek**	**2 yıllık Y.Okul**	**Üniversite Açıköğr.**	**Üniversite Normal**	**Lisans Üstü**
EMEKLİ B - Emekli Olmadan Önce: ÜCRETLİ - MAAŞLI ÇALIŞIYORDU										
4a	İşçi/hizmetli - parça başı işi olan (yevmiye)	E	E	E	D	D	D	C2	C2	C1
4b	İşçi/hizmetli - düzenli işi olan (maaş)	E	D	D	C2	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1
5	Ustabaşı/kalfa - kendine bağlı işçi çalışan	E	D	D	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1	C1
6	Yönetici olmayan memur / teknik eleman / uzman vs	E	D	D	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1	C1
7	Yönetici (1-5 çalışanı olan)	D	C2	C2	C2	C2	C1	C1	B	B
8	Yönetici (6-10 çalışanı olan)	D	C2	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1	B	B
9	Yönetici (11-20 çalışanı olan)	C2	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1	B	B	B
10	Yönetici (20'den fazla çalışanı olan)	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1	B	B	B	B
11	Ordu mensubu (uzman er, astsubay, subay)		D	D	C2	C2	C1	C1	B	B
12	Ücretli Kıdemli Nitelikli uzman (avukat, doktor, mimar, Mhendis, Akademisyen vs)							B	B	B
EMEKLİ C - Emekli Olmadan Önce: KENDİ HESABINA ÇALIŞIYORDU - SERBEST										
13	Çiftçi (kendi başına/ailesiyle çalışan)	E	E	E	D	D	D	C2	C1	C1
14	Seyyar - Kendi isi (free lance dahil), dükkanda hizmet vermiyor	D	D	D	C2	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1
15	Tek başına çalışan, dükkan sahibi, esnaf (taksi şoförü dahil)	D	C2	C2	C2	C2	C1	C1	B	B
16	1-5 calisanli isyeri sahibi (Tic, Tarım, İmalat, Hizmet)	D	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1	C1	B	B
17	6-10 calisanli isyeri sahibi (Tic, Tarım, İmalat, Hizmet)	C2	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1	B	B	B
18	11-20 calisanli isyeri sahibi (Tic, Tarım, İmalat, Hizmet)	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1	C1	B	B	B
19	20'den dazla calisanli isyeri sahibi (Tic, Tarım, İmalat, Hizmet)	C2	C2	C1	C1	C1	B	B	B	B
20	Serbest nitelikli uzman (avukat, mühendis, mali müşavir, doktor, eczacı vs)							B	B	B

APPENDIX G

VISUAL CARDS USED IN SURVEY

1. Visual Card of Ranking for Seven Point Likert Scale

1- Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum
2
3
4
5
6
7- Kesinlikle Katılıyorum

2. Visual Card of Ranking for Semantic Scale (Questions 28-41)

28	Benden değişik görünürler	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bana benzer görünürler
29	Benim gibi davranmaz	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Benim gibi davranır
30	Görüntü tarzı benden farklıdır	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Görüntü tarzı bana benzer
31	Ekonomik durumu benden farklıdır	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ekonomik durumu bana benzer
32	Benim sosyal sınıfımdan farklı sosyal sınıfa mensuptur	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Benim sosyal sınıfıma benzer sosyal sınıftandır
33	Ahlak değerleri benden farklıdır	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Ahlak değerleri bana benzer.
34	Konumu benden farklıdır	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Konumu bana benzer.
35	Altyapısı ve özgeçmişi benden farklıdır	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Altyapısı ve özgeçmişi bana benzer
36	Düşünce ve karakter tarzı benim gibi değildir	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Düşünce ve karakter tarzı benim gibidir
37	Seksüel Eğilimleri benden farklıdır	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Seksüel Eğilimleri bana benzer
38	Beni andırmazlar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Beni andırırlar
39	Benden değişik bedendedirler	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Benimle benzer bedendedirler
40	Genel havaları benden farklıdır	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Genel havaları bana benzer
41	Benim gibi düşünmez	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Benim gibi düşünür

3. Visual Card of Ranking for Likert Scale (Questions 89 - 91)

1- Tamamıyla Azaltır
2
3
4
5
6
7- Tamamıyla Arttırır

4. Visual Card for Selection of Product Group (Question 95)

Oyun+hobi
Giyim+ayakkabı
elektronik+teknoloji
Araba+motor+ulaşım
Aksesuar+saat+takı
Kozmetik+makyaj+güzellik ve bakım ürünleri+estetik+sağlık+spor+zayıflama
Yiyecek+içecek
Banka+finansal hizmetler+danışmanlık+emlakçılık+online alışveriş
Tatil+eğlence+etkinlik+klub+gazete+dergi
Diğer

APPENDIX H

SURVEY INSTRUMENT IN ENGLISH

This questionnaire belongs to the partial fulfillment statistical research application part of my thesis study in Marketing PhD program of Boğaziçi University Institute of Social Sciences Management Department. Your name/surname is not requested and all the information gathered from you will be kept confidential and used for only academic purposes. I will appreciate for your attention and interest in reading and answering all of the questions carefully and thank you for your support and participation in my thesis study.

PART I

1. Are you a member of these Social Network Sites: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter?

If Yes, please indicate all the ones you use.

- o Yes; I use: .....

  Please identify the time amount you spent in each SNS a day (in minutes):

  Facebook ..... Instagram ..... Twitter .....

- o No, I don't use any of them.

If your answer is No, please end the questionnaire...

2. If your answer is Yes, please think about Social Network Site do you use most intensively among all of them? Please choose and declare the one you use most frequent and the one in which you spend more time .....

Please answer the questions below for the Social Network Site which you indicated as the most intensively used one in the above question 2.

PART II

3- How long have you been using this SNS? .....

4- About how many total contacts do you have at this SNS?

0 = 10 or less

1 = 11–50

2 = 51–100

3 = 101–150

4 = 151–200

5 = 201–250

6 = 251–300,

7 = 301–400

8 = more than 400

5- How frequently do you use this SNS (how many days a week)? .....

6- In a week, on average, approximately how many minutes per day have you spent on this SNS? .....

Please choose and mark the best number for you ranking from 1 to 7 in each statement *(*1= *strongly disagree,* 7= *strongly agree).*

7- I am continuously in contact with new people on this SNS.

8- I am proud to tell people I'm on this SNS.

