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<p>NUOMONIŲ FORMUOTOJŲ SKLEIDŽIAMO NEIGIAMO ELEKTRONINIO TŪRINIO ĮTAKA GREITOSIOS MADOS KLIENTŲ PASITIKĖJIMUI PREKĖS ŽENKLU IR KETINIMUI JĮ PIRKTI PAKARTOTINAI</p>	<p>THE IMPACTS OF OPINION LEADERS' NEGATIVE ELECTRONIC WORD-OF- MOUTH ON FAST FASHION CUSTOMERS' BRAND TRUST AND REPURCHASING INTENTION</p>
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	6
1. THE IMPACTS ON CUSTOMERS' BRAND TRUST AND REPURCHASING INTENTION BY OPINION LEADERS' NEGATIVE ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH	9
1.1. Customers' brand experience, satisfaction, and trust.....	9
1.2. The familiarity of followers with opinion leaders and the opinion leader's influential role and credibility in influencing their followers	13
1.3. E-WOM and negative E-WOM.....	18
1.4. Information Adaptation Model.....	23
2. OPINION LEADERS' NEGATIVE ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH IMPACTS ON FAST FASHION CUSTOMERS' BRAND TRUST AND REPURCHASING INTENTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	27
2.1. Research Framework and Hypotheses Development	27
2.2. Research Methods and Instruments.....	30
2.3. Research Object and Respondents.....	31
2.4. Sample Size	32
2.5 Questionnaire design and Measurement Scales.....	33
3. ANALYZES AND RESULTS.....	36
3.1. Validity Analyzes	36
3.2. Reliability Analysis	38
3.3. Hypothesis Testing	39
3.4. Discussion.....	48
3.5. Scientific Contributions	49
3.7. Managerial Implications	49
3.8. Research Limitations and Future Directions	50
4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	51
REFERENCES.....	53
SUMMARY	69

SANTRAUKA	70
ANNEXE	71

LIST OF TABLES

1. Calculation of sample size of the study
2. Constructs of the questionnaire
3. KMO and Bartlett's Test
 - 3a. Communalities
4. Cronbach`s Alpha overall value
 - 4a. Cronbach`s Alpha value
5. Correlation table of H1
6. Correlation table of H2
7. Correlation table of H3
8. Correlation table of H4
9. Correlation table of H5
10. Correlation table of H6
 - 10a. Model Summary Table of H6
 - 10b. ANOVA table of H6
 - 10c. Coefficient table of H6

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. *Research Framework*

Figure 2. *Revised Research Framework*

LIST OF KEYWORDS AND ABBREVIATIONS

WOM - Word-of-mouth

E-WOM - Electronic word-of-mouth

N e-WOM - Negative electronic word-of-mouth

NWOM – Negative word of mouth

IAM - Information Adoption Model

INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry has drastically changed over the past three decades. Due to the high profitability, the industry has witnessed a massive shift from high-end brands producing two seasonal lines of clothing to becoming dominated by fast-fashion brands producing mass clothing monthly. The great publicity of new fashion trends and the effortless access of customers to social media have increased retailers' demand for more extensive clothing production in a short time. Recent reports have estimated the industry production cost to be 100 billion US dollars. According to Bhardwaj & Fairhurst, 2010, the changes in the fashion industry, where people are following new trends soon to fall, are known as "throwaway" or so-called fast fashion. The need for flexible and quick production response has become apparent to retailers, and these attributes are crucial in today's economy and have been studied as a new business model. Even though the fast fashion industry is providing its customers with greater gratification and trouble-less ability to afford the constantly changing trends in clothing, the industry produces significant pollution and waste and is rumored to have dangerous production workplace conditions for workers at low-wage payments.

Moreover, word-of-mouth communication has significantly played an influential role in influencing customers' repurchase decisions since the rise of fast fashion e-commerce. E-WOM is the customers' remarks about a product or company, whether positive or negative, available to many other people and organizations over the Internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Zhao et al., 2020). Because customer dissatisfaction occasionally occurs, the impact of negative e-WOM is surreptitious for retailers and manufacturers. The research results to date contradict the effects of WOM communications on the repurchasing behavior of those who receive them. These studies discovered that exposure to positive e-WOM increased actual repurchasing levels, whereas exposure to negative e-WOM decreased these levels. According to Hu et al. (2012), customers prefer to watch or read content generated by opinion leaders, whom they trust, to make the best repurchasing decisions. Various fields have different perceptions of opinion leaders. However, an opinion leader is a trusted and reliable source of information in a particular area of expertise for customers, primarily aiding their repurchasing decisions. Herewith, an opinion leader may be a person or organization strongly influencing people's attitudes and opinions within a given group or community. People frequently look to opinion leaders for direction and information because they often possess a high level of experience or understanding in a given field.

Additionally, businesses constantly search for more substantial business models to maintain customers' trust and repurchase. Many studies show that the process, time, and effort it takes firms to acquire a new customer is more challenging and costly than retaining one. This explains

why much research has been conducted on the importance of repurchasing intention. The importance of creating a trustful customer comes from its ability to directly reflect their repurchasing behavior and emotional ties to a company (brand trust). Another essential aspect that encourages many businesses to dedicate much attention to acquiring a trustful base of customers is that retained customers are most likely to involve themselves in the company's word-of-mouth marketing, creating a more valuable and trusted reputation for the brand. (Gustafsson et al., 2005). However, satisfied and trustful customers may buy goods and services from different brands and service providers when N e-WOM ruins their trust in a brand. Akoglu and Özbek (2021) further demonstrate that negative opinions about a company may pose severe and wide-reaching impacts.

Although many scholars have studied the effectiveness of e-WOM (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Kumar & Benbasat, 2006) and the factors that influence repurchasing (Evans & Gentry, 2003; Law, Hui, and Zhao, 2004; Mittal & Kamakura, 2001; Seiders et al., 2005), there is a gap in the academic literature regarding how negative e-WOM is received and evaluated by opinion leaders' followers compared to their brand trust upon repurchase. This thesis addresses the inconsistencies in previous research findings and the possibility that new variables could substantially impact understanding the customers' brand trust and repurchasing behavior. The research goal is to study customers' brand trust and repurchasing behavior when exposed to a negative e-WOM provoked by an opinion leader—questioning their repurchasing decision-making and whether they will go with their previous experience and satisfaction that formed their brand trust. Alternatively, follow the opinion leader due to their credibility, influence, and familiarity with the opinion leader. This leads to the research question: **To what extent does negative electronic word-of-mouth, provoked by opinion leaders, impact customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention?**

The thesis aims to assess how negative electronic word-of-mouth, provoked by opinion leaders, impacts customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention. The current study compares fast fashion customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention before and after exposure to N e-WOM provoked by an opinion leader. While heeding the follower's familiarity with the opinion leader, the credibility and influential role that the opinion leader possesses on their followers, the customers' previous experience, and satisfaction with the brand. Moreover, the current findings will assist businesses and customers in further understanding repurchasing decision-making, brand trust, and the effects of opinion leaders' N e-WOM. Accordingly, the study's objectives are:

1. Analyze customers' brand experience and satisfaction importance in customers' brand trust and repurchase decisions.
2. Analyze the follower's familiarity with opinion leaders and the opinion leader's influential role and credibility effects on their followers' repurchasing intention and brand trust.
3. Analyze the impacts of E-WOM and negative E-WOM on customers' repurchase intention and brand trust.
4. Construct a research model to examine how opinion leaders' negative e-WOM influences customers' brand trust and repurchase intent.
5. Collect and analyze the data needed to determine how negative e-WOM of opinion leaders affects customers' trust in a brand and their intention to rebuy from a fast-fashion brand.
6. Based on the study's findings, provide suggestions, insights, and work restrictions on the impact of negative e-WOM provoked by opinion leaders on customers' brand trust and intention to rebuy from fast fashion brands.

The current research used a combination of methods to conduct a literature review and an empirical study. For the literature review, keyword searches in academic databases, to name a few, JSTOR and ResearchGate, were used to locate relevant studies, as well as manual searches by going through reference lists. For the empirical research, a quantitative approach was used to conduct a survey to gather data from a large sample of participants. The data were analyzed using statistical techniques such as correlation tests and linear regression, using SPSS as software support. The quantitative approach allows for testing hypotheses and identifying patterns in the data.

This paper is structured into four sections. The first section provides the literature context and background of the research. While the second section outlines the research design and data collection procedures and methods. Then the third section presents the results and findings of the analysis, highlights the theoretical contributions of this study compared to earlier research, underlines the importance of the data supplied, and gives limitations and recommendations for future research. Finally, the last section presents the discussion and conclusion, interpreting the results and drawing conclusions based on the research question and objectives.

1. THE IMPACTS ON CUSTOMERS' BRAND TRUST AND REPURCHASING INTENTION BY OPINION LEADERS' NEGATIVE ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH

1.1. Customers' brand experience, satisfaction, and trust

Customers judge and evaluate brands based on their experience and other tangible and intangible clues concerning the brands' products and identity (Swoboda et al., 2012). Although a brand's evaluation can be based on different attributes unique to that brand, Gilbert and Hewlett (2003) use a subsidiary of these features as the foundation for evaluating brands. Moreover, the brand's concept and illustration are controlled by how the brand chooses to express and introduce itself to the market, and its subsequent growth and enforcement over time, shaping the customer experience (Stern, (2001) & Cui, (2018). Therefore, the actions taken by a company may even devalue the brand itself in the eyes of customers (Puzakova et al., 2013). Self-produced beliefs about a brand are formed in consumers' minds through controlled and other uncontrolled information consumers receive, which shapes customers' brand experience. Such beliefs are formed in the minds of existing or former brand consumers (Romaniuk et al., 2012).

Moreover, consumers' interactions on multiple levels further help shape their experiences. The experience of a particular brand could be conducted once the consumers first see a brand advertisement, visit the store, deal with the staff, or once they make their first purchase or use the service that the brand provides (Alloza, 2008). Once they search for the products or services, interact with the employees, and shop from the brand, the customer's treatment will stay with them as an image of the brand entity (Arnould, et al., 2002). In their research, Brakus et al. (2009) stated that brand design and uniqueness, communications, packaging, and settings shape consumers' experience with the product. Moreover, they defined brand experience as a group of responses, sensations, feelings, and perceptions elicited by brand-related stimuli. According to Sirianni et al. (2013), consumers' emotional response to a brand, such as enthusiasm, trust, and desire, is the brand experience. Mainly, smooth checkout and delivery protocol gives a customer a better experience and reduces unnecessary obstacles when a client should repurchase an item (Xiao et al., 2019; Cambra-Fierro et al., 2021).

