

Examining Influence of Electronic Words of Mouth and Social Media Marketing on Customer Satisfaction and Purchase Intention: Moderating Impact of Effectiveness of Information and Communication Technologies

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Abstract

Purchasing intention has been the foremost element that leads the organizations towards success and this aspect demands revisiting this to reiterate its significance. The present study examines the impact of electronic words (E-words) of mouth and social media marketing on the purchase intention of manufacturing sector in China. The study also checks the mediating role of customer satisfaction among E-words of mouth, social media marketing and purchase intention and also checks the moderating role of effectiveness of information and communication technologies (ICT) among customer satisfaction and purchase intention. The primary data was collected from 190 respondents, identified through simple random sampling technique, using surveys. SPSS-AMOS was used to examine the associations among variables. The results exposed that E-words of mouth and social media marketing have a positive nexus with purchase intention. The results also exposed that the customer satisfaction significantly mediates the relationships among the constructs, effectiveness of ICT too significantly moderates this association. The study guides the policymakers in establishing the policies related to achieve the purchase intention using E-words of mouth, effective social media marketing and ICT.

Keywords

E-words of Mouth, Social Media Marketing, Purchase Intention, Information and Communication Technologies, Customer Satisfaction.

1. Introduction

The proliferation of the information and communication technologies (ICT) environment in the modern world has redefined customer relationships strategies across all marketing organizations. For instance, social media platforms have replaced the traditional methods of marketing and emerged as more effective marketing strategies (Jin *et al.*, 2019). This is true for the massive and rapidly grown digital market of China, where electronic words of mouth (e-WOM) and social media marketing play a crucial role in shaping a customer's choices. With the increasing popularity of social media platforms like WeChat, Weibo, Douyin, and other similar Social Networking Services, new channels for business communication with consumers and perception management, as well as positive purchasing aspirations, have emerged.



This research analyses the relationship between e-WOM, social media marketing (SMM), customers' satisfaction (CS), and purchase intention (PI) with a focus on the moderating effect of ICT effectiveness in China.

Therefore, e-WOM is defined by the online messages passed by consumers, concerning their personal opinions towards certain type of products or services. Unlike the conventional word of mouth which is restricted by region and or group, e-WOM cuts across the globe and can influence a massive population within a short span (**Nuseir**, 2019). As seen in China, the internet usage, especially social media, is widely prevalent; therefore e-WOM is influential to the consumers. According to **Nuseir** (2019), the favorable e-WOM can create a positive impression about the brand, attract more consumers, and increase the sales volume. On the other hand, the negative e-WOM can repel potential customers and can even have negative impact on brand image (**Sun et al.**, 2021). Thus, it is important for the businesses aspiring to operate in the Chinese market to comprehend the extent to which e-WOM alters consumer satisfaction and purchase intention.

SMM is a distinct form of marketing that entails the use of the social sites to convey information regarding certain products, services, and brands while interacting with the consumers in the process (**Ebrahim**, 2020). The market of social media marketing is examined in China as it can be noted that social media is one of the most effective tools in business strategies due to the high level of consumers' activity. Hence, by proper segmenting of consumers, the businesses would be in a position to build brand preferences, customer loyalty, and even control their purchases. The fact of using social media for advertising also consists in making communications real-time and interactive, thus making it possible to increase customer satisfaction and stimulate the purchasing intentions (**Dwivedi et al.**, 2021).

The study shows that customer satisfaction plays a mediating role in the connection between e-WOM, social media marketing, and the purchase intention. The study postulates that when customers have a positive attitude, they pull a favorable image over the brand, speak about it to others, and even show a greater tendency to purchase. In the case of e-WOM, those customers, who are satisfied with the product or service, can promote it to other people thus creating an interest in the product amongst the people and retaining old customers (**Azer; Ranaweera**, 2022). Likewise, the well-coordinated social media marketing, which is valuable for customers, also has an impact on the improvement of the level of satisfaction due to the corresponding expectations, joy of getting added value with the involvement of the brand for the targeted consumers (**Rajagopal**, 2020).