9- This SNS has become part of my daily routine.

10- I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto this SNS for a while.

11- I feel I am part of this SNS community.

12- I would be sorry if this SNS will shut down.

PART III

Please choose and mark the best number for you ranking from 1 to 7 in each statement (1= *strongly disagree*, 7= *strongly agree*).

13- I know members in this SNS on a personal level.

14- There is a member of this SNS I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions.

15- I have known members in this SNS for a long time.

16- When I feel lonely, there are members of the SNS that I can talk to.

17- I maintain close relationships with members on this SNS.

18- Interacting with people on SNS makes me want to try new things.

19- The people I interact with on this SNS would be good job references for me.

20- Interacting with people on this SNS makes me interested in what people different from me are thinking.

21- I spend a lot of time interacting with members on this SNS.

22- The people I interact with on this SNS would help me fight an injustice.

23- If I needed an emergency loan of USD 500.- I know someone at the SNS I can turn to.

24- Talking with people on this SNS makes me curious about other places in the world.

25- Interacting with people on this SNS makes me feel like part of a larger community.

26- I have frequent communication with members in this SNS.

27- There is no one on this SNS that I feel comfortable talking to about intimate personal problems.

Please choose and mark the best number for you in 7 points semantic-differential scale in each statement.

In general, the contacts on my "friends" list on the social networking site..

28- Look different from me/Look similar to me.

29- Don't behave like me/Behave like me.

30- Different from me/Similar to me.

31- Economic situation different from mine/Economic situation like mine.

32- From social class different from mine/From social class similar to mine.

33- Morals unlike mine/Morals like mine.

34- Status different from mine/Status like mine.

35- Background different from mine/Background similar to mine.

36- Unlike me/Like me.

37- Sexual attitudes unlike mine/Sexual attitudes like mine.

38- Don't resemble me/Resemble me.

39- Different size than I am/Same size I am.

40- Appearance unlike mine/Appearance like mine.

41- Don't think like me/Think like me.

PART IV

Please choose and mark the best number for you ranking from 1 to 5 in each statement (1= *strongly disagree*, 7= *strongly agree*)

42- I think that the product recommendations of this SNS are credible.

43- I trust the product recommendations of this SNS.

44- I believe the product recommendations of this SNS are trustworthy.

I think...

45- The members of this SNS have knowledge about the subject we discuss.

46- A lot of my friends use this SNS.

47- The members of this SNS are well qualified in the subject we discuss.

48- I believe that people in this SNS give credit for others knowledge where it is due.

49- I believe that people in this SNS do not use unauthorized knowledge.

50- I believe that people in this SNS use other's knowledge appropriately.

51- There are many members in this SNS.

52- The members of this SNS are concerned about what is important to others.

53- The members of this SNS will do their best to help others.

54- The members of this SNS participate in product evaluation enthusiastically.

55- The members of this SNS are honest with others.

56- Members in this SNS will not take advantage of others even when the opportunity arises.

57- Members in this SNS will always keep the promise they make to one another.

58- Members in this SNS would not knowingly do anything that may harm others.

59- Members in this SNS behave in a consistent manner.

60- The members of this SNS interact frequently.

61- I believe that people in this SNS share the best knowledge that they have.

62- Members in this SNS are truthful in dealing with one another.

63- The members of this SNS are fair to others.

64- Many of the people that I know use this SNS.

65- The members of this SNS are capable of participating in the subject we discuss.

PART V

Please choose and mark the best number for you ranking from 1 to 7 in each statement (1= *strongly disagree*, 7= *strongly agree*)

66- Members in this SNS use common terms or jargon.

67- In general, the people in this SNS are working toward the same goal.

68- Members in this SNS use understandable narrative forms to post messages.

69- Members in this SNS share the same values and goals.

70- I have difficulties in understanding some terms/languages in the message posted by others.

71- Members in this SNS share the vision of helping others solve their problems.

72- Members in this SNS share the same goal of learning from each other.

73- I have no problem understanding terms/words in messages posted by others.

74- Members in this SNS use understandable communication patterns during the discussion.

PART VI

*Please choose and mark the best number for you ranking from 1 to 7 in each statement (*1= *strongly disagree,* 7= *strongly agree).*

75- When I consider new products, I ask my contacts on the social networking site for advice.

76- I don't need to talk to my contacts on the social networking site before I buy products.

77- I like to get my contacts' opinions on the social networking site before I buy new products.

78- I rarely ask my contacts on the social networking site about what products to buy.

79- I feel more comfortable choosing products when I have gotten my contacts' opinions on them on the social networking site.

80- When choosing products, my contacts' opinions on the social networking site are not important to me.

81- My contacts' liking behaviours, posts and recommendations about some new products and services catch my interest on this social networking site.

82- I follow my contacts' liking behaviours, posts and recommendations on this SNS to have opinions about new products and services.

PART VII

Please choose and mark the best number for you ranking from 1 to 7 in each statement (1= *strongly disagree*, 7= *strongly agree*).

With regard to the products that this SNS recommends..

83- I would consider buying them.

84- I am likely to buy them.

85- I am willing to buy them.

With regard to the products that this SNS recommends.. I would..

86- Try the product in a store.

87- Buy the product if I happened to see it in a store.

88- Actively seek out the product in a store in order to purchase it.

PART VIII

Please choose and mark the best number for you ranking from 1 to 7 in each statement (1= *greatly decreased*, 7= *greatly improved*).

89- How do you feel the use of other consumers' reviews and recommendations as shopping advice affects the accuracy of your decisions?

90- How do you feel the use of other consumers' reviews and recommendations as shopping advice affects the degree of certainty of your decisions?

91- How do you feel the use of other consumers' reviews and recommendations as shopping advice affects the amount of confidence of your decisions?

Please choose and mark the best number for you ranking from 1 to 7 in each statement (1= *Strongly disagree*, 7= *Strongly agree*).

92- It is easy for me to trust people.

93- I tend to trust people even though I know little of them.

94- I think that one should be cautious about strangers.

PART IX

95- What type of products/services typically come across as recommended or highly mentioned by your social network in this SNS? Please type two of them by ranking:

1- ----------

2- ----------

Consider these products you mentioned above and mark the best number for them from 1 to 7 in each statement below: (1= *Strongly disagree*, 7= *Strongly agree*).

For 1st Product or Service:

96- The product/service is necessary for me.