Additionally, (Veloutsou et al., 2005; Anderson et al., 2004) explained that customers' satisfaction is a combination of insights, appraisals, and emotional responses to the experience of purchasing goods or services for one-time or continuous consumption from a specific supplier. Consequently, customers' satisfaction with a brand appears relatively measured through the usage of a service or consumption of a product by a brand (Benoit et al., 2020). As a result, every

marketed product must meet non-standard expectations. Consumer satisfaction leads to evaluating the product or services expended, permitting customers to determine its suitability for future use or purchase. Thus, other people may have the intention to buy a product again or repeatedly (repurchase intention). For consumers to repurchase a product, it should achieve their predictions. Unlike displeased clients, pleased consumers are most likely to repurchase a product. Thus, repurchase intention is formed by the consumer's desire to repurchase a product or service that has previously met the benefits and quality standards. Users' perceived satisfaction with a brand's performance may also lead them to recommend it to others (Mashur et al., 2019). Proper communications and engagements with consumers by brands boost customer relationships (Xiao et al., 2019). Consequently, it allows information sharing about available products and services and how they solve consumers' problems to increase consumers' willingness to recommend and repurchase.

Consequently, creating satisfied customers has become one of the businesses' top priorities. Ha, et al. (2010) demonstrated several approaches to conceptualizing customer satisfaction. Generally, satisfaction is a reasonable response that focuses on product performance relative to specific pre-purchase standards during or after consumption - an emotional reaction to the purchase situation or a positive affective response to a previous experience's outcome. Further, Bennett et al. (2005) explained that purchases are influenced by satisfaction and attitudes formed in an earlier experience, completing the recurring pattern. Satisfaction increases the likelihood of a long-term relationship connection, making it an essential constituent of brand trust and repurchasing (Agustin & Singh, 2005). In this way, satisfaction remains a prerequisite for or an indirect source of brand trust, with higher satisfaction levels resulting in higher levels of brand trust.

Moreover, customer satisfaction increases the repurchases of a specific product, service, recommendations to others, and the increase in price tolerance. While only some of these behaviors are probably present in many businesses, customer satisfaction measures the profitability of a business. Customer satisfaction should encourage customers to purchase more from the supplier, which will showcase the potential profitability of a business (Verhoef et al., 2001; Casaló, 2017b). Accordingly, increased cross-buying can result from increased customer satisfaction (Ha et al., 2010). Cross-selling increases net cash flow in the same way that meeting a larger share of customer demand does and speeds up the timing of new cash flow generation. A satisfied customer base provides a good market for new add-on services, product line extensions, or repurchasing. Tien et al. (2019) and Curtis et al. (2011) illustrated a favorable relationship between satisfied clients and corporate profit.

However, the existing literature illustrates differing views on the relationship between consumers' trust and repurchase. Lee et al. (2006) and Teichmann (2021) suggest that customers with brand trust tend to repurchase goods or services. On the other hand, Davidow (2003) illustrates that impartiality is the most persuasive dimension for customer repurchase intentions and WOM influences. In line with this, Mittal and Kamakura (2001) and Larson et al. (2021) demonstrate that most organizations need help establishing a direct link between repurchasing and brand trust since pleased customers may also buy goods and services from different brands and service providers. According to Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) and Teichmann (2020), trust is crucial for brands to establish enduring connections with their audience. In the opinion of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) and Uzunolu & Misci Kip (2014), brand trust can be the cornerstone for the development of long-lasting brand connections and the desire of customers to co-create and support the brand. Agustin and Singh (2005) also refer to a brand as a trust mark for all impalpable measures. Such findings demonstrate the significance of a trust construct in maintaining relationships between buyers and sellers.

Notably, the trust between a customer and seller is the belief that the customer can depend on the provider to provide excellent services to satisfy their needs. Simultaneously, Agustin and Singh (2005) argue that relational value is a user's perception of their profits against the costs of maintaining a continuing exchange affiliation. Trust in the purchased product can leverage the brand's trustworthiness, thus strengthening customers repurchase behavior. Ashley and Leonard (2009) demonstrate that most clients gain trust in a brand based on positive opinions, which they anticipated before and after experiencing purchasing. Thus, identifying the factors that drive trust is critical. Some of these anticipated opinions about the provider come from the customers' surroundings, whether a family member, a friend, or online experts and reviews.

Uniquely, consumers' opinions and purchase intentions can be greatly influenced by how much they trust influencers and other people when they talk about brands (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014). It can be challenging to find a comprehensive list of the elements impacting consumers' trust in social media posts about a brand and its goods and services (Goodrich & de Mooij, 2014). Customers' trust can be gained through communication and cognitive processes, claim Liu et al. (2018). When a customer and a brand contact and communicate directly, trust can develop (Garg & Pandey, 2021). The cognitive process of trust may occur when customers rely on their faith in a brand on information from third parties (Liu et al., 2018). This is the difference between information about a brand from an influencer and that the brand directly publishes on social networks. Consumer interaction and direct communication with a reliable source raise the

possibility that the source's e-WOM will have an impact on consumers (Laroche et al., 2013). Consequently, consumer engagement is an essential factor in trust transmission.

However, online users and buyers increasingly rely on e-WOM, impacting their trust in a brand and repurchase intent. Dissatisfied consumers' comments or opinion leaders' negative e-WOM decrease customers' trust in a product and thus reduce the possibility of repurchasing items from a brand (Li & Wu, 2013; Sandhu et al., 2021). Ali and Bhasin (2019) further illustrate that online customers are increasingly interested in information supporting the quality of a product to form a sense of trust in the brand and the desired product before making a purchase decision. Based on Kakirala and Singh's (2020) research, companies may lose their customers' trust and reputation and face a decrease in revenue once their customers are exposed to N e-WOM. However, if customers have developed strong trust and disagree with N e-WOM, they will not detain from making their purchase and losing their brand trust, even though they were exposed to N e-WOM.

Therefore, it is crucial to understand further the more extensive scope and efforts that brands dedicate to ensure their customers' trust and satisfaction by providing the best experience, leading to repurchase. The process, time, and effort it takes to acquire a new customer are more challenging and costly than retaining one (Yan et al., 2018; Kwun & Oh, 2007). According to Ali & Bhasin (2019), customer retention ensures competitive advantages to the business's presence in the market; many marketers and business owners focus on knowing what tools and factors affect turning their one-time customer into a lifetime one. Therefore, customer retention comes from a business's ability to directly reflect its repurchasing behavior and emotional ties to a firm.

Retaining customers enhance the success of a business. Gustafsson et al. (2005) and Karunamoorthy et al. (2021) argue that retained customers are most likely to engage in the company's word-of-mouth marketing, creating a more valuable and trusted reputation for the brand. Hence, it is another essential aspect of encouraging many businesses to focus on customer retention. Lun et al. (2016) and Gilbert et al. (2004) further demonstrate that consumer loyalty guarantees the profitability and success of the business as retained customers. As a result, most companies have concentrated on identifying the best practices to ensure consumers' trust and loyalty (Cui et al., 2018; Kandampully & Suharanto, 2003). This approach will enhance the brands' efforts to ensure customer satisfaction and experience, thus building brand trust and a retinted customer base.

Equally, customer retention refers to the company's consistent insurance of customer satisfaction, trust, and purchasing goods and services. Customers that are appreciated and valued by the company feel a sense of commitment to it. Park et al. (2021) further demonstrate that retained customers are loyal to the brand and may participate in spreading a WOM within their online networks or other circles, making them excellent brand ambassadors. Brands that offer loyalty programs may significantly influence consumers to purchase another item. Similarly, the involvement of customers in brand activity by asking and responding to feedback also makes customers feel worthwhile since they value their perceptions (Park et al. (2021). Additionally, it provides a better insight into how a consumer thinks and feels about a product or service. These approaches help build satisfied communities and trust in the brand.

The previous extensive literature analysis studied consumers' brand experience, satisfaction, and trust. Customers formulate brand experience through responses, sensations, feelings, and perceptions elicited by brand-related stimuli. If the customer experience is uninterrupted by negative external factors, it will lead in favor of brand trust and repurchasing behavior. Satisfied customers of a previous experience create an emotional reaction to repurchase products and a positive response to the brand image, increasing their trust in it. Brand trust is the foundation for a long-term relationship with the customer, ensuring that a strong base of customers may not be affected by negative outside elements, which can cause the brand to lose its customers. The previous researchers' information will be a great asset that will help support a better understanding of the current study.

1.2. The familiarity of followers with opinion leaders and the opinion leader's influential role and credibility in influencing their followers

With the rise of smart devices, many social media platforms have become the primary communication and content-sharing channels. "The active and regular use of social media and social networking sites has made these indispensable sources of information and content and, thus, attractive platforms for firms on which to conduct promotional activities." (Jiménez-Castillo, & Sánchez-Fernández. 2019). Due to that, marketing-digital influencers and bloggers have gained more disclosure and captivated the minds of their followers with their user-generated content, making them become opinion leaders. When describing social media influencers as opinion leaders, it is not meant to refer to them as authority figures who hold high positions in formal corporates and public organizations. But rather "as individuals, with a wide set of personal connections, who play a key influential role and who are considered both source and guide" (McQuail & Windahl, 1993, as cited in Uzunoğlu & Misci Kip, 2014).

Additionally, Shoham and Ruvio (2008) explained opinion seeking as the tendency that happens when individuals search for information and consultation about a specific type of service or a product from those more experienced in that field. However, Clark and Goldsmith (2005) argue that opinion-seeking could be a radical extension of leadership-seeking. According to Chen et al. (2017), opinion leaders play different roles depending on the theme, field, culture, social environment, and the era they are part of. The followers of those opinion leaders are mainly connected with those leaders to receive information and opinions to follow those leaders' steps and change their behavior accordingly. Lie et al. (2012) describe these opinion leaders' followers as people influenced by opinion leaders' opinions, and a noticeable change in their attitudes and behavior is reported.

The fashion industry is one of many industries that uses opinion leaders' e-WOMs as part of their marketing strategies. Fashion-sensitive shoppers are increasing, and fashion trends constantly influence purchasing behavior (Chetioui et al., 2020). Fashion influencers gain more popularity with product recommendations. Fashion "opinion leaders receive a higher trust rate than products recommended by families or friends, resulting in 40% of consumers purchasing the products used by social media influencers" (Sahi et al. 2016). For example, marketing influencers and opinion leaders have embraced Instagram to engage or communicate with consumers about available fashions (De Perthuis & Findlay, 2019). Some of those who are so-called fashion opinion leaders are classified by their followers' total number on the platform they are popular at, not necessarily, because they are currently or previously working in fashion. Instead, they are creative individuals who can create high-end content that mimics the professional fashion media look, feel, and discourse while weaving promotional strategies into it.

Moreover, opinion leaders frequently have a significant impact on consumers' purchasing decisions, and whether or not these consumers are familiar with the opinion leaders will also affect how they will feel about a particular product, service, or fashion trend. According to Karaca & Uyar (2014), almost 80% of consumers interact with opinion leaders seeking their expertise. Before purchasing a new product, consumers seek the advice of people they know, value, and trust, looking for support to assist in making their final decision. However, when this support comes from a familiar person, consumers' decision is highly influenced, especially if this person has trusted knowledge about the product. Hence, word of mouth by significant familiar opinion leaders is more likely to be believed since it comes from an opinion leader, who is believed to be knowledgeable, and the opinion seekers are familiar with them.