Another variable that intervenes between e-WOM and SMM and purchase intention is customer satisfaction. This assesses the level of realization of the goals of these marketing efforts in persuading the consumers to make their intended purchases. The ICT impact moderates the extent of these interrelationships. According to **Mainolfi and Vergura** (2022), using ICT in China can also vary the e-WOM and SMM results because market remains highly digitalized; therefore, consumers primarily turn to online information sources while making their purchases. Efficient implementation of ICT means that consumers are able to easily access the right information from reliable and up-to-date sources that can improve their interaction with the virtual environment and increase their satisfaction (**Urdea et al.**, 2021). The basic premise is that if the ICT systems support business to consumer communication are sound and easy to use, they would enhance the transmission of e-WOM messages and the efficiency of social media marketing communications. On the other hand, if ICT fails to work or is not trustworthy, meaningful communication will not be established, consumer satisfaction decreases and influence that e-WOM and SMM has on the purchase intention will be negatively affected.

The Chinese market is even more specific as **Huateng et al.** (2021) point out that it is characterized by rather fast penetration of digital technologies in almost all spheres of life and significant population. It is crucial to determine how e-WOM and social media marketing impact customer satisfaction and purchase intention, because these are vital insights for business to leverage the mentioned digital tools. Further, the moderating effect of ICT effectiveness emphasizes the necessity to develop better, more reliable, and customer-oriented technologies to enhance the results of Internet marketing initiatives. For example, with the help of big data, analytics, Artificial Intelligence or Machine Learning are integrated to raise the ICT capabilities of the business. Eventually, firms can have better understanding of customers, make appropriate advertising and promotional strategies, and thus better satisfy consumers' needs and drive better purchase decisions.

The main research question for this study was to investigate the effect of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) and social media marketing (SMM) on customer satisfaction (CS) and purchase intention (PI) in the context of the Chinese market. Besides, the study seeks to determine the moderating role of customer satisfaction towards the relationship between these marketing initiatives and buying behavior. The third variable examined in this study was mediating/ moderating influence of the ICT utilization efficiency on this relationship, with the aim of establishing the role of ICT infrastructure in determining the ability of the digital marketing strategies to alter consumer behavior in China.

In responding to the research questions as well as the hypotheses for this study, this paper also fills the research gaps in the existing literature. There is a lack of knowledge as to how these factors may integrate in the context of the Chinese market, despite the plethora of research on constructs like e-WOM, SMM, and customer satisfaction individually. Moreover, the presence of ICT effectiveness to moderate this relationship has not been examined in previous studies, especially in the context of developing countries like China, where information communication technology is dynamically adopted. This research thus highlights the impact of e-WOM and SMM on customers' satisfaction and purchase intentions while capturing the value of ICT in promoting these effects.

The next sections of this study deal with relevant literature review, the research methodology, empirical analysis and test results of the proposed hypotheses, discussion and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

A major and significant influence on purchase intention in past literature is through electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), since consumers are more likely to turn to the internet to get information about products and services they wish to purchase in the current world. Customers' opinions, reviews, and recommendations on social media, blogs, forums, and third-party platforms in general are considered an informative type of e-WOM (Tran; Strutton, 2020). The e-WOM depends upon reviews based on other people's experience and, therefore, assists in assessing the quality, dependability and efficiency of the products and service providers. Sun *et al.* (2021) point out that when e-WOM is positive, it makes the information more credible and of higher perceived value to consumers, thus, creating a favorable attitude toward the brand. This positive perception leads to the desired effect of purchase intentions since users are inclined to rely on the word-of-mouth recommendation or experience shared by other users. E-WOM has a particularly strong impact on purchasing decisions in the electronic commerce, as there is no personal contact with the product, and the consumer often turns to the recommendations of other people (Nuseir, 2019). The social proof attained through e-WOM enhances the consumers' confidence, lowers perceived risk, and hence contributes to the intended purchase and is therefore influential in controlling consumer behavior (Sun *et al.*, 2021). Based on these arguments, the first hypothesis was proposed.

H1: E-words of mouth have a positive influence on purchase intention.