97- The product/service is enjoyable for me.

98- The product/service is functionable for me.

99- The product/service is thrilling for me.

100- The product/service is useful for me.

101- The product/service is pleasant for me.

For 2nd Product or Service:

102 - The product/service is necessary for me.

103 - The product/service is enjoyable for me.

104 - The product/service is functionable for me.

105 - The product/service is thrilling for me.

106- The product/service is useful for me.

107- The product/service is pleasant for me.

PART X

108- Age: .....

109- Gender:

- Female
- Male

110- Marital Status:

- Married
- Single

111- Education Level:

- Elementary
- High School
- University

- Master/Doctorate

112- Are you working?

- Yes
- No

113- If yes, what is your job? .....

114- Monthly income: (net)

- Less than 500 TL
- Between 500 TL-1.000 TL
- Between 1.001 TL-3.000 TL
- Between 3.001 TL-5.000 TL
- More than 5.000 TL

115- At which city and district do you live? .....

Thank you for your participation in my study...

APPENDIX I

SURVEY INSTRUMENT IN TURKISH

Bu anket Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü İşletme Departmanı Pazarlama Doktora Programı kapsamında sürdürdüğüm tez projemin araştırma kısmına ait bölümü teşkil etmektedir. İsim/soyisiminiz talep edilmemekte olup, sizden alınan tüm bilgiler gizli tutulacak ve sadece akademik amaçlara yönelik olarak tez projesi kapsamında değerlendirilecektir. Anketimizi dinlerken ve yanıtlarken göstereceğiniz ilgi ve dikkat ile çalışmamızda yer alarak gösterdiğiniz destek ve katkılarınız için teşekkürlerimizi sunuyoruz.

BÖLÜM 1

1. Yanda belirtilen şu sosyal ağ sitelerine üye misiniz?: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter? Eğer cevabınız evetse, hangilerine üye olduğunuzu belirtiniz.

o Evet; Kullandıklarım şunlar: .....

Lütfen kullandığınız her sosyal ağ sitesinde bir günde harcadığınız süreyi (dakika olarak) belirtiniz:

Facebook ..... dakika Instagram ..... dakika Twitter ..... dakika

o Hayır, hiç birini kullanmıyorum. Kullandığım şu(nlar): .....

Eğer cevabınız Hayır ise, lütfen anketi burada sonlandırınız.

2. Eğer cevabınız Evet ise, içlerinde en yoğun kullandığınız Sosyal Ağ Sitesinin hangisi olduğunu düşününüz. Üyesi olduğunuz ağlar arasında en yoğun kullandığınız (en sık girdiğiniz ve girdiğinizde en çok zaman harcadığınız) sosyal ağın ismini seçiniz ve belirtiniz. .....

Lütfen bundan sonra gelen tüm soruları 2. soruda en yoğun kullandığınızı söylediğiniz sosyal ağı düşünerek yanıtlayınız.

BÖLÜM 2

3- Ne kadar yıldır bu Sosyal Ağı kullanıyorsunuz? .....

4- Bu sosyal ağda kaç bağlantınız bulunmakta?

0 = 10 veya daha az

1 = 11–50

2 = 51–100

3 = 101–150

4 = 151–200

5 = 201–250

6 = 251–300,

7 = 301–400

8 = 400'den fazla

5- Bu sosyal ağı haftada kaç gün kullanıyorsunuz? .....

6- Bir günde ortalama kaç dakikanızı bu sosyal ağda harcıyorsunuz? .....

Lütfen aşağıdaki cümlelere katılım durumunuzu ifade eden 1'den 7'ye kadar en uygun sayıyı seçiniz. (1= *kesinlikle katılmıyorum* 7- *kesinlikle katılıyorum*) *(Burada skalayı gösteren 1. görsel değerlendirme kartı deneğe sunulur)*

7- Bu sosyal ağda sürekli yeni insanlarla iletişime geçerim.

8- İnsanlara bu sosyal ağa üye olduğumu söylemekten gurur duyarım.

9- Bu sosyal ağ benim günlük rutinimin bir parçası haline geldi.

10- Bu sosyal ağa bir müddet baplanmadıysam kendimi dünyadan kopmuş hissederim.

11- Bu sosyal ağın bir parçası olduğumu hissediyorum.

12- Eğer bu sosyal ağ kapansaydı üzülürdüm.

BÖLÜM 3

Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadeler ile ilgili 1'den 7'ye kadar size en uygun sayıyı seçiniz. (1=*kesinlikle katılmıyorum*, 7= *kesinlikle katılıyorum*).

13- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımı kişisel seviyede tanıyorum.

14- Önemli kararlar vermem gerektiğinde bu sosyal ağ içinde danışabileceğim birini bulabilirim.

15- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımı uzun zamandır tanıyorum.

16- Yalnız hissettiğimde bu sosyal ağda konuşabileceğim bağlantılarım vardır.

17- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımla yakın ilişkim vardır.

18- Bu sosyal ağda bağlantılarımla iletişime geçmek beni yeni şeyler denemeye iter.

19- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım benim için iş referansı olmaya hazırdırlar.

20- Bu sosyal ağda bağlantılarımla iletişime geçmek benim kendimden farklı insanların neler düşündüğü ile ilgilenmemi sağlar.

21- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımla bağlantıda olurken çok zaman harcarım.

22- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım bana bir haksızlıkla savaşmam gerektiğinde yardım ederler.

23- Eğer acilen 1.500 TL'ye ihtiyacım olursa, bu sosyal ağ içinden isteyebileceğim birini bulabilirim.

24- Bu sosyal ağda bağlantılarımla konuşmak dünyadaki yerleri merak etmemi sağlar.

25- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımla iletişimde olmak beni büyük bir topluluğun parçası gibi hissettirir.

26- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımla sık iletişim kurarım.

27- Bu sosyal ağda kişisel problemlerimle ilgili olarak rahat konuşabileceğim hiçbir kimse yok.

Genel olarak baktığımda, bu sosyal ağdaki "arkadaşlar" listemde yer alan üyeler...(1'den 7'ye kadar size en uygun gelen sayıyı seçiniz). (Burada skalayı gösteren 2. görsel değerlendirme kartı deneğe sunulur.)

28- Benden değişik görünürler (1) .....Bana benzer görünürler (7).