Furthermore, these opinion leaders influence their followers' decisions on products, goods, and services. The consumers' familiarity with the opinion leaders is vital in whether the consumers will purchase a specific good or service. According to (Martensen et al., 2018), familiarity with the opinion leader will depend on how knowledgeable the opinion leader seems and how exposed the consumers are to that opinion leader. Martensen (2018) believed that familiarity gives consumers a sense of comfort, making the opinion leader more persuasive and believable.

Research by Martensen et al. (2018) and Hoffner (2008) describes the relationship between the follower and opinion leader differently than the typical understanding of a relationship where both parties have trust and know each other well. However, they described the relationship as becoming a part of the opinion leader's everyday life. The followers/consumers who follow opinion leaders on social media platforms and watch their content develop familiarity, trust, and comfort with these opinion leaders through this following relationship. This sense of familiarity developed by followers affects their decision to purchase and makes them trust and follow the opinion leader's advice or word of mouth. Additionally, (Lee & Watkins, 2016) studied the Instagram posts of opinion leaders through their social media and the impact it has on their followers. The results showed that opinion leaders' posts on Instagram have an impact and positive effect on the consumers' purchase intention. Moreover, (Chapple and Cownie (2017) found, through an interview study regarding the influence of Instagram posts on consumers by their favorite, most followed opinion leaders, that consumers confessed that they frequently buy or further advocate the products that the influencers have recommended. Based on the research mentioned above, the more familiar the followers are with the opinion leaders, the more they will trust them and make their purchase decisions based on what they will hear from the word of mouth of the opinion leader.

Additionally, specific characteristics of opinion leaders play a more significant role in how influential they are. "Opinion leadership plays a key role in new product adoption and diffusion of related information, so it is an essential element in marketing communications" (Casaló et al., 2018). One of the essential characteristics of opinion leaders is having the ability to, directly and indirectly, influence their audiences directly by conveying the message and indirectly through the way their audiences view them. "Celebrities can transform an unknown product into a well-known product through persuasion techniques and generating positive associations via advertisements" (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). Recognizing the leverage of opinion leaders over their audiences and followers, marketers are progressively turning to them to reach out to their customers more efficiently and cost-effectively. By forming alliances and

sponsorship with digital marketing influencers, marketers hope to promote their products and influence their followers to purchase them. "Social media influencers (SMIs) represent a new type of independent third-party endorser who shapes audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media" (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg. 2011).

Furthermore, opinion leaders depend on their expertise in a particular field to influence their followers. Opinion leaders evaluate products using their expertise in a specific field and customer feedback to enlighten potential consumers on the positive or negative values (Casaló et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). The opinion leaders themselves understand their control over consumers' choices. Casaló et al. (2020) argue that opinion leaders' mastery of a particular industry supports their establishment of trust in a community as industry insiders. On online platforms, opinion leaders have followers who trust them with information concerning their interests (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Additionally, they influence their followers based on current events, industry trends, and consumer behavior. Accordingly, most opinion leaders in business have; expertise in the specific topic, a sense of charisma, profound social media presence, respect, interest in issues, and the capacity to influence and quickly convey information (Raghupathi & Fogel, 2015; Shoham & Ruvio, 2008). These characteristics make their impact and relay their message to a broader population. Furthermore, resemblance in cognitive styles has shown a reduction in ambiguity, a boost in the levels of interpersonal gravitation, and improvement in the leader-follower communication dyads (Johlke & Duhan, 2001), resulting in strengthening the relationships of leader-follower and leading to fewer misunderstandings (Suazo et al., 2008).

Moreover, many studies investigated what forms these online communities as well as why and how these follower-leader relationships are formed. Empirically, the web is the convergence of several communication flows rather than the organization of consumers around brands. Chu and Kim (2018) illustrated this phenomenon as the "digital tribal space," which is a heterogeneous aggregate whose members produce feelings of social solidarity, identity definitions, and transitory cultural worlds by sharing common consumer interests. The digital tribal space is a space of communication flows from which a specific consumer discourse emerges more than a group of individuals. This digital discourse has the following four characteristics: i) it is born and develops in specific Internet environments (blog, forum, wiki, social network, and so forth.); ii) it focuses on discussions of certain brands; iii) it focuses on particular topics of opinion debate that is logically and semantically linked to brands; iv) it has a specific "narrative costume" Chu and Kim (2018). Nevertheless, a company's participation in digital tribal space operations has limits since personal comments or suggestions from consumers

often are regarded as more trustworthy than business messages. Overall, when followers consider themselves part of a digital space/community that an opinion leader leads, it clearly identifies the opinion leader's leadership ability.

In addition, opinion leader leadership strength comes from their credibility and reliable reputation. Credibility has been linked to other factors like persuasion, social influence, mastery, and the veracity of the message, according to earlier research on leadership and impact (Maria et al., 2019). According to the findings of this study, the reputations of opinion leaders in the discussion community explain why e-WOM significantly influences consumer purchase choices. Thus, opinion leaders remain critical influencers of the virtual community on buying preferences. Tien et al. (2019) and Cheung et al. (2009) believe that credibility is a crucial component for opinion leaders to develop trust and increase the impact of their influence on the adoption of eWOM. Hussain et al. (2018) further point out that the credibility of an opinion leader is tied to their trustworthiness. Roch (2005) explored opinion leaders' social identities and status and their effect on an online community, among other things. The findings indicate that engagement in online conversations is associated with credibility, and the number of followers measures opinion leaders' influence and credible they are to their followers. Altogether, Chevalier et al. (2006) and Ludwig et al. (2013) illustrate that consumers actively engage in online communities to gather product or service-linked information; therefore, the credibility of opinion leaders reflects the information they give. Casaló et al. (2020) and Lou & Yuan (2019) further demonstrate that people who can offer rich and helpful details about a specific product draw considerable attention and become opinion leaders within social networks.

Moreover, Casaló et al. (2018a) and Roch (2005) argue that opinion leadership is built on social contacts with other online members via ongoing information exchange activities that help individuals gain the trust of their peers and social network friends. Generally, earlier research on opinion leadership has provided valuable insights into opinion leaders' characteristics, legitimacy, and social identities, among other things. Nevertheless, researchers have recently looked at the establishment of opinion leadership. Consequently, more empirical research is needed to understand how dominant opinion leadership is when provoking negative e-WOM. It is also necessary to investigate how opinion leaders influence members' views of online communities. Bhat and Bhat (2020) assert that word-of-mouth recipients consider senders who have personal experience with a particular company's products or services, reasonably objective sources of information, or trusted opinion leaders. Opinion leaders' messages can be positive, negative, or both, eliciting different consumer responses, even though they undoubtedly affect

consumers' purchase intentions. Casaló (2017) notes that consumers rely on and trust word of mouth more than traditional advertising tools.

The study of the previous substantial literature analysis analyzed followers' relationship and familiarity with opinion leaders, the opinion leader's influential role, and their credibility influencing their followers. According to the previously mentioned, opinion leaders and their followers build a stronger relationship and link due to the similarity in their cognitive styles, making the leader-follower communication dyads strive (Johlke & Duhan, 2001). According to Lie et al. (2012), opinion leaders' followers can be influenced by opinion leaders' opinions, changing their attitudes and behavior. The credibility of an opinion leader plays a factor in the way opinion leader followers build their trust in their opinions and follow their steps changing their behavior (Chevalier (2006) and Ludwig (2013). The previously analyzed pieces of literature have assisted in developing a greater knowledge that will help further understand the current study.

1.3. E-WOM and negative E-WOM

The Internet has gradually taken over people's communication tools. The shift from handwritten letters to the preponderant usage of emails, blogs, chat rooms, discussion forums, online communities, and social media was the catalyst for the entire phenomenon (Lis & Neßler, 2014). Like all other forms of communication, word of mouth (WOM) has evolved into electronic WOM. The informal exchange of information about products or services between two or more people—none of whom are the brand's agents or marketing sources—is referred to as e-WOM, according to Li and Wu (2013). A further definition of the phenomena of engaging in e-WOM by Chang and Wang (2019) is the readiness to receive and disseminate market knowledge to others when utilizing online platforms.

Fundamentally, electronic word of mouth is a significant driving factor in this world. Ismagilova et al. (2020) and Dellarocas (2003) perceive word of mouth (WOM) as more persuasive and informative than other correspondence sources, propositions, or claims. As a result, this has enhanced the companies' devotion to customer respect and product quality. Likewise, most potential customers use previous buyers' and experts' (opinion leaders') feedback before buying new items, goods, or services. Thus, e-WOM communication remains a critical point of contact and direction for consumers (Zhao et al., 2020). Also, e-WOM impacts consumers' opinions, ideas, and intentions to re-buy services or goods. As e-WOM communication is more sensitive than other types of communication due to the ideals of its quickness, directness, and the broad audience that it covers. With increased internet access and

freedom of information sharing, online clients can affect the assurance of customers' trust by communicating e-WOM through reviews (Al-J a'afreh & Al-Adaileh, 2020). Equally, companies have invested adequately in their operational electronic systems to determine the impacts of e-WOM in retaining and attracting new customers.

Moreover, Al-Gasawneh and Al-Adamat (2020) demonstrate that many potential customers can obtain a company's product and its reviews online. E-WOM acts as a buzz promotion that may get viral if the message entices or properly engages the viewers (Tsai & Bui, 2021). However, understanding what drives customers to share or pass on e-WOM and what motivates potential clients to identify an online direct buyer requires more research (Lee & Hong, 2019). Interestingly, potential clients typically assume that internet opinions, reviews, and terminations are accurate and actively seek control zones. Lee and Hong (2019) asked how audits of two online libraries influenced their duties considering data from two bookstores accessible in their research. Following up on their earlier findings, they discovered that such online communication considerably impacted the purchasing decisions of various consumers. The two parties engaged in the information distribution process are the opinion leader or the source and the opinion seeker or the receiver. In support of the previous findings, Chu & Chen (2019) found that opinion leaders' e-WOM affects purchasing rates since they gather the trust of web users who embrace online buying goods and services. Accordingly, they jeopardize the shopping patterns and invention acceptance and indicate product quality and attributes that further affect potential online clients of a product.

Undeniably, e-WOM has both advantages and disadvantages for businesses. Park et al. (2021) and Balter and Butman (2005) demonstrate that WOM has authentic assessments and genuine details about a product or service, making it a significant resource for consumers to decide on buying items. Allsop et al. (2007) and Roy et al. (2019) further support this by demonstrating that consumers' generated information is more reliable than marketers'. Also, consumers value information generated from personal sources like friends, family members, experts, or other acquaintances' (Cakim, 2009; Jansen et al., 2009). Moreover, when the e-WOM is positive, it benefits brands since the information is easily conveyed among clients at considerable costs. Positive experience mainly leads to increased sales.