Social media marketing (SMM), according to Moslehpour *et al.* (2021), has a positive impact on the purchase intention through utilizing the features of the Social Networking Services, which are designed as an interactive and engaging means of communicating with the consumers. Thus, employing advertising, influencers, and creating engaging content in video format, stories, and live streams, brands can successfully entail and appeal to the clients. SMM is different from other social media marketing since brand messages, promotions, and offers can be created to match specific consumer tastes; thus they are significantly more compelling (Chan *et al.*, 2023). This type of personalization makes the consumer personally attached to the brand, which in turn stills brand commitment, and cultivates a positive attitude towards the brand's products or services. Social media also enables one-to-one conversation as well as opportunities for being in touch, responding to consumers' comments, and resolving customer concerns in real-time (Sashi *et al.*, 2019). The interaction formed with consumers not only helps develop trust but also increases consumers' psychological needs satisfying feelings and, in turn, have positive impacts over consumers' buying behaviors. Related to this. SMM also employs content visibility that tends to attract consumer attention without a doubt by implementing images, videos, and creativity in the posting that in return appeals to the consumer's emotions and influences their decision-making process than just encouraging them to purchase the brand (Moslehpour *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, complying with these arguments, the second hypothesis was proposed.

H2: Social media marketing has a positive influence on purchase intention.

The mediating effect of customer satisfaction is located between the e-WOM and the purchase intention. Chatterjee (2019) explains that such works which are in the form of reviews, recommendations and testimonials have an impact on the consumers' perception of the particular product or service which eventually results in increased satisfaction. This satisfaction comes when positive e-WOM is consistent with the consumers' expectation level and any perceived risk is lowered while confidence in the quality of the product or brand is enhanced. Getting more convinced with the information received through e-WOM, the level of consumer trust in the product or brand also rises, thus encouraging the consumer to think about the possible purchase (Kumar *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, the increased satisfaction performs the mediating role between the characteristics of the positive e-WOM and consumer's purchase intention. It reassures them that what they are going to purchase will fully satisfy them and this is very important in the decision-making process. By enhancing the customer satisfaction, it has a straight effect on the consumer's behavior to purchase and thus it is an important mediator that translates the e-WOM into a concrete behavioral intent to buy (Liao *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, the level of customer satisfaction remains the key constraint to the extent to which e-WOM is communicated or even influences a consumer's purchase intention. Aligning with these arguments, the third hypothesis was proposed.

H3: Customer satisfaction mediates the relation of E-words of mouth and purchase intention.

Customer satisfaction also plays the role of a mediator in the relationship between social media marketing (SMM) and purchase intention. Consumers' positive perceptions when it comes to the brand or product are attained when they interact with well-developed SMM, such as promotional ads, creative content, and advocates (Moslehpour *et al.*, 2021). Such engagement to the marketing process will mostly result to increased satisfaction since the marketing is done in line with the expectations, needs as well as preference of the consumer. Due to the nature of SMM, which is more or less a consumer to consumer dialogue or correspondence, Vlachvei *et al.* (2022) find that the consumers get more engaged and hence receive superior satisfaction with the brand. Thus, as customer satisfaction increases the involvement of SMM in customers' purchase decision becomes more significant. Customer expectation is higher and perhaps confidence in the brand so, they feel assured that what they are patronizing will not disappoint them. This satisfaction increases the

tendency of consumers to make a purchase since they have faith in the value and quality being offered by the brand as indicated by the marketing message (Hanaysha, 2022). In this regard, customer satisfaction plays the role of a mediator perceiving the results of social media marketing as the increase in the probability of a consumer's purchase, which qualifies the role of satisfaction as one of the determining factors in consumer behavior. Therefore, based on these arguments, the fourth hypothesis was proposed.

H4: Customer satisfaction mediates the relation of social media marketing and purchase intention.