29- Benim gibi davranmaz (1).....Benim gibi davranır (7)

30- Görüntü tarzı benden farklıdır (1) .....Görüntü tarzı bana benzer (7)

31- Ekonomik durumu benden farklıdır (1) .....Ekonomik durumu bana benzer (7).

32- Benim sosyal sınıfımdan farklı sosyal sınıfa mensuptur (1) .....Benim sosyal sınıfıma benzer sosyal sınıftandır (7)

33- Ahlak değerleri benden farklıdır (1) .....Ahlak değerleri bana benzer (7).

34- Konumu benden farklıdır (1).....Konumu bana benzer. (7)

35- Altyapısı ve özgeçmişi benden farklıdır (1) .....Altyapısı ve özgeçmişi bana benzer (7).

36- Düşünce ve karakter tarzı benim gibi değildir (1) .....Düşünce ve karakter tarzı benim gibidir (7)

37- Seksüel Eğilimleri benden farklıdır (1) .....Seksüel Eğilimleri bana benzer (7).

38- Beni andırmazlar (1) .....Beni andırırlar (7).

39- Benden değişik bedendedirler (1) .....Benimle benzer bedendedirler (7)

40- Genel havaları benden farklıdır (1) .....Genel havaları bana benzer (7).

41- Benim gibi düşünmez (1) ..... Benim gibi düşünür (7)

BÖLÜM 4

Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerle ilgili 1'den 7'e kadar size en uygun gelen sayıyı seçiniz (1= *kesinlikle katılmıyorum*, 7= *kesinlikle katılıyorum*).

42- Bu sosyal ağda bağlantılarımdan gelen ürün/hizmet tavsiyelerine itibar edilebilir.

43- Bu sosyal ağda bağlantılarımın ürün/hizmet tavsiyelerine güvenirim.

44- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımın ürün/hizmet tavsiyelerinin güvenilir olduğuna inanıyorum.

Bence...

45- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım tartışılan konular hakkında bilgiye sahiptir.

46- Birçok arkadaşım bu sosyal ağı kullanır.

47- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım tartışılan konu hakkında kalifiyedir.

48- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımın gerektiğinde diğerlerinin bilgisine başvuracaklarına inanırım.

49- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımın gayrıresmi ve yetkisiz bilgiyi kullanmayacaklarına inanırım.

50- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımın başkalarının bilgisini uygun şekilde kullanacağına inanırım.

51- Bu sosyal ağda pek çok üye vardır.

52- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım başkalarının önemli buldukları şeyler ile ilgilidirler.

53- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım başkalarına yardım etmek için ellerinden gelenin en iyisini yaparlar.

54- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım ürün ve hizmet değerlendirmelerine katılımda isteklidirler.

55- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım başkalarına karşı dürüsttürler.

56- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım fırsat olsada başkalarından menfaat sağlamazlar.

57- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım birbirlerine verdikleri sözleri tutarlar.

58- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım bilerek başkalarına zarar verecek birşey yapmazlar.

59- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım istikrarlı davranırlar.

60- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım sık sık iletişime geçerler.

61- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım sahip oldukları en sağlam bilgileri paylaşırlar.

62- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım birbirleriyle iletişimde açıkyüreklidirler.

63- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım başkalarına karşı adildirler.

64- Tanıdığım pek çok insan bu sosyal ağı kullanır.

65- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım tartışılan konu içinde söz söyleyecek kapasiteye sahiptir.

BÖLÜM 5

Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerle ilgili 1'den 7'ye kadar size en uygun gelen sayıyı seçiniz (1= *kesinlikle katılmıyorum*, 7= *kesinlikle katılıyorum*).

66- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım ortak jargon ve terimleri kullanır.

67- Genel olarak, bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım aynı amaca yönelik çalışırlar.

68- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım mesaj yüklerken ve gönderirken (post ederken) anlaşılabilir anlatım biçimlerini kullanır.

69- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım aynı değer ve amaçları paylaşırlar.

70- Başkaları tarafından post edilmiş mesajlardaki terim ve dili anlamakta zorluk çekerim.

71- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım başkalarının problemlerini çözmeye yardım etme vizyonunu paylaşırlar.

72- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım birbirlerinden öğrenme ortak amacını paylaşırlar.

73- Bu sosyal ağda başkaları tarafından post edilmiş terim ve sözcükleri anlamada problem yaşamam.

74- Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarım tartışmalar sırasında anlaşılabilir iletişim yöntemleri kullanır.

BÖLÜM 6

Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerle ilgili 1'den 7'ye kadar size en uygun gelen sayıyı seçiniz (1= *kesinlikle katılmıyorum,* 7= *kesinlikle katılıyorum*)

75- Yeni ürünleri araştırırken, sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarıma tavsiyelerini sorarım.

76- Yeni ürün satın almadan önce sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımla konuşma gereği hissetmem.

77- Yeni ürünleri satın almadan önce sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımın görüşlerini almayı severim.

78- Sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarıma ürün satın alma konusunda görüşlerini nadiren sorarım.

79- Sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımın fikirlerini sorduktan sonra ürün seçersem daha rahat hissederim.

80- Ürün seçerken, sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımın görüşleri benim için önemli olmaz.

81- Sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımın yeni ürün ve hizmetler ile ilgili like'ları, postları ve recommend'leri dikkatimi çeker.

82- Yeni ürünler hakkında bilgi edinmek için sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımın like'ları, post'ları ve recommend'lerini takip ederim.

BÖLÜM 7

Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerle ilgili 1'den 7'e kadar size en uygun gelen sayıyı seçiniz (1= *kesinlikle katılmıyorum*, 7= *kesinlikle katılıyorum*)

Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımın önerdiği ürünler ile ilgili olarak düşünecek olursam....

83- Onları satın almayı değerlendirebilirim.

84- Onları muhtemelen satın alırım.

85- Onları satın almaya istekliyim.

Bu sosyal ağdaki bağlantılarımın önerdiği ürünler ile ilgili olarak düşünecek olursam....

86- Onları mağazada deneyebilirim.

87- Onları bir mağazada görsem satın alabilirim.

88- Onları mağazada satın almak için ararım.

BÖLÜM 8

Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerle ilgili 1'den 7'ye kadar size en uygun gelen sayıyı seçiniz (1= *tamamıyla azaltır*, 7= *tamamıyla artırır*). (Burada konuyla ilgili 3. görsel değerlendirme kartı skalayı görmesi için deneğe sunulur)

Günlük hayatınızda genel olarak düşünürseniz....