Personal sources of information impact the customer's interpersonal relationships. Increased accessibility to the Internet has tremendously enhanced the sharing and publicizing of customers' post-purchase experiences via online communication channels. Online customer and opinion leaders' evaluations are one kind of electronic word-of-mouth that provides information

or ideas to customers about buying certain goods and services (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Viglia et al., 2016). According to Yu et al. (2019), E-WOM plays an essential role in the decision-making process regarding purchasing products and services. Online evaluations and comments have the power to impact every potential customer online globally. Also, the web environment reinforces other users to gather and share their perceptions. Altogether, these intensify exchanges and permit individuals seeking views on the Internet to get consumers with consumer expertise to provide relevant information about desired product categories. While we can encounter different types of e-WOM (negative or positive), these may affect consumers' decisions based on whether the comment will be negative or positive.

Accordingly, choices on what to consume are often made in the context of other people (Cheung & To, 2019). According to Ryu and Park (2020), consumer unhappiness has previously been connected to negative e-WOM. Kuo and Nakhata (2019) further reveal that unsatisfied online customers are more likely to propagate negative e-WOM. The dissatisfied clients can voice their frustrations in three different ways, each influencing the company's performance differently. The Yuan et al. (2020) categorize negative word-of-mouth communication into two forms based on why it is being shared; those antagonistic complaints intended to retaliate against a seller and those planning to warn others against purchasing an item due to the perceived poor value. Thus, consumers should understand the forms of e-WOM to avoid misjudging the quality or value of a product.

According to (Chu & Chen, 2019), there are four reasons why individuals may promote negative e-WOM through the Internet. These include the desire to prevent others from experiencing a similar issue, the drive to share their thoughts, the endeavor to ease cognitive dissonance, and venting out their unhappiness, among other things. Notably, these aspects form the basis of online word-of-mouth interaction. Thus, negative e-WOM spreads faster, and opinion seekers pay more attention to it, substantially impacting a company's bottom line and reputation (Yuan et al., 2020). Remarkably, the negative e-WOM may influence clients' attitudes and product evaluations more than positive information. The findings of the literature mentioned above explain how negative e-WOM can be spread very quickly. When negative information about a company reaches a large audience, it may impact the organization's sales, revenue, market share, and reputation. Organizations that do not respond effectively when negative e-WOM is sent, the spread of negative e-WOM is likely to accelerate further. Occasionally, negative e-WOM jeopardizes an enterprise's survival, and in these cases, crisis management must tackle the difficulties (Kuo & Nakhata, 2019). In this way, the companies may address some problems associated with e-WOM. However, despite several studies recommending

strategies for businesses to respond to bad e-WOM, stopping the spread of negative e-WOM remains challenging. In their research, Ryu and Park (2020) observed that consumers who had previously dealt with a company or brand are less likely to respond negatively to unfavorable information. Consequently, some businesses attempt to keep customers engaged by releasing promotional information consistently across various communication channels to reinforce the brand's favorable image and influence consumers' thoughts about their goods. Thus, companies that actively resolve bad e-WOM may reduce its impact.

Moreover, understanding consumers' engagement in communicating positive or negative word of mouth is also helpful. Consumer involvement in e-WOM differs from individual to individual, and at its core, the difference comes from the willingness to participate in receiving and sharing market information. According to López and Sicilia (2014), participants of e-WOM could be categorized into opinion-seeking and opinion-giving. The opinion-giving group involves the customers who post their thoughts on social media. The opinion seekers seek others who have voiced their ideas and experience using a product or service. Contrastingly to opinion-seeking groups, consumers search social media for opinions shared by others. Participants of each group could play the role of the other in specific fields and areas. However, in some cases, opinion leaders could also be group one participants on topics or products that are out of their expertise. So, they could be found searching for other people's opinions to help their decision-making process and vice versa (Ridings et al., 2006). Ultimately, this may reinforce their influence on a client's purchase decision.

Remarkably, different motives drive people's involvement in e-WOM. Bhat and Bhat (2020) found that social interaction, economic incentives, and self-worth enhancement are motives for such behavior. To no one's surprise, social interaction is the leading player in the social media structure. Once consumers figured that there was a possibility to also benefit from these interactions, economic participation in e-WOM became more interesting (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Being called or considered a "consumption expert" or a "brilliant shopper" by others stimulates costumers' self-assurance to further involvement in e-WOM (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). However, the motivation for communicating positive WOM may differ from sharing negative WOM. According to Sundaram et al. (1998), dissonance reduction, vengeance, altruism, and anxiety reduction are motives that could be associated with negative e- WOM. Other consumers share negative e-WOM to express their dissatisfaction with a brand product/service, hoping to receive a solution or relieve their anger and anxiety (Verhagen et al., 2013). These people feel they have a duty to share their experiences so other consumers would not need to undergo the same bad experiences or services (Verhagen et al., 2013). People also

feel they belong to an online community, and by sharing and discussing brands' products or services, they are fulfilling their role as members of this society. Sharing negative e-WOM is another method for getting firms' attention and encouraging them to change based on user feedback (Verhagen et al., 2013). Hence, a business may study these motives and use them to minimize the potential negative influence on operations and profitability and to grasp how and why the negative e-WOM spreads and its impact.

Kim et al. (2016) indicate that brands cannot control negative e-WOM once it happens. Consumer evaluation is already more highly affected by negative information than by receiving positive information, as many studies suggested above. Kim et al. (2016) and Garg & Pandey (2021) explain that a negative e-WOM is very powerful, it affects consumer trust and influences attitudes and behaviors toward a specific brand. Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) further support this by showing that positive and negative e-WOM affects brands' relationships with consumers. It is quick to spread to consumers on social media as the Internet gives the privilege to many people to participate in e-WOM anonymously. Many individuals also can join in expressing their true feelings while remaining unidentified (Joinson, 2001). Likewise, participants seem to have a "false sense of security," making them feel untouchable since the interaction is online and parties are not face-to-face. Thus, it remains challenging to control the negative e-WOM.

As negative e-WOM is usually a result of a bad experience or purchase of a product or service from a brand, adverse e-WOM effects are more prominent than positive ones. Hence it is found to have more persuasive effects on consumers than the positive e-WOM (Evgeniy et al., 2019; Kim, 2009; Lee & Hong, 2019; Park & Lee, 2009). Considering these salient effects, consumers tend to pay more attention to negative e-WOM to avoid undergoing or experiencing the same risks (Haugtvedt et al., 2005; Bhat & Bhat, 2020). Research shows that negative e-WOM harms multiple organizational measures like consumer acquisition (Sharp, 2018; Sharp et al., 2012), customer retention and loyalty (East et al., 2008), and corporate reputation (Hsu & Lu, 2007). Therefore, organizations should apply tactics that would improve customer experience. Nevertheless, Nguyen et al. (2019) argue that this phenomenon will require a better understanding of the online community, the role of opinion leaders in influencing their followers, and how the negative e-WOM impacts the repurchasing intention and brand trust.

Conversely, opinion leaders' negative e-WOM may damage brands differently, and the relationship opinion leaders have with the consumer may affect customers' decisions. If an unsatisfied opinion leader shares the adverse experience, it may lead to increased avoidance from the brands, products, services, and the brand itself. Misinterpreted or incorrect details may

quickly spread during online exchanges on a brand experience (Phua et al., 2017). Negative e-WOM hinders a company's plan for successful marketing. Besides, the increased sharing of negative information online makes it difficult for brands to measure the extent of the harm caused or determine counteractive measures for any specific problem (Ryu & Park, 2020). Therefore, this adversely affects an organization's overall performance, and the spreading of the negative e-WOM by unsatisfied customers may lead other consumers to avoid being predisposed to buy goods or services from the brand.

A comprehensive analysis of the previous literature regarding e-WOM and the effects of negative e-WOM was done to understand the topic better. Chang and Wang (2019) described the act of involvement in e-WOM as the readiness to receive and send information about the market to other users online. Opinion leaders' e-WOM is a great help to their followers' decision-making process and affects their repurchasing behavior (Ridings et al., 2006). Kim et al. (2016) and Garg & Pandey (2021) argue that negative e-WOM has powerful effects on consumers' brand trust and influences their attitudes and behaviors toward it. The speed of negative e-WOM spreading is expeditiously, and customers who seek opinions are substantially impacted by it, causing the brand to lose customer satisfaction and trust (Yuan et al., 2020). Information analyzed from the previous research will provide a greater extent to understanding the current study and the spread of the negative e-WOM, as well as the importance of the relationship between opinion leaders and their followers.

1.4. Information Adaptation Model

Sussman and Siegal (2003) created (IAM) the Information Adoption Model to learn more about the factors that affect people's decision to adopt information. To describe information adoption behavior, the IAM considers internal and external elements. These criteria formed of three primary variables, Argument Quality, Information Credibility, and Information Usefulness, which were developed from the Technology Acceptance Model and the Elaboration Likelihood Model. Research concentrates on rapidly increasing information adoption in environments such as social media and online communities. IAM is used by Christy, Matthew, and Neil (2008) to investigate the variables influencing how online opinions are adopted in online communities. Four aspects of argument quality (relevancy, timeliness, correctness, and comprehensiveness), two aspects of source credibility (source expertise and source trustworthiness), the usefulness of information, and information adoption are the variables employed in this empirical study. The Openrice platform, which is used for sharing information about restaurants and food in Hong Kong, was the setting for this study's survey and testing of the research model. The intended

respondents were those who used this site and were impacted by the comments posted. This study, which relied on 154 valid questionnaire responses, concluded that only the relevance and comprehensiveness of the argument quality significantly affected the information's usefulness. These effects also significantly impact consumers' decisions to adopt information in online communities.

By including new variables in the initial IAM, Dong et al. (2016) examined the impact of C2C on consumers' purchasing decisions in online communities. The study's survey was answered by 234 students from an important institution in China. The findings demonstrate that argument quality, source credibility, and tie strength are all positively correlated with assessing a product's usefulness and consequently influence the buying choice. By including perceived travel risk into IAM, Tseng & Wang (2016) examine how perceived risk affects how people accept information from travel websites. Potential tourists who had visited travel websites responded to the questionnaire, and ultimately 212 distinct legitimate responses were collected. The findings demonstrate that argument quality and source credibility significantly influence consumers' intention to adopt new information through perceived usefulness. Also, perceived risk influences information adoption intention both directly and indirectly through perceived information usefulness, and that perceived argument quality and source credibility moderate the relationship between perceived usefulness and source credibility. Erkan & Evans (2016) integrate the IAM and associated TRA components to investigate the impact of e-WOM through social media on customers' purchasing intentions. Information quality, information credibility, information needs, attitude toward information, information usefulness, information adoption, and purchase intention were among the variables in the study's model. 384 students in UK institutions were participants in the study's survey. After examining the data, this study reveals that the adoption of information and attitudes toward information impact purchase intentions, as does the usefulness of information on the adoption of information. Meanwhile, it has been discovered that the usefulness of information is influenced by the quality of information, information credibility, and information needs.