The ICT can sometimes act as a moderator between the level of customer satisfaction and the intention to purchase. By integrating and improving the ICT strengths, customers often find that their experience with a product or a service is satisfying since the systems are reliable, easy to use and efficient (Li *et al.*, 2021). For instance, there is an improved e-commerce, efficient handling of customer complaints, and improved access to information through well-developed websites/apps add up to customer satisfaction. This means that satisfaction enhances the relationship between intention and purchase since people are likely to actualize their intention and make the purchase when their experience on the social media platform the firm is using is pleasant and efficient. On the other hand, Mofokeng (2021) finds that if ICT is not well developed, meaning that web speeds are slow, customer interfaces are poor, or there are constant technical problems, then the influence of customer satisfaction on that particular purchase intention reduces. Thus, any problems in acquiring the information about the product or brand, making the purchase or receiving the needed help, can negatively impact the consumer and erode his/her intentions to make the purchase despite the overall satisfaction with a certain product or brand (Yakut; Bayraktaroglu, 2021). Hence, the role played by ICT emerges as the moderating factor that cushion and exaggerates the consumer's final decision to buy based on their level of satisfaction. This moderating effect is critical in highly digital environments, such as e-commerce and online services to generate favorable purchase intentions aided by effectively implemented ICT. The fifth hypothesis was thus based on these arguments.

H5: Effectiveness of ICT works as a moderator between customer satisfaction and purchase intention.

3. Research Methodology

The study examines the impact of E-words of mouth and social media marketing on the purchase intention and also checks the mediating role of customer satisfaction among E-words of mouth, social media marketing and purchase intention and also checks the moderating role of effectiveness of ICT among customer satisfaction and purchase intention of manufacturing sector in China. The study gets the primary data from respondents using surveys. These surveys were taken from past literature such as e-words of mouth had five questions from **Almana and Mirza** (2013); social media marketing had four questions from **Sun and Wang** (2020); customer satisfaction had five questions adopted from **Gao *et al.*** (2021); effectiveness of ICT had five questions retrieved from **Hashim** (2007); and purchase intention had four question extracted from **Sun and Wang** (2020). These constructs and measurements are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Measurements of the Constructs.

Items	Questions	Sources
E-words of Mouth		
EWM1	Consistency of reviews posted on the website affect my purchase.	(Almana; Mirza, 2013)
EWM2	When I buy a product online, the reviews presented on the website are helpful for my decision making.	
EWM3	I believe that the product reviews on the internet are neutral.	
EWM4	Regency of product reviews posted on the website affect my purchase decision.	
EWM5	When I buy a product online, the impact of negative online reviews on my purchasing decision is greater for expensive goods.	
Social Media Marketing		
SMM1	I receive information from clients on social media.	(Sun; Wang, 2020)
SMM2	Expressing my opinion that I am thinking about buying is very easy via social media.	
SMM3	Using social media to search for information that I am thinking about buying is very fashionable.	
SMM4	I would like to share information from social media with my friends.	
Customer Satisfaction		
CS1	I feel loyalty toward this firm.	(Gao <i>et al.</i> , 2021)
CS2	Even if this firm was difficult to reach, I would still keep buying there.	
CS3	I am very committed to this firm.	
CS4	I am willing to make an effort to shop at this firm.	
CS5	I care a lot about this firm from which I frequently purchase.	
Effectiveness of ICT		
EICT1	I find using ICT interesting.	(Hashim, 2007)
EICT2	I have the opportunity to try ICT.	
EICT3	A trial version is available.	
EICT4	I have tried several times to use ICT.	
EICT5	I had taught myself to use ICT before I was asked to use it.	
Purchase Intention		
PI1	I plan to purchase green products in the future.	(Sun; Wang, 2020)
PI2	I am willing to purchase green products.	
PI3	From now on, I plan to purchase green products.	
PI4	I intend to pay more for green products.	

The sample of the study comprised employees working in the marketing department of manufacturing industry, identified through simple random sampling technique. Surveys were distributed through email and personal visits. A total of 509 surveys were distributed but only 290 valid responses were received. These responses have approximately 56.97 percent response rate. In addition, the article also used SPSS-AMOS to examine the associations among variables. It is a significant and commonly used tool for the analysis of primary data and provides best outcomes using complex frameworks (Hair *et al.*, 2014). Finally, the study used two independent constructs named e-words of mouth (EWM) and social media marketing (SMM), while one mediating variable viz., customer satisfaction, one moderating variable, viz., effectiveness of ICT (EICT), and one dependent variable viz., purchase intention (PI) were used. These variables are given in framework in Figure 1.