89- Başka tüketicilerin alışveriş konusunda eleştiri ve tavsiyelerinin kararlarınızın doğruluğunu nasıl etkilediğini hissediyorsunuz?

90- Başka tüketicilerin alışveriş konusunda eleştiri ve tavsiyelerinin kararlarınızın kesinliğini nasıl etkilediğini hissediyorsunuz?

91- Başka tüketicilerin alışveriş konusunda eleştiri ve tavsiyelerinin kararlarınıza duyduğunuz güveni nasıl etkilediğini hissediyorsunuz?

Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadelerle ilgili 1'den 7'ye kadar size en uygun gelen sayıyı seçiniz (1= *kesinlikle katılmıyorum*, 7= *kesinlikle katılıyorum*).

92- Benim için insanlara güvenmek kolaydır.

93- İnsanları az tanısam bile onlara güvenmeye eğilimim vardır.

94- Bence bir kişi yabancılara karşı ihtiyatlı olmalıdır.

BÖLÜM 9

95- Bu Sosyal Ağ Sitesinde bağlantılarınız aracılığıyla sıklıkla bahsi geçen, post edilen ve/veya tavsiye edilen en çok hangi ürün ve hizmetlere rastgeliyorsunuz? Lütfen ürün kartındaki ürün gruplarına bakarak birinci ve ikinci en çok rastgeldiğinizi seçiniz.

1- ----------

2- ----------

Yukarda belirttiğiniz bu ürün/hizmetleri düşünerek, aşağıdaki ifadelerden herbirisi ile ilgili en uygun sayıyı belirtiniz. (1= *kesinlikle katılmıyorum*, 7= *kesinlikle katılıyorum*)

1. Ürün veya hizmet:

96- Bu ürün benim için gereklidir.

97- Bu ürün/servis benim için eğlencelidir.

98- Bu ürün/servis benim için fonksiyoneldir.

99- Bu ürün benim için heyecan vericidir.

100- Bu ürün/servis benim için kullanışlıdır.

101- Bu ürün benim için hoştur.

2. Ürün veya hizmet:

102- Bu ürün benim için gereklidir.

103- Bu ürün/servis benim için eğlencelidir.

104- Bu ürün/servis benim için fonksiyoneldir.

105- Bu ürün benim için heyecan vericidir.

106- Bu ürün/servis benim için kullanışlıdır.

107- Bu ürün benim için hoştur.

BÖLÜM 10

108- Yaş: .....

109- Cinsiyet:

- Kadın
- Erkek

110- Anket yapılan ilçe:

111- Medeni Hal:

- Evli
- Bekar

112- Eğitim Seviyesi:

- İlkokul
- Lise
- Universite
- Master/Doktora

113- Çalışıyor musunuz?

- Evet
- Hayır

114. Evetse, mesleğiniz nedir? .....

115. Aylık gelir: (net)

- 500 TL'den az
- 500 TL-1.000 TL arasında
- 1.001 TL-3.000 TL arasında
- 3.001 TL-5.000 TL arasında
- 5.000 TL'den fazla

116. Yaşadığınız il ve semt? .....

Çalışmamıza katıldığınız için teşekkür ederiz...

APPENDIX J

NORMALITY AND HOMOSCEDASTICITY ANALYSES

Table 6. Normality Test Results

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Gender	.344	979	.000	.637	979	.000
Age	.138	979	.000	.945	979	.000
Marital Status	.395	979	.000	.620	979	.000
SES	.257	979	.000	.884	979	.000
Monthly income	.502	979	.000	.203	979	.000
Tiestrength	.080	979	.000	.923	979	.000
Homophily	.084	979	.000	.980	979	.000
Interpersonal Trust	.081	979	.000	.969	979	.000
Critical Mass	.107	979	.000	.941	979	.000
SNS Culture	.099	979	.000	.939	979	.000
EWOM	.111	979	.000	.947	979	.000
Purchase intention	.078	979	.000	.980	979	.000
Self efficacy	.097	979	.000	.955	979	.000
Propensity to trust	.077	979	.000	.962	979	.000
Utilitarian product	.104	979	.000	.969	979	.000
Hedonic product	.100	979	.000	.968	979	.000
SNS usage intensity	.087	979	.000	.943	979	.000

Table 7. Homoscedasticity Test Results

	Interpersonal Trust		EWOM		Purchase Intention	
Groups	Sig (2-tailed)	Null Hypothesis of Equal Variances	Sig (2-tailed)	Null Hypothesis of Equal Variances	Sig (2-tailed)	Null Hypothesis of Equal Variances
Gender	.769	Accepted	.121	Accepted	.041	Rejected
Age	.130	Accepted	.002	Rejected	.007	Rejected
Marital Status	.017	Rejected	.005	Rejected	.000	Rejected
SES	.019	Rejected	.227	Accepted	.011	Rejected
Income	.170	Accepted	.170	Accepted	.000	Rejected

APPENDIX K

MULTICOLLINEARITY ANALYSES

Table 8. VIF Values of Multicollinearity Tests

Coefficients[a]

Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	Tiestrength	.269	3.713
	Homophily	.917	1.091
	CriticalMass	.476	2.101
	SNSCulture	.260	3.843
	InterpersonalTrust	.328	3.048

a. Dependent Variable: EWOM

Coefficients[a]

Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	Tiestrength	.254	3.943
	Homophily	.991	1.009
	CriticalMass	.582	1.718
	SNSCulture	.206	4.860
	EWOM	.247	4.045

a. Dependent Variable: InterpersonalTrust

Coefficients[a]

Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	Homophily	.925	1.081
	CriticalMass	.482	2.074
	SNSCulture	.242	4.124
	InterpersonalTrust	.316	3.168
	EWOM	.253	3.959

a. Dependent Variable: Tiestrength

Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	CriticalMass	.484	2.064
	SNSCulture	.202	4.939
	InterpersonalTrust	.336	2.980
	EWOM	.234	4.275
	Tiestrength	.252	3.974

a. Dependent Variable: Homophily

Coefficients[a]

Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	SNSCulture	.205	4.887
	InterpersonalTrust	.381	2.627
	EWOM	.235	4.263
	Tiestrength	.253	3.948
	Homophily	.936	1.068

a. Dependent Variable: CriticalMass

Coefficients[a]