By introducing additional variables and swapping out the mediated variable of the usefulness of information with the perceived credibility of e-WOM reviews, Cheung et al. (2009) analyze the driving forces behind the adoption of e-WOM. An online survey was used to test the research model, and the respondents were from Myetone, a well-known Chinese online consumer discussion forum. The findings show that two normative variables, suggestion consistency, recommendation rating, and three informational determinants, argument strength,

source credibility, and confirmation with prior opinion, all influence e-WOM review adoption via perceived e-WOM review credibility.

Using IAM and user satisfaction theories, Jin et al. (2009) created a model to investigate how social networks encourage users to use the information within the network and to keep using the network. A web poll that was completed by 240 users of a Chinese university's bulletin board system served as the model's validation. The findings indicate that source credibility and the disconfirmation of source credibility impact satisfaction and further influence continuing intention. In contrast, information quality and source credibility, directly and indirectly, impact information usefulness. Li (2012) combines social influence theory and IAM to examine how persuasion affects the acceptance of information systems. For the survey, a questionnaire was created, and 123 responses were accepted. The findings show that two persuasive message characteristics—source credibility and argument quality—significantly impact social influence, affective response, and cognitive response. Affective response, cognitive response, and behavior are also shown to be interconnected, and the moderating effect of international social influence on cognitive response and behavior intention is confirmed.

Moreover, Chen, Chen, and Hsu (2011) examine the adoption of e-WOM by consumers in online communities. The study model is based on the IAM plus three other factors, including message trustworthiness, consistency of recommendations, and confirmation of prior belief. The information was acquired by online surveys distributed to a specific online community in Taiwan that specialized in knowledge about computer-related products, and 466 of the responses were approved. The results demonstrate that message quality and source credibility influence the information's usefulness and further influence its adoption. Message quality, source credibility, confirmation with prior belief, and recommendation consistency all significantly influence the message's credibility, which in turn influences both information adoption directly and indirectly through information usefulness. Gunawan & Huarng (2015), to understand the effects of viral marketing on customers' purchase intentions via social networks and other media is crucial, they used IAM, the Theory of Reason and Action (TRA), perceived risk, and social interaction combined. The respondents to the study were Indonesian college students majoring in various fields who were internet users and used at least three major social networking and media platforms (such as Facebook, Youtube, and Instagram). The findings show that perceived risk harms behavioral intentions and that perceived risk impacts users' attitudes toward the utility of information and their actions. Social influence also affects conduct via subjective norms.

A comprehensive analysis of the previous literature regarding IAM was done to understand the topic better. The main reason for choosing the IAM for this study is that it has been used extensively in earlier research and has demonstrated solid explanatory power in areas like online reviews and repurchasing decisions (Cheung et al., 2008; Sussman & Siegal, 2003). This research model can explain how people acquire information and subsequently alter their intents and behaviors, which will assist the aim of this study to explore how negative electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), provoked by opinion leaders, impacts fast fashion consumers' brand trust and repurchasing intention.

2. OPINION LEADERS' NEGATIVE ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH IMPACTS ON FAST FASHION CUSTOMERS' BRAND TRUST AND REPURCHASING INTENTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main goal of the methodology and objectives are presented in this part of the research paper. Based on the literature analysis, a research model has been constructed, and appropriate hypotheses have been set. Furthermore, a research questionnaire is created to organize data collection.

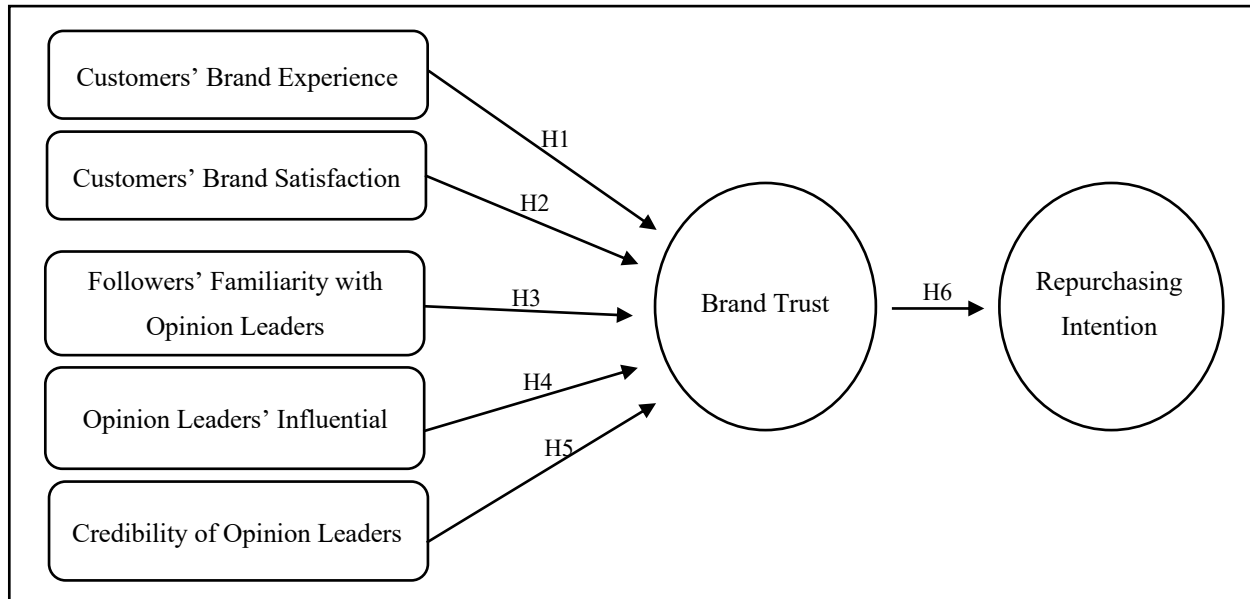
Main objectives:

1. Based on the Literature review, build a research framework
2. Formulate hypotheses
3. Define the appropriate research audience for conducting research
4. Define sample size and proper research tools

2.1. Research Framework and Hypotheses Development

After analyzing the literature to understand the topic better, the IAM was chosen to implement and construct the framework for this research. It is essential to mention that the research framework was built to assist the current study better. The choice of the IAM came after further understanding its ability to further explain how the general public accepts information promoted by an influencer and subsequently alters their intents and behaviors (Cheung et al., 2008; Sussman & Siegal, 2003). In the current research, followers' familiarity with opinion leaders, the opinion leader's influential role and credibility on their followers, and customers' brand experience and satisfaction are the Argument Quality and the Information Credibility. Information Usefulness is represented in the brand trust variable as how the respondents processed the information and found it useful to themselves. And finally, repurchasing intention represents the change in the behavior, which is the Information Adaptation. Figure 1 illustrates the research framework of this study.

Figure 1. *Research Framework*



In conclusion, based on the literature analysis and research framework of the study, appropriate hypotheses have been set.

Customer perceptions of a brand are crucial to the success of fast fashion products. Tien et al. (2019) and Curtis et al. (2011) discussed the relationship between pleased customers and corporate profit, highlighting the possibility of these customers, regardless of having a pleasing experience with the brand, to buy goods and services from different brands and service providers. In other words, a customer who has had a pleasant experience and is satisfied with the brand and its product doesn't necessarily mean they will not buy from another brand. This raises the question about other types of customers, who may have a neutral experience and satisfaction level with the brand, on how they will change their repurchasing decision if they are exposed to a negative e-WOM from someone they trust. Mashur et al. (2019) argued that satisfied customers improve business operations. However, unsatisfied customers may negatively review a brand due to a particular experience. Moreover, dissatisfied consumers combined with N e-WOM of opinion leaders may negatively generate more N e-WOM about the brand (Li & Wu, 2013; Sandhu et al., 2021). According to Lee et al. (2010), there is a direct positive correlation between the trust experienced by consumers and the intention to repurchase from a brand. The current study expects to detect a similar relationship between higher trust perceptions and higher repurchase intention. Therefore, this study stays consistent with previous research and aims to provide a deeper understanding of the changes in customers' trust and repurchasing intention levels when exposed to N e-WOM by opinion leaders, depending on their trust in the opinion leader in comparison to their previous brand experience and satisfaction.

H1: The better the customer brand experience, the lower the negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

H2: The higher the customer brand satisfaction, the lower the negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

Customers typically trust the information about brands or products when provided by their friends, families, celebrities, known experts within a market, anonymous consumers, and those with affiliations other than the companies or the marketers (Liu, 2006; Dellarocas et al., 2007). Some online selling platforms permit e-WOM among anonymous users (Sen & Lerman, 2007; Dellarocas, 2003), while other social media enhance e-WOM among familiar groups. Goldsmith and Horowitz (2006) argue that anonymity lets opinion leaders share their perceptions comfortably, thus giving a high quantity of e-WOM. Still, Wallace et al. (2009); Chu and Choi (2011) demonstrate that familiarity among consumers and opinion leaders makes the provided e-WOM highly trusted and reliable. Therefore, consistent with previous research, the current study suggests that the level of familiarity followers have with the opinion leader correlates with the effects of opinion leaders' N e-WOM on customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention.

H3: The higher the followers' familiarity with the opinion leader, the higher the negative effects there are on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

Previous knowledge shows that different aspects of opinion leaders influence their followers' behavior. Chetioui et al. (2020) demonstrated that attitudes toward fashion influencers positively affect brand attitude and consumer purchase intention. Moreover, understanding the importance of opinion leadership role in the diffusion of related information in their communities make this role an essential aspect of marketing communications (Casaló et al., 2018). Consumers show a higher trust rate in expert opinion leaders' feedback on products than other recommendations from their families or friends (Sahi et al., 2016). The ability of an opinion leader to persuade and convince their followers that they are a person of expertise in their field plays a vital role in their influential role. Therefore, the current study suggests that the effects of opinion leaders' negative electronic word of mouth on consumers' brand trust and repurchasing intention are linked to the influential role of opinion leaders on their followers.

H4: The more influential the opinion leader, the more negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

(Chevalier et al., 2006; Ludwig et al., 2013) Argue that online-opinion seekers tend to be part of online communities happens in the aim of gathering information about a product or service; however, the credibility of opinion leaders will mirror the information the online opinion seekers will receive in this community. According to (Chen et al., 2017), following a particular credible opinion leader depends on the opinion seeker and their perceived attributes of the specific opinion leader and whether they wish to follow them not to achieve their interests. The ability of the opinion seeker to identify whether the opinion leader is knowledgeable and neutral in their opinion will play an essential role in their judgment of the credibility of the opinion leader they choose to follow. Therefore, this study expects to discover a similar relation between opinion leaders' credibility and the effects of their N e-WOM on customer brand trust and repurchasing intention. Additionally, the current study will mainly focus on the customer/follower's ability to identify different credibility discriptions of the opinion leaders and their intention to spread N e-WOM about the brand.