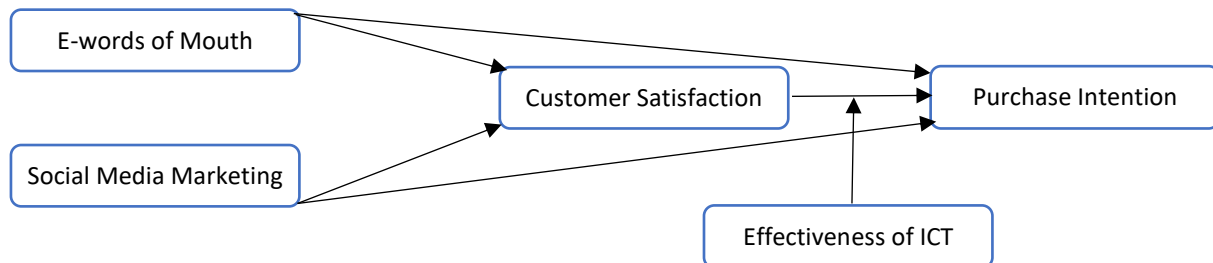


Figure 1: Research Framework.

4. Results and Findings

The outcomes show the correlation between items often called convergent validity. The outcomes indicated that loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) are bigger than 0.50, composite reliability (CR) are larger than 0.70 and MSV and ASV are lower than AVE. These values exposed a high correlation between items. Table 2 shows these results.

Table 2: Convergent Validity.

Relationships		Loadings	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
EWM1	<---	EWM	0.706	0.899	0.641	0.479
EWM2	<---	EWM	0.985			
EWM3	<---	EWM	0.704			
EWM4	<---	EWM	0.988			
EWM5	<---	EWM	0.746			
CS1	<---	CS	0.833	0.919	0.699	0.479
CS2	<---	CS	0.853			
CS3	<---	CS	0.832			
CS4	<---	CS	0.629			
CS5	<---	CS	0.763			
SMM1	<---	SMM	0.998	0.889	0.618	0.591
SMM2	<---	SMM	0.631			
SMM3	<---	SMM	0.996			
SMM4	<---	SMM	0.631			
EICT1	<---	EICT	0.802	0.897	0.696	0.691
EICT2	<---	EICT	0.849			
EICT3	<---	EICT	0.785			
EICT4	<---	EICT	0.793			
EICT5	<---	EICT	0.773			
PI1	<---	PI	0.562	0.797	0.501	0.281
PI2	<---	PI	0.875			
PI3	<---	PI	0.661			
PI4	<---	PI	0.697			

The outcomes show the correlation between variables often called discriminant validity. The outcomes indicated that the Fornell Larcker exposed the values that show the correlation with construct itself are bigger than the values that exposed the correlation with other variables. These values exposed a low correlation between variables. Table 3 shows these results.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity.

	EICT	EWM	CS	SMM	PI
EICT	0.801				
EWM	0.692	0.836			
CS	0.472	0.274	0.786		
SMM	0.359	0.185	0.531	0.834	
PI	0.436	0.203	0.530	0.425	0.708

The outcomes show the model good fitness. The outcomes indicated that the TLI and CFI values are higher than 0.90

and RMSEA value is less than 0.05. These values exposed a model as good fit as presented in Table 4 and Figure 2, which shows the measurement assessment model.

Table 4: Model Good Fitness.

Selected Indices	Result	Acceptable level of fit
TLI	0.903	TLI > 0.90
CFI	0.907	CFI > 0.90
RMSEA	0.000	RMSEA < 0.05 good; 0.05 to 0.10 acceptable



Figure 2: Measurement Assessment Model.

The results also exposed that E-words of mouth and social media marketing have a positive nexus with purchase intention and thus H1 and H2 were accepted. The results also exposed that the customer satisfaction significantly mediates among E-words of mouth, social media marketing and purchase intention and thus H3 and H4 were accepted. These associations are given in Table 5.

Table 5: Path Analysis.

Relationships	Beta	S.E.	C.R.	P
Customer Satisfaction <--- E-Words of Mouth	0.091	0.029	3.138	0.004
Customer Satisfaction <--- Social Media Marketing	0.837	0.027	31.000	0.000
Purchase Intention <--- Customer Satisfaction	0.161	0.078	2.064	0.032
Purchase Intention <--- E-Words of Mouth	0.126	0.039	3.231	0.005
Purchase Intention <--- Social Media Marketing	0.158	0.066	2.394	0.022
Purchase Intention <--- Effectiveness of ICT	0.098	0.039	2.513	0.027
Purchase Intention <--- CS x EICT	0.626	0.007	89.429	0.000

The results exposed that ICT effectiveness significantly moderates the relationship among customer satisfaction and purchase intention in the manufacturing industry in China, thus H5 was also accepted. These associations are given in Table 6 and Figure 3 as structural assessment model.