Model		Collinearity Statistics	
		Tolerance	VIF
1	InterpersonalTrust	.315	3.174
	EWOM	.300	3.330
	Tiestrength	.298	3.352
	Homophily	.916	1.092
	CriticalMass	.479	2,087

a. Dependent Variable: SNSCulture

APPENDIX L

COMMON METHOD BIAS ANALYSES

Table 9. Harman's Single Factor Test Results

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	31.290	41.171	41.171	30.844	40.585	40.585
2	8.358	10.997	52.168			
3	3.723	4.899	57.067			
4	2.883	3.794	60.860			
5	2.021	2.659	63.519			
6	1.321	1.738	65.257			
7	1.158	1.523	66.781			
8	1.034	1.361	68.141			
9	.923	1.214	69.356			
10	.823	1.082	70.438			
11	.764	1.005	71.443			
12	.719	.947	72.389			
13	.685	.901	73.291			
14	.660	.868	74.159			
15	.637	.838	74.996			
16	.612	.805	75.802			
17	.587	.773	76.574			
18	.577	.760	77.334			
19	.555	.730	78.064			
20	.535	.704	78.767			
21	.526	.692	79.459			
22	.504	.664	80.123			
23	.491	.647	80.770			
24	.481	.633	81.403			
25	.476	.626	82.029			
26	.457	.602	82.631			
27	.439	.578	83.209			
28	.433	.570	83.779			
29	.418	.549	84.328			
30	.411	.541	84.869			
31	.405	.532	85.401			
32	.396	.521	85.922			
33	.386	.508	86.430			
34	.374	.492	86.923			
35	.371	.489	87.411			
36	.366	.481	87.893			
37	.358	.470	88.363			
38	.353	.464	88.827			
39	.339	.446	89.274			
40	.334	.440	89.713			
41	.326	.429	90.142			
42	.313	.412	90.554			
43	.309	.407	90.961			
44	.305	.401	91.362			
45	.295	.389	91.751			
46	.292	.385	92.135			
47	.285	.376	92.511			
48	.279	.367	92.878			
49	.272	.357	93.236			
50	.269	.354	93.589			
51	.258	.339	93.929			
52	.251	.330	94.259			
53	.242	.319	94.578			
54 to 76	.241 to .122	5.422	100.000			

APPENDIX M

EFA AND RELIABILITY ANALYSES

Table 11. EFA and Reliability Test Results

FACTOR TITLE	Factor Loading	Variance Explained	KMO	Bartlett's Test	Cronbach's Alpha
SOCIAL NETWORK TIES		63%	0.969	.00	0.922
FACTOR 1: TIE STRENGTH		36%			0.969
Interacting with people on social networking sites makes me feel like part of a larger community.	.872				
I maintain close relationships with members in this virtual community.	.867				
I have frequent communication with members in this virtual community.	.859				
The people I interact with on the social networking site would be good job references for me.	.859				
The people I interact with on the social networking site would help me fight an injustice.	.858				
Interacting with people on social networking sites makes me want to try new things.	.857				
When I feel lonely, there are members of the social networking site that I can talk to.	.854				
Interacting with people on social networking sites makes me interested in what people different from me are thinking.	.852				
I spend a lot of time interacting with some members in this virtual community.	.848				
I have known members in this virtual community for a long time.	.846				
Talking with people on the social networking sites makes me curious about other places in the world.	.841				
There is a member of the social networking site I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions.	.836				

I know members in this virtual community on a personal level.	.819				
If I needed an emergency loan of USD 500.- I know someone at the social networking site I can turn to.	.763				
There is no one on the social networking site that I feel comfortable talking to about intimate personal problems (R).	.172	REMOVED			
FACTOR 2: HOMOPHILY		27%			0.933
Unlike me/Like me.	.783				
Don't think like me/Think like me.	.766				
Background different from mine/Background similar to mine.	.765				
Economic situation different from mine/Economic situation like mine.	.763				
From social class different from mine/From social class similar to mine.	.762				
Status different from mine/Status like mine.	.755				
Don't resemble me/Resemble me.	.735				
Different from me/Similar to me.	.727				
Look different from me/Look similar to me.	.725				
Don't behave like me/Behave like me.	.718				
Morals unlike mine/Morals like mine.	.717				
Appearance unlike mine/Appearance like mine.	.716				
Different size than I am/Same size I am.	.688				
Sexual attitudes unlike mine/Sexual attitudes like mine.	.608				
TRUST		66%	0.982	.00	0.971
FACTOR 3: INTERPERSONAL TRUST		44%			0.971
I trust the product recommendations of this SNS.	.827				
I believe the product recommendations of this SNS are trustworthy.	.819				
I think that the product recommendations of this SNS are credible	.788				
I believe that people in this SNS share best knowledge they have.	.744				

I believe that people in this SNS give credit for others knowledge where it is due.	.742				
I believe that people in this SNS do not use unauthorized knowledge.	.728				
The members of this SNS participate in product evaluation enthusiastically.	.724				
The members of this SNS have knowledge about the subject we discuss.	.708				
Members in this SNS will not take advantage of others even when the opportunity arises	.693				
Members in this SNS will always keep the promise they make to one another.	.690				
The members of this SNS are honest with others.	.687				
I believe that people in this SNS use other's knowledge appropriately.	.687				
The members of this SNS are well qualified in the subject we discuss	.674				
Members in this SNS are truthful in dealing with one another.	.673				
The members of this SNS will do their best to help others.	.672				
The members of this SNS are fair to others.	.643				
The members of this SNS interact frequently	.643				
The members of this SNS are concerned about what is important to others	.636				
Members in this SNS would not knowingly do anything that may harm others.	.636				
Members in this SNS behave in a consistent manner	.625				
The members of this SNS are capable of participating in the subject we discuss.	.593				
FACTOR 4: PERCEIVED CRITICAL MASS		22%			0.866
Many of the people that I know use this SNS.	.835				
Many of my friends use this SNS.	.833				
There are many members in this SNS	.785				