H5: The more credible the opinion leader, the more negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

Finally, the existing literature demonstrates various perspectives on the relationship between consumer trust and repurchases. According to Lee et al. (2006) and Teichmann (2021), customers who trust brands repurchase goods or services. However, previous studies have struggled to establish a significant direct effect of consumers' brand trust influence and its influence on their repurchasing attitudes and behaviors toward the brand (Mittal and Kamakura, 2001; Larson et al., 2021). Overall, the current study assumes that customers' level of trust in the brand entity and its products directly influences the customer's intention to make another purchase from the brand.

H6: Customer's brand trust directly influences their repurchasing intention after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

2.2. Research Methods and Instruments

A quantitative research method was used for data analysis of the present research. For several reasons, the research will be conducted using a quantitative data collection method. First, this specific study strategy is regarded as a formal and impartial procedure. On the other hand, it is particularly helpful for researching a large sample size. Additionally, acquired data are employed in the quantitative research method to derive specific conclusions and measure occurrences, which can test and examine cause-and-effect correlations. As current research

focuses on exploring the effects of negative electronic word-of-mouth, the best way to reach the research audience is to use an online survey method. The respondents will be contacted through social media platforms such as Facebook (Facebook groups), LinkedIn, Instagram, and WhatsApp. During the survey, the respondents will be exposed to a stimulus which is a video of an opinion leader's negative word of mouth on the selected brand. The respondents' data reports will showcase the effects of the opinion leader's negative electronic word-of-mouth on the research variables.

2.3. Research Object and Respondents

In order to ensure the accurate analysis of the present research, a specific brand from the fast fashion industry and negative e-WOM have been chosen. The chosen brand is (Zara), and the respondents of this study are its customers who have previously purchased products from it. Zara is one of many brands that are dominating the fast fashion industry. Respondent's ages will vary between the ranges of 18-40. The choice of the Spanish apparel retailer Zara came from its global popularity among both males and females from all age groups. The largest company in the Inditex group has gotten much attention due to its massive success in the past decades. Zara is well-known for getting the trendiest outfits from the catwalks of different famous fashion designers replicated, at a swift pace and low price, before any other stores (Financial Times, 2004; International Herald Tribune, 2005). In support (Mo, Z. 2015) chose to study Zara and H&M, considering how famous and international these fast fashion retailers are. Given that Zara is a "quick fashion shop" with significant overseas sales, making it a relevant subject for this study.

Additionally, it is advised to use Zara as a sample based on the criterion of geographic closeness because the brand is of European descent. Moreover, the success of the chosen brand outperformed other fast fashion businesses, like H&M, which introduces 2,000–4,000 new items each year; in contrast, Zara can accomplish more significant numbers with a quicker production rate and much lower costs (Clatation, N. 2007). Considering all these attributes and how known, attractive, and used Zara is by many worldwide, Zara is a perfect subject for testing this research.

In this study, the given example of an opinion leader and their negative e-WOM is a video by Deutsche Welle (Planet A) on Zara. As mentioned before, an opinion leader could be a person or an entity because they frequently provide information and analysis on current events, news channels can be regarded as opinion leaders because viewers may turn to them for advice on interpreting and comprehending these events. News outlets can also influence public opinion

by selecting which stories to cover and how to convey information. The channel's viewpoints and ideas may also influence people who use news channels as a source of information. Deutsche Welle (DW) is an international broadcaster in Germany and one of the most successful and current international media organizations. They offer journalism information in 32 languages, allowing readers worldwide to create their own judgments. On the other hand, in 2021, DW hit a new record of 289 million user contacts per week, up 40 million from the previous year. The first time that online options surpass TV formats. One hundred twenty-two million user contacts each week are made through DW's web services. Facebook and YouTube are the two most reliable web platforms. Every week, 117 million people use television, while 50 million remain listeners to the radio. Moreover, the news channel can reach a vast audience internationally and in different languages. As well as its numbers of users and viewers clearly show that people trust the channel and the information provided.

2.4. Sample Size

Estimating the sample size and the target sample is crucial before starting a study. In the current study, a non-probability convenience sampling method was employed. The online survey was distributed randomly to participants through social media websites, emphasizing young adults and adults. Therefore, most of the questionnaire's target audience is social media users. 263 respondents in total took part in the poll. Since there will be plenty of cases to examine and compare, this number of respondents is the most appropriate for the current study. The number of respondents who participated in related studies has been looked at to assess the proper sample size needed for the accurate execution of the current research. To determine the sample size, eight studies in all have been chosen. Consequently, about 263 individuals are needed for the present study (see table 1).

Table 1. *Calculation of sample size of the study*

No.	Year	Authors	The topic of the article	Number of respondents
1.	2009	Ashley & Leonard	Betrayed by the Buzz? Covert Content and Consumer–Brand Relationships	n= 121
2.	2019	Jiménez-Castillo & Sánchez-Fernández	The role of digital influencers in brand recommendation: Examining their impact on engagement, expected value and purchase intention	n= 280
3.	2006	Goldsmitha & Horowitz	Measuring Motivations for Online Opinion Seeking	n= 309
4.	2019	Ali & Bhasin	Understanding Customer Repurchase Intention in E-commerce: Role of Perceived Price, Delivery Quality, and Perceived Value	n= 350
5.	2020	Cheung & To	The Effect of Consumer Perceptions of the Ethics of Retailers on Purchase Behavior and Word-of-Mouth: The Moderating Role of Ethical Beliefs	n= 399
6.	2020	Tsai & Bui	Impact of word of mouth via social media on consumer intention to purchase cruise travel products	n= 305
7.	2013	Verhagen, Nauta, & Feldberg	Negative online word-of-mouth: Behavioral indicator or emotional release?	n= 95
8.	2018	Yu, Liu, & Lee	Consumers' responses to negative publicity: the influence of culture on information search and negative word-of-mouth	n= 240
The average number of respondents				≈ 263

2.5 Questionnaire design and Measurement Scales

The questionnaire was provided in English to allow diverse participants to deliver relevant answers and satisfactory conditions for the survey using Google Forms (see annex). In order to create the questionnaire for conducting research, different measuring scales have been adapted from existing literature, listed in table 2. All of the used scale items were successful and can be used for other research purposes related to the topic. All seven variables that will be used in the current research are presented in (see Table 2), involving a description of the construct questions and the adapted measurement type. The measuring scales have been adapted from existing literature, listed in Table 2.

Table 2. *Constructs of the questionnaire*

Variable	Description	Measurement	References
Costumer's brand experience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I have enjoyed my overall experience with Zara. 2. As a whole, I have not enjoyed my experience with Zara. 3. How would you rate your overall experience of Zara? 	Three, seven-point Likert-type statements	Maxham and Netemeyer (2003).
Costumer's brand satisfaction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I am satisfied with my overall experience with Zara. 2. As a whole, I am not satisfied with Zara. 3. How satisfied are you overall with the quality of Zara? 	Three, seven-point Likert-type statements	Maxham and Netemeyer (2003).
Opinion leaders' familiarity with their followers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not at all familiar / extremely familiar. 2. Definitely do not recognize / definitely recognize. 3. Definitely have not heard of them before / definitely have heard of them before. 	Three, seven-point semantic differential scale	Simonin and Ruth (1998)
Opinion leaders' influential role	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. good/bad 2. influential/uninfluential 3. favorable/unfavorable 4. positive/negative 5. reputable / not reputable 6. dislike the opinion leader a lot / like the opinion leader a lot 	The scales consist of various bi-polar adjectives, a seven-point semantic differential scale	Rifon et al. (2004),
Opinion leaders' credibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. not an expert/expert 2. inexperienced/experienced 3. unknowledgeable/knowledgeable 4. unqualified/qualified 5. unpaid/paid 	The scale is composed of multiple bi-polar adjectives, seven-point semantic differential scale	Ohanian (1991)

Continuation of Table 2

<p>Brand trust (Before & after being presented to the negative e-WOM of the opinion leaders)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I trust this brand. 2. I rely on this brand. 3. This is an honest brand. 4. This brand is safe. 	<p>Four, seven-point Likert-type statements</p>	<p>Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001)</p>
<p>Repurchasing intention (Before & after being presented to the negative e-WOM of the opinion leaders)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If you need a clothing item in the future, how likely are you to try Zara? 2. If you ever purchase a clothing item again, how likely are you to buy it from Zara? 3. How likely are you to revisit Zara for your shopping needs? 	<p>Three, seven-point Likert-type items</p>	<p>Dutta, Biswas, and Grewal (2007)</p>

3. ANALYZES AND RESULTS

An online survey was conducted to gather data on the effects of negative electronic word-of-mouth on customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention. 263 participants took part in the survey, with 36.4% of them being male and 59.3% being female. The respondents' ages varied between 18 and 40 years old, with 56.1% of them being under 26 representing the most significant number of the survey's respondents. To ensure that the questionnaire was accessible to a diverse range of participants, it was provided in English using Google Forms (check annex). Participants were contacted through social media platforms such as Facebook groups, LinkedIn, Instagram, and WhatsApp to invite them to participate in the survey. During the survey, participants were exposed to a stimulus in the form of a video of an opinion leader delivering negative word-of-mouth about a selected brand. This was done to measure the effects of the opinion leader's negative electronic word-of-mouth on the participants' trust in the brand and their intention to repurchase from the brand in the future. The survey was conducted online and it was completely anonymous.

3.1. Validity Analyzes

Factor analysis was used to evaluate validity. Responses from all 263 respondents were used to test the 34 items. The correlation matrix showed many correlation coefficients higher than .30 ($r > 0.3$) in all instances. Furthermore, KMO and Bartlett also showcased promising results. Notably, the KMO test of Sampling Adequacy revealed a level of 0.918, which is a satisfactory result, and the Sig. of Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was 0.001, which is also a good result (see table 3). Additionally, the Autocorrelation matrix's diagonal elements with an 'a' superscript revealed that $MSA > 0.5$ in every instance and showed high sampling adequacy. In addition, a number of factors were identified using the principal component analysis with Varimax rotation. Then Anti-image matrices, Communalities, and Total variance explained tables were checked for distribution, considering a value of 0.5 MSA, Extraction at 0.322, and component at 0.4. No variables were omitted. The Communalities table demonstrated extraction levels greater than 0.4 for all items, demonstrating that all the items are statistically significant (see table 3a.).