Table 6: Indirect Path Analysis.

	CS x EICT	ICT Effectiveness	Social Media Marketing	E-Words of Mouth	Customer Satisfaction
Customer Satisfaction	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Purchase Intention	0.000	0.000	0.108	0.013	0.000

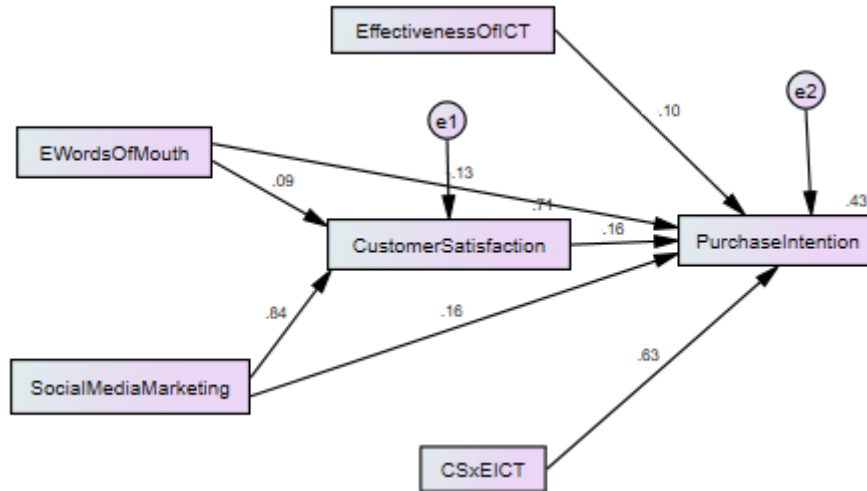


Figure 3: Structural Assessment Model.

5. Discussion

The research focuses on e-WOM and SMM on customer satisfaction and purchase intention evaluating customer satisfaction as the mediator while ICT effectiveness as the moderator in the Chinese market. This discussion expands on the complexity of relation between these variables to understand the nature of China’s digital environment and how these factors can be used effectively to enhance the business’s marketing efforts and consumer interaction. E-WOM is known to influence consumers’ buying behaviors extensively within the context of the current world which is digitally influenced especially in China with high internet usage and social media integration (Bilal et al., 2022). The study aims at revealing how e-WOM affects the level of customer satisfaction and, therefore, the purchase intention of customers. Studies like Lee and Hong (2019) find that promoting favorable e-WOM like reviews, recommendations, and user-generated content help to build trust as well as credibility among the consumers, which in turn escalate the level of consumers’ satisfaction.

For the Chinese consumers, word of mouth is vital and before making a purchase, what peers have to say is crucial, therefore e-WOM is an important factor affecting perception and purchase intentions (Tien et al., 2019). This research validates previous findings that show when positive e-WOM is mentioned, consumers’ satisfaction with a brand or product is enhanced, subsequently improving their purchase intent. Another factor that is relevant to this process is SMM. In China, WeChat, Weibo, and Douyin are communication channels and at the same time play a critical role in the path to purchase. The paper revealed that techniques of SMM such as involving personal content, advertising, and interaction with influencers have a highly positive impact on customer satisfaction. In creating fun, relative, and communicative content, the brands are able to engage the consumers in a way that is expected and appreciated (Hollebeek; Macky, 2019). The study also goes further to explain how the purchase intentions influence is mediated by the customer experience and satisfaction, whereby satisfied customers with good experience would exhibit a strong favorable purchase intention towards a brand’s SMM. Thus, the above result highlights the relevance of SMM in creating and sustaining customer satisfaction, thus marking a key driver to consumers.