FACTOR 5: SOCIAL NETWORK CULTURE		67%	0.956	0.00	0.932
Members in this community use understandable communication patterns during the discussion.	0.895				
Members in this community share the same goal of learning from each other.	0.873				
In general, the people in this community are working toward the same goal.	0.871				
Members in this community use understandable narrative forms to post messages.	0.87				
Members in this community share the vision of helping others solve their problems.	0.867				
I have no problem understanding terms/words in messages posted by others.	0.859				
Members in this community share the same values and goals.	0.857				
Members in this community use common terms or jargon.	0.853				
I have difficulties in understanding some terms/languages in the message posted by others. ®	0.065	PROSPECT TO BE REMOVED			
FACTOR 6: CONSUMERS' ENGAGEMENT IN EWOM		66.5%	0.874	0.00	0.875
I like to get my contacts' opinions on the social networking site before I buy new products.	0.904				
I feel more comfortable choosing products when I have gotten my contacts' opinions on them on the social networking site.	0.898				
My contacts' liking behaviours. posts and recommendations about some new products and services catch my interest on this social networking site.	0.895				
I follow my contacts' liking behaviours. posts and recommendations on this SNS to have opinions about new products and services.	0.895				
When I consider new products. I ask my contacts on the social networking site for advice.	0.865				
I rarely ask my contacts on the social networking site about what products to buy (R).	-0.132	PROSPECT TO BE REMOVED			

I don't need to talk to my contacts on the social networking site before I buy products (R).	0.033	REMOVED			
When choosing products. my contacts' opinions on social network site are not important to me (R).	0.009	REMOVED			
FACTOR 7: PURCHASE INTENTION		73.5%	0.915	0.00	0.928
With regard to the products that this virtual community recommends.. I am willing to buy them.	0.879				
With regard to the products that this virtual community recommends.. I would consider buying them.	0.876				
With regard to the products that this virtual community recommends.. I am likely to buy them.	0.871				
When shopping. I would.. Actively seek out the product in a store in order to purchase it.	0.865				
When shopping. I would.. Try the product in a store.	0.829				
When shopping. I would..Buy the product if happened to see it in a store.	0.822				

Table 12. EFA and Reliability Tests of Prospect Moderators

MODERATING VARIABLE	Factor Loading	Variance Explained	KMO	Bartlett's Test	Cronbach's alpha
PERCEIVED SELF EFFICACY		85%	0.755	.00	0.911
How do you feel the use of other consumers' reviews and recommendations as shopping advice affects the amount of confidence of your decisions? 1= greatly decreased 7= greatly improved	0.928				
How do you feel the use of other consumers' reviews and recommendations as shopping advice affects the accuracy of your decisions? 1= greatly decreased 7= greatly improved	0.926				
How do you feel the use of other consumers' reviews and shopping recommendations affects the degree of certainty of your decisions? 1= greatly decreased 7= greatly improved	0.911				

PROPENSITY TO TRUST		75%	0.657	.00	0.835
I tend to trust people even though I know little of them.	0.920				
It is easy for me to trust people.	0.911				
One should be very cautious with strangers	0.767				
CONSUMER ATTITUDE FOR UTILITARIAN PRODUCTS		86%	0.762	.00	0.918
This product is functional for me.	0.928				
This product is usable for me.	0.926				
This product is necessary for me.	0.926				
CONSUMER ATTITUDE FOR HEDONIC PRODUCTS		87%	0.763	.00	0.924
This product is pleasant for me.	0.939				
This product is enjoyable for me.	0.931				
This product is exciting for me.	0.926				
SNS USAGE INTENSITY		77%	0.925	.00	0.941
I feel I am part of the this social network site community.	0.908				
I am proud to tell people I'm on this social network site.	0.894				
I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto this social network site for a while.	0.884				
This social network site has become part of my daily routine	0.881				
I would be sorry if this social network site shuts down.	0.877				
I always contact with new people on this social network site.	0.829				

APPENDIX N

LEVENE AND GROUP MEAN STATISTICS RESULTS

Table 31. Independent t Tests for Self Efficacy

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tail)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	Lower	Upper
Interpers. Trust	Equal variances assumed	8.418	.004	-24.087	846	.00	-.9815	.0407	-1.0615	-.9015
	Equal variances not assumed			-23.598	722.49	.00	-.9815	.0415	-1.0631	-.8998
EWOM	Equal variances assumed	13.429	.000	-25.390	846	.00	-1.4964	.0589	-1.6121	-1.3807
	Equal variances not assumed			-24.863	720.76	.00	-1.4964	.0601	-1.6145	-1.3782
Purchase intention	Equal variances assumed	2.636	.105	-20.716	846	.00	-1.3587	.0655	-1.4874	-1.2299
	Equal variances not assumed			-20.554	768.37	.00	-1.3587	.0661	-1.4884	-1.2289

Table 32. Independent t Tests for Propensity to Trust

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tail)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	Lower	Upper
Interpers. Trust	Equal variances assumed	6.236	.013	-17.264	927	.000	-.7670	.0444	-.8542	-.6798
	Equal variances not assumed			-17.139	875.75	.000	-.7670	.0447	-.8548	-.6792
EWOM	Equal variances assumed	41.609	.000	-18.974	927	.000	-1.3237	.0697	-1.4606	-1.1868
	Equal variances not assumed			-18.707	815.09	.000	-1.3237	.0707	-1.4626	-1.1848
Purchase intention	Equal variances assumed	2.492	.115	-16.166	927	.000	-1.0781	.0666	-1.2090	-.9472
	Equal variances not assumed			-16.115	902.42	.000	-1.0781	.0669	-1.2094	-.9468

Table 33. Independent t Tests for Utilitarian Product Attitude

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tail	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	Lower	Upper
Interpers. Trust	Equal variances assumed	4.309	.038	-19.932	869	.000	-.8548	.0428	-.9390	-.7706
	Equal variances not assumed			-19.872	848.61	.000	-.8548	.0430	-.9393	-.7704
EWOM	Equal variances assumed	22.126	.000	-19.790	869	.000	-1.4199	.0717	-1.5607	-1.2791
	Equal variances not assumed			-19.668	822.74	.000	-1.4199	.0721	-1.5616	-1.2782
Purchase intention	Equal variances assumed	3.853	.050	-24.910	869	.000	-1.4462	.0580	-1.5602	-1.3323
	Equal variances not assumed			-24.852	853.02	.000	-1.4462	.0582	-1.5604	-1.3320