Table 3. *KMO and Bartlett's Test table*

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.918
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	11478.597
	df	561
	Sig.	<.001

Table 3a. *Communalities Table*

Communalities		
	Initial	Extraction
Repurchasing Intent Before 1	1.000	.851
Repurchasing Intent Before 2	1.000	.883
Repurchasing Intent Before 3	1.000	.833
Experience 1	1.000	.769
Experience 2	1.000	.906
Experience 3	1.000	.824
Satisfaction 1	1.000	.822
Satisfaction 2	1.000	.900
Satisfaction 3	1.000	.860
Trust Before 1	1.000	.913
Trust Before 2	1.000	.790
Trust Before 3	1.000	.863
Trust Before 4	1.000	.856
Familiarity 1	1.000	.923
Familiarity 2	1.000	.967
Familiarity 3	1.000	.961
Influential Role 1	1.000	.776
Influential Role 2	1.000	.777

Continuation of Table 3a.

Influential Role 3	1.000	.915
Influential Role 4	1.000	.813
Influential Role 5	1.000	.829
Influential Role 6	1.000	.806
Credibility 1	1.000	.899
Credibility 2	1.000	.939
Credibility 3	1.000	.906
Credibility 4	1.000	.872
Credibility 5	1.000	.920
Repurchasing Intent After 1	1.000	.913
Repurchasing Intent After 2	1.000	.904
Repurchasing Intent After 3	1.000	.915
Trust After 1	1.000	.910
Trust After 2	1.000	.913
Trust After 3	1.000	.922
Trust After 4	1.000	.885
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.		

3.2. Reliability Analysis

With the use of Cronbach's alpha values, the variables' internal consistency was confirmed at $\alpha=.819$ (see table 4). It aided in defining the reliability of study variables constructed from similar items measuring the same construct. The scale's reliability is measured using a numerical coefficient that spans from 0 to 1, and the higher the score, the more reliable the scale is. A coefficient percentage higher than 0.7 is a satisfactory level for the construct. Cronbach's alpha values were observed for the items to see whether the present study's variables meet these criteria. According to (table 4a), all 9 items demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with values more than 0.7.

Table 4. *Cronbach's Alpha overall value*

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.819	9

Table 4a. *Cronbach's Alpha value*

Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Repurchasing Intent Before	35.6695	37.741	.684	.779
Experience	35.3552	38.081	.785	.769
Satisfaction	35.3184	37.548	.808	.765
Trust Before	35.9227	37.987	.798	.768
Familiarity	35.6721	43.580	.197	.855
Influential Role	35.5029	45.978	.269	.826
Credibility	35.4541	45.740	.330	.819
Repurchasing Intent After	36.7342	40.544	.584	.793
Trust After	37.5168	42.788	.407	.814

3.3. Hypothesis Testing

Firstly, the relationship between customer brand experience and customers' brand trust after exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM needs to be checked.

H1: The better the customer brand experience, the lower the negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

Correlation analysis has been decided to analyze the change in the dependent variable (customers' brand trust) caused by our independent variable (customer brand experience). The first thing to be observed is Pearson's R-value, the correlation coefficient. Table 5 showcases the Pearson Correlation value of 0.375 in this instance. Pearson's r ranges from +1 to -1, with +1 indicating the highest possible positive correlation and -1 denoting the highest possible negative

correlation. No linear correlation exists at all when the value is 0. H1 Pearson's value result of 0.375 shows a reasonably weak positive correlation. Although the correlation is relatively minor, customer brand experience decreases the negative effect on customers' brand trust after exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM. Additionally, the 2-tailed significance value, which in this instance is 0.001, is of interest to us. The usual alpha value is 0.05, indicating that the H1 correlation is highly significant and not simply a product of random sampling error.

As a result of applying correlation analysis, H1 was accepted and proved that the better the customer brand experience, the lower the negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM. $R=0.375$ and $p<0.001$.

Table 5. Correlation table of H1

Correlations			
		Experience	Trust After
Experience	Pearson Correlation	1	.375**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	263	263
Trust After	Pearson Correlation	.375**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	263	263
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Second, checking the relationship between customer brand satisfaction and customers' brand trust after exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

H2: The higher the customer brand satisfaction, the lower the negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

Similarly, correlation analysis was chosen to investigate the change in the dependent variable (customers' brand trust) caused by our independent variable (customer brand satisfaction). The correlation coefficient, or Pearson's R-value, should be noted first. The Pearson Correlation score in this situation is 0.454, as shown in Table 6. The range of Pearson's r is +1 to -1, with +1 marking the maximum possible positive correlation and -1 the maximum possible negative correlation. If the value is 0, then there is absolutely no linear relationship. A somewhat

slight positive correlation may be seen by looking at Pearson's value result of 0.454. Customer brand satisfaction lessens the detrimental effect on customers' brand trust after exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM, despite the relatively small link. We are also interested in the 2-tailed significance value, which in this case is 0.001. The correlation of H2 is extremely significant and not just a byproduct of random sampling error, according to the standard alpha value of 0.05.

By using correlation analysis, it was determined that H2 was true and proved that the better the customer brand satisfaction, the lower the negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM. $R=0.454$ and $p<0.001$.

Table 6. Correlation table of H2

Correlations			
		Satisfaction	Trust After
Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	1	.454**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	263	263
Trust After	Pearson Correlation	.454**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	263	263
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Next, testing the relationship between followers' familiarity with the opinion leader and the customers' brand trust after exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

H3: The higher the followers' familiarity with the opinion leader, the higher the negative effects there are on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

To help predict how changes in the dependent variable (customers' brand trust) are affected by the independent variable (followers' familiarity with the opinion leader), correlation analysis has been decided to analyze the change. The correlation coefficient, or Pearson's R-value, must be examined first. As seen in Table 7, the value of Pearson's R is -0.124. As mentioned previously, Pearson's R ranges between +1 to -1, (+1) indicating a positive correlation and (-1) a negative one. If the value is zero, no relationship is indicated. As the R-value for H3 is -0.124, a negative correlation has been dedicated. Followers' familiarity with the opinion leader decreases the negative effect on customers' brand trust after exposure to opinion leaders' N e-

WOM. The 2-tailed significance value, which is 0.045 in this case, is also relevant. As the usual alpha value is 0.05, it is safe to say that the H3 correlation is highly significant.

The application of correlation analysis on H3 proved that the better followers' familiarity with the opinion leader, the lower the negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM. $R=-0.124$ and $p<0.045$.

Table 7. Correlation table of H3

Correlations			
		Familiarity	Trust After
Familiarity	Pearson Correlation	1	-.124*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.045
	N	263	263
Trust After	Pearson Correlation	-.124*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.045	
	N	263	263
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Next, testing the relationship between opinion leaders' influential role and customers' brand trust after exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

H4: The more influential the opinion leader, the more negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

Correlation analysis has been chosen to examine the change in order to forecast how changes in the independent variable (Opinion Leaders' Influential Role) will affect changes in the dependent variable (Customers' Brand Trust). It is necessary to look at the correlation coefficient, also known as Pearson's R-value. As can be observed in Table 8, Pearson's R is -0.124. The value of (+1) specifies a positive correlation, while (-1) is negative, and the correlation is not recognized if the value is 0. Given that H4's R-value is -0.124, a negative correlation has been established. After exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM, the negative effect on customers' brand trust is increased by the influential abilities of the opinion leader. It is also essential to consider the 2-tailed significance value, which in this instance is 0.045. It is safe to claim that the H4 correlation is highly significant because the usual alpha value is 0.05.

The application of correlation analysis led to proving H4, meaning that the more influential the opinion leader, the more negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM. $R=-0.154$ and $p<0.012$.

Table 8. *Correlation table of H4*

Correlations			
		Influential Role	Trust After
Influential Role	Pearson Correlation	1	-.154*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.012
	N	263	263
Trust After	Pearson Correlation	-.154*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	
	N	263	263
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			

Next, testing the relationship between opinion leader credibility and customers' brand trust after exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

H5: The more credible the opinion leader, the more negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

Correlation analysis was chosen to assist in forecasting how changes in the dependent variable (customers' brand trust) are influenced by the independent variable (Opinion Leaders' credibility). First of all, it is required to examine the correlation coefficient, also known as Pearson's R-value. Pearson's R is 0.06, as can be seen in Table 9. Next, the 2-tailed significance value of 0.919 must also be considered. Such a value is considered high. High p-values imply that the evidence is insufficient to demonstrate the existence of an effect in the population. If there is an effect, the hypothesis test might not be able to detect it because the effect size, sample size, or variability are insufficient. Using correlation analysis, H5 was rejected. $R=0.006$ and $p<0.919$.

Table 9. Correlation table of H5

Correlations			
		Credibility	Trust After
Credibility	Pearson Correlation	1	.006
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.919
	N	263	263
Trust After	Pearson Correlation	.006	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.919	
	N	263	263

Lastly, H6 focuses on checking the relationship between the customer's brand trust and the customer's repurchasing intention after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

H6. Customers' brand trust directly influences their repurchasing intention after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.

H6's data analysis approach has been determined to be linear regression analysis. When a dependent variable (repurchasing intention) and an independent variable (brand trust) have a linear relationship, it is possible to model that connection statistically using linear regression, i.e., a change in the independent variable has a linear inverse relationship with a difference in the dependent variable. The correlation test indicates a moderate correlation between the variables in H6, which yields a value of 0.785. The significance of the regression analysis is less than 0.001, with a p-value that is less than 0.05, the model is significant enough to determine the outcome. According to table 10a, the dependent variable's R square value is 0.616, which is a number higher than 0.5, indicating that the model can identify the relationship. From the R square formula, it can be said that customers' brand trust accounts for 61.6% of their intention to repurchase, which assesses the change in the dependent variable brought on by the independent variable.

As a result of applied regression analysis, H6 was accepted and proved that there are direct influences on customers' repurchasing intention after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM by their brand trust. $R^2=0.616$, $F(1) =418.019$, $t=20.446$, $p<0.001$.

Table 10. *Correlation table of H6*

Correlations			
		Trust After	Repurchasing Intent After
Pearson Correlation	Trust After	1.000	.785
	Repurchasing Intent After	.785	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Trust After	.	<.001
	Repurchasing Intent After	.000	.
N	Trust After	263	263
	Repurchasing Intent After	263	263

Table 10a. *Model Summary Table of H6*

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.785 ^a	.616	.614	.76606
a. Predictors: (Constant), Repurchasing Intent After				
b. Dependent Variable: Trust After				

Table 10b. *ANOVA table of H6*

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	245.315	1	245.315	418.019	<.001 ^b
	Residual	153.168	261	.587		
	Total	398.484	262			
a. Dependent Variable: Trust After						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Repurchasing Intent After						

Table 10c. *Coefficient table of H6*

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.084	.152		-.549	.584
	Repurchasing Intent After	.809	.040	.785	20.446	<.001

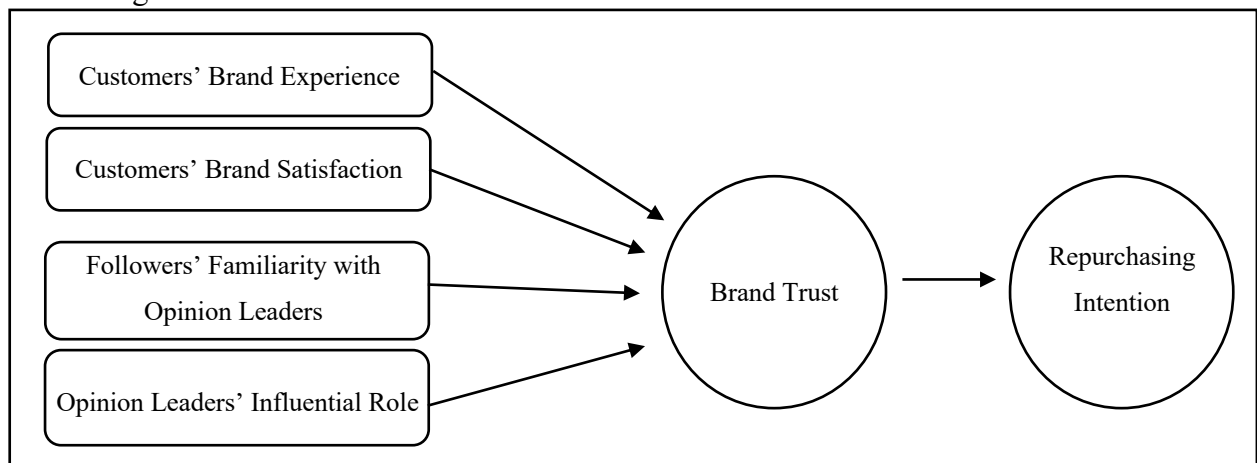
In summary, the results of the hypotheses testing in my study showed that 5 out of 6 hypotheses were proven to be true using correlation and linear regression tests, and only one of the hypotheses was rejected (see table 11). The analysis was conducted using SPSS software, which allowed for a thorough and rigorous examination of the relationships between the variables under study. The results suggest that there is a significant correlation and linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables in this research, and the research questions were supported by the results. However, it should be noted that correlation does not imply causation, future research may aim to test causality using different methods. Overall, these findings contribute to the current understanding of the topic and provide new insights for future research.

Moreover, the process of testing hypotheses has played a role in reshaping the research framework. The ability to test hypotheses allowed to build a new framework (see Figure 2) upon existing knowledge and make changed to the one that was constructed before testing the hypotheses. One major change in the research framework as a result of hypothesis testing is excluding the opinion leader credibility variable. All these changes together help to make the research more powerful and leads to the development of new understanding and knowledge of the studied topic.

Table 11. *Hypotheses Results Summary*

Hypotheses Results			
H1. The better the customer brand experience, the lower the negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM	R=0.375	Correlation	Proven
	p<0.001		
H2. The higher the customer brand satisfaction, the lower the negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.	R=0.454	Correlation	Proven
	p<0.001		
H3. The higher the followers' familiarity with the opinion leader, the higher the negative effects there are on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.	R=-0.124	Correlation	Proven
	p<0.045		
H4. The more influential the opinion leader, the more negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.	R=-0.154	Correlation	Proven
	p<0.012		
H5. The more credible the opinion leader, the more negative effect there is on customers' brand trust after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.	R=0.006	Correlation	Rejected
	p<0.919		
H6. Customers' brand trust directly influences their repurchasing intention after the exposure to opinion leaders' N e-WOM.	R ² =0.616	Linear Regression	Proven
	p<0.001		
	F (1) =418.019		
	t=20.446		

Figure 2. *Revised Research Framework*



3.4. Discussion

This research sought to understand better opinion leaders' negative electronic word-of-mouth on customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention. The findings have revealed insightful information about the study and have answered the following research question: to what extent does negative electronic word-of-mouth, provoked by opinion leaders, impact customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention? The empirical findings proved that opinion leaders' negative electronic word-of-mouth negatively affects customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention. Herewith, it clarified that the characteristics of the opinion leader in the eyes of the followers and the previous interactions of the customers with the brand correlate with the impacts of the negative e-WOM. The findings show that the more popular and familiar the opinion leaders are to their followers, as well as how influential they are in delivering their message, play a significant role in affecting the levels of customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention. Neither the less, the customer's previous interaction with the brand, like their experience and satisfaction, affect how they evaluate the N e-WOM of an opinion leader as they have previously interacted with the brand themselves. It is feasible that the opinion leader's credibility did not negatively impact customers' brand trust if the tested sample did not perceive them as knowledgeable and trustworthy or their e-WOM was perceived as swayed by money or other incentives. In such a circumstance, customers may believe that the opinion leader's endorsement is not a credible source of information and that their endorsement of the brand did not carry much weight for them. This research showcased the customer's significance in evaluating specific attributes of the opinion leaders' negative electronic word-of-mouth on their brand trust and repurchasing intention by measuring the change in their attitudes and behavior to repurchase from the tested brand Zara. Therefore, and from the empirical finding of this research, negative e-WOM evoked by opinion leaders can particularly damage a brand's reputation and lead to a decline in customer trust and a decrease in repurchasing intention.

To make the linkage between the findings of this research and the findings of previous researchers, it is significant to state that the current research proved that customers' familiarity with the opinion leaders increases the impact of their e-WOM on brand trust and repurchase intention. Prior research, such as (Laroche et al., 2013), increased customer interaction and contact with a reputable source increases the possibility that the source's e-WOM will have an impact on consumers. The current research findings prove a connection to the previously studied literature; their similar cognitive styles strengthen the relationship between opinion leaders and their followers, leading to effective communication and mutual understanding (Johlke & Duhan, 2001). Furthermore, followers of opinion leaders can be influenced by the leader's opinions,

resulting in changes in their attitudes and actions (Lie et al., 2012). However, contrary to Chevalier, 2006 & Ludwig, 2013 findings that the level of credibility an opinion leader holds also plays a role in how much trust and influence they have over their followers, potentially altering their behavior, the current research finds the opposite. Additionally, While earlier studies have tended to concentrate on the advantages of e-WOM, this study focuses on its drawbacks.

3.5. Scientific Contributions

This thesis has advanced an understanding of the relationship between negative e-WOM and customer brand trust and repurchasing intent. To establish a connection between the results of this study and those of earlier researchers (Cheung and Thadani, 2012; Kim et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2009; Lee and Young, 2009) studying customers' behavior and attitudes after being exposed to negative e-WOM provoked by an opinion leader, this research adds to the literature by collectively tying these phenomena. By introducing new variables and empirical data, this study also advances scientific knowledge by exploring in greater detail how different traits of opinion leaders who spread negative e-WOM affect customers' brand trust and intent to purchase again while also assessing the level of impact of such exposure on customers with prior experiences.

This study also examines how consumers receive information differently depending on the source's reliability, influence, and familiarity with them. The many aspects surrounding the source of the negative e-WOM provide additional theoretical insights. The updated research model of this research gives a clear picture of how the several components are related to one another, arguing that by shedding further light on how consumers are influenced by negative e-WOM that is provoked by opinion leaders. The research complements other studies in social media marketing, negative e-WOM, consumer brand trust, and repurchasing intention. Overall, these kinds of findings boost marketing effectiveness and make businesses more competitive. Therefore, the findings of this research will benefit organizations who recognize the importance of customer trust and repurchasing intention.

3.7. Managerial Implications

The managerial implications include the need for managers to be conscious of consumers' frequent propensity to modify their trust in brands. In conclusion, firms should focus on provoking their values rather than trying to match every consumer value in an effort to lessen the effects of negative e-WOM. To maintain high levels of trust, which will result in a high number

of retained customers who are eager to make repeat purchases, the brand should consistently work toward aligning its fundamental values with its target audience.

Businesses should take into consideration the potential negative effects of opinion leaders' electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) when developing their marketing strategies. When opinion leaders provide negative e-WOM about a business or product, it can have a significant impact on the company's reputation and sales. One of the key managerial implications for businesses is the need to actively monitor and manage their online reputation. This can be done by regularly monitoring social media and review websites to identify any negative e-WOM about the business or its products. Additionally, businesses should respond promptly and professionally to any negative comments or complaints to mitigate the potential damage. Moreover, businesses should also work to create a more engaged community of customers and fans who can counteract any negative e-WOM by sharing their own positive experiences.

3.8. Research Limitations and Future Directions

There are a number of limitations to this study that could be addressed in follow-up studies that build on this thesis' findings. This study initially only examines two customer-related elements and insights and three opinion leader traits. If various features and attributes are considered in light of other potential consequences, it may be highly valuable to get additional information. It is advised to conduct more studies on the various elements and attributes and utilize a sample comparable to the one used in this thesis. Moreover, the population of the sample. Even if a broad understanding of the subject was obtained, a bigger sample size may have allowed for a more thorough study to be conducted with other perceptions and points of view, which would have revealed novel insights into the ongoing research.

One could propose expanding on the core premise of this thesis for future investigation into this research topic. The study focuses on negative e-WOM from opinion leaders and how it affects customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention. Consequently, there is a chance to investigate further various opinion leader types of negative e-WOM and customers' reactions to hearing bad e-WOM. The effects of another subject or theme, as opposed to apparel shopping, which was the focus of this study, can be studied further, as can the negative e-WOM associated with such topics. In various domains, there are chances to investigate further and understand negative e-WOM and its consequences on customers

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To conclude, the research has answered the research question showcasing that negative electronic word-of-mouth provoked by opinion leaders impacts customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention to a great extent. Opinion leaders are highly influential, and their negative comments about a brand can quickly spread and be seen by many other people. This is because people tend to trust the opinions of others and may be more likely to believe negative comments about a brand than positive ones. Negative e-WOM can also lead to increased perceived risk and perceived uncertainty, further decreasing trust and repurchasing intention. Additionally, it found that negative e-WOM providers' characteristics as well as the customer previous interaction with the brand are crucial drivers of the impact of e-WOM on consumers' attitudes toward the brand. However, it's important to note that not all negative e-WOM will have the same effect on customers. The credibility of the opinion leader providing the e-WOM and the context in which it is presented can all influence how it is perceived.

The main focus of this research was to examine the effects of negative electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) from opinion leaders on customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention. Through empirical findings, it was determined that negative e-WOM from opinion leaders has a negative impact on customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention. The characteristics of the opinion leader, as perceived by the followers, and the customer's previous interactions with the brand were found to be correlated with the impacts of the negative e-WOM. The study found that the more influential and familiar an opinion leader is to their followers, as well as their influence in delivering their message, plays a significant role in impacting customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention. Additionally, customers' previous experiences and satisfaction with the brand also affect how they evaluate the negative e-WOM from an opinion leader.

It was also noted that the opinion leader's credibility might not necessarily have a negative impact on customers' brand trust if the tested sample did not perceive them as knowledgeable and trustworthy or if their e-WOM was perceived as swayed by money or other incentives. In such cases, customers may not view the opinion leader's endorsement as credible, and their brand endorsement may