Customer satisfaction helps in mediating the effects linked to e-WOM, SMM, and purchase intention. The study supports the notion of customer satisfaction as a direct consequence of positive e-WOM as well as an efficient SMM, along with the means as to how satisfaction helps in the transformation of these marketing efforts into sales. In the Chinese market, where consumers’ expectations are high and competition stiff, retaining and acquiring customer satisfaction is the key in the conversion of marketing communication into sales (Zhu et al., 2022). Thus, the mediator of customer satisfaction implies that business should aim to provide good quality purchases that are equal to or exceed the consumer expectations in order to drive the positive e-WOM and SMM efforts to a purchase intention.

As for the role of ICT in moderating this relationship, it can be concluded that ICT plays an effective role in the stated relation. More importantly, the presented ICT plays a crucial role in the context of the Chinese setting where advancement in digital

infrastructure and the level of technology-savviness of consumers is relatively higher. Hence, identifying the effectiveness of ICT moderates the e-WOM and SMM effects on customer satisfaction and purchase intention. The research proposal will show that when ICT systems are strong, easy to use, and effective, e-WOM and SMM content improves the availability and credibility of the information, thereby increasing the overall satisfaction levels of the customers. For example, **Zhu et al.** (2022) find that ease in accessing online reviews, timely and effective handling of customers' complaints through social media and company e-shops that are friendly create a good perception of the business. On the other hand, if ICT is not effective – slow internet connection, us attractiveness, or unreliable information, it will reduce the effectiveness of e-WOM and SMM and hence decrease consumers' satisfaction and purchasing attitudes (**Mofokeng**, 2021).

As the market environment is highly competitive and the customers of China are knowledgeable in receiving the digitally enhanced services ICT if not optimally developed, it can become a reason for the customers to switch off and hamper the efficiency and effectiveness of the e-WOM and SMM (**Liu; Bell**, 2019). Thus, companies should pay attention to the possibility of performance, design, and security of the digital environments supporting e-WOM and SMM. Furthermore, when it comes to the current research study, it also reveals that the China's digital marketing perspective requires the simultaneous consideration of the factors mentioned above. Thus, **Bushara et al.** (2023) explain that e-WOM or SMM is not sufficient for affecting perceived purchase intentions for firms, ICT should work in coordination with e-WOM and SMM as well. This integrated approach is especially important in the contemporary market where people are increasing shifting their attention and placing more importance in interaction with the 'net and other digital occurrences. Thus, keeping each segment of marketing in harmony, firms can implement its efforts to have the cohesive digital strategy and strengthen positions to influence consumers' satisfaction and purchasing behavior.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this study are important to the understanding of Chinese consumers' behavior in the highly competitive e-commerce environment. The study reveals that e-WOM and SMM are central in influencing the satisfaction of customers within a firm in regard to the purchase intention. This also goes to stress the need of organizations in developing sound e-WOM and SMM strategies that are acceptable by consumers as well as the ability to create trust. The paper also highlights the importance of proper ICT to enhance the potential of these digital marketing initiatives. Good ICT keeps the consumers satisfied by making sure that there are minimal hitches in getting important information, and that online interactions are as good as real-life ones. Marketers should thus ensure that they incorporate hi-tech friendly online tools to enhance their marketing activities. The results indicate that there is a joint impact of strong e-WOM, SMM and efficient ICT to enhance the customer satisfaction and purchase intentions in context of China. By adopting this approach, various business establishments will be in a position to satisfy the consumers' expectations as well as effectively compete within the digital economy.

The following limitations are associated with this study on the effect of e-WOM and SMM on customer satisfaction and purchase intention in the context of China, which has investigated ICT effectiveness as a moderator. First, the investigation questions are answered mainly on the basis of consumer surveys, which are vulnerable to some types of bias, including social desirability or the tendency of respondents to recall information inaccurately. Second, there is a risk of geographical bias of the study due to its primary concern with China's market only, and therefore, the results may not be applicable to other cultures or economic environments. Besides, there are always limitations to the study due to the dynamic nature of the innovation technologies In China suggesting that the findings may soon go obsolete being replaced by new platforms in ICT. The study also fails to consider differences in consumers' behavior depending on the specific social media sites or the sectors under analysis. Lastly, the study focuses on ICT effectiveness, but the study did not examine the technological factors in detail nor identify the contributions of each factor, which constitutes an area of future research.

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