Table 34. Independent t Tests for Hedonic Product Attitude

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tail)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	Lower	Upper
Interpers. Trust	Equal variances assumed	.001	.976	-18.137	926	.000	-.7697	.0424	-.8530	-.6864
	Equal variances not assumed			-18.143	893.31	.000	-.7697	.0424	-.8529	-.6864
EWOM	Equal variances assumed	8.943	.003	-17.465	926	.000	-1.2523	.0717	-1.3930	-1.1116
	Equal variances not assumed			-17.317	858.00	.000	-1.2523	.0723	-1.3943	-1.1104
Purchase intention	Equal variances assumed	.564	.453	-23.963	926	.000	-1.3836	.0577	-1.4969	-1.2703
	Equal variances not assumed			-23.989	895.77	.000	-1.3836	.0576	-1.4968	-1.2704

Table 35. Group Statistics for Consumer Traits and Attitudes

Self-efficacy 1= Low 2= High		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Interpersonal Trust	1.00	370	2.7248	.64067	.03331
	2.00	478	3.7064	.54472	.02491
EWOM	1.00	370	3.2466	.92825	.04826
	2.00	478	4.7430	.78634	.03597
Purchase intention	1.00	370	2.9938	.97984	.05094
	2.00	478	4.3525	.92114	.04213
Propensity to trust low=1 high=2		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Interpersonal Trust	1.00	440	2.8324	.72375	.03450
	2.00	489	3.5994	.63033	.02850
EWOM	1.00	440	3.2663	1.20453	.05742
	2.00	489	4.5900	.91431	.04135
Purchase intention	1.00	440	3.1479	1.04639	.04988
	2.00	489	4.2261	.98584	.04458
Utilitarian attitude low=1 high=2		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Interpersonal Trust	1.00	419	2.8345	.65806	.03215
	2.00	452	3.6894	.60775	.02859
EWOM	1.00	419	3.2495	1.14417	.05590
	2.00	452	4.6694	.97135	.04569
Purchase intention	1.00	419	3.0370	.88296	.04314
	2.00	452	4.4833	.83053	.03906
Hedonic attitude low=1 high=2		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Interpersonal Trust	1.00	419	2.8392	.64203	.03137
	2.00	509	3.6089	.64450	.02857
EWOM	1.00	419	3.2827	1.13849	.05562
	2.00	509	4.5351	1.04281	.04622
Purchase intention	1.00	419	3.0105	.86983	.04249
	2.00	509	4.3941	.87985	.03900

APPENDIX O

MEDIATION TEST RESULTS - BARON AND KENNY APPROACH

Table 36. Chi-square Difference Test Results for Tie Strength - Int. Trust - EWOM

Model Element	Initial Model without Mediation (Tiestrength → Eng. in EWOM)	Re-specified Partial Mediation Model (Tiestrength → Interpersonal Trust → Eng. in EWOM)
Model fit		
Chi-square	6938.47	6926.14
Df	2398	2397
$\Delta\chi 2$	12.33 - significant at .05 level	
CMIN/DF	2.89	2.89
RMSEA	.044	.044
CFI	.92	.92
Standardized parameter estimates		
Tie Strength→ Eng. in EWOM	.231***	.231***
Tie Strength → Interpersonal Trust		.157***
Interpersonal Trust→Eng. in EWOM	.196***	.202***

***p < .001, ** p < .05, *p < .1 (one sided)

Table 38. Chi-square Difference Test Results for Homophily - Int. Trust - EWOM

Model Element	Initial Model without Mediation (Homophily → Eng. in EWOM)	Re specified Mediation Model (Homophily → Interpersonal Trust → Eng. in EWOM)
Model fit		
Chi-square	7002.39	6926.14
Df	2398	2397
$\Delta\chi 2$	76 - significant at .05 level	
CMIN/DF	2.92	2.89
RMSEA	.044	.044
CFI	.92	.92
Standardized parameter estimates		
Homophily → Eng. in EWOM	-.018	-.018
Homophily → Interpersonal Trust		.173***
Interpersonal Trust→Eng. in EWOM	.198***	.202***

***p < .001, ** p < .05, *p < .1 (one sided)

Table 40. Chi-square Difference Test Results for SN Culture - Int. Trust - EWOM

Model Element	Initial Model without Mediation (Social Network Culture → Eng. in EWOM)	Re specified Partial Mediation Model (Social Network Culture → Interpersonal Trust → Eng. in EWOM)
Model fit		
Chi-square	6977.72	6926.14
Df	2398	2397
$\Delta\chi 2$	51- significant at .05 level	
CMIN/DF	2.91	2.89
RMSEA	.044	.044
CFI	.92	.92
Standardized parameter estimates		
SN Culture → Eng. in EWOM	.608***	.599***
SN Culture → Interpersonal Trust		.330***
Interpersonal Trust → Eng. in EWOM	.227***	.202***

***p < .001, ** p < .05, *p < .1 (one sided)

Table 42. Chi-square Difference Test Results for Per. Cr. Mass - Int. Trust - EWOM

Model Element	Initial Model without Mediation (Perceived Critical Mass → Eng.in EWOM)	Re specified Partial Mediation Model (Perceived Critical Mass→ Interpersonal Trust→ Eng.in EWOM)
Model fit		
Chi-square	7112.12	6926.14
Df	2398	2397
$\Delta\chi 2$	186 - significant at .05 level	
CMIN/DF	2.96	2.89
RMSEA	.045	.044
CFI	.92	.92
Standardized parameter estimates		
Per. Cr. Mass → Eng. in EWOM	-.086**	-.084*
Per. Cr. Mass → Interpersonal Trust		.430***
Interpersonal Trust → Eng. in EWOM	.178***	.202***

***p < .001, ** p < .05, *p < .1 (one sided)

Table 44. Chi-square Difference Test Results for Int. Trust - EWOM - Purc. Int.

Model Element	Initial Model without Mediation (Interpersonal Trust→ Purchase Intention)	Re specified Partial Mediation Model (Interpersonal Trust→ Eng.in EWOM→ Purchase Intention)
Model fit		
Chi-square	6959.95	6926.14
Df	2398	2397
$\Delta\chi 2$	186 - significant at .05 level	
CMIN/DF	2.90	2.89
RMSEA	.044	.044
CFI	.92	.92
Standardized parameter estimates		
Interpersonal Trust→ Purchase Intention	.423**	.413***
Interpersonal Trust → Eng. in EWOM		.202***
Eng. in EWOM → Purchase Intention	.298***	.304***

***p < .001, ** p < .05, *p < .1 (one sided)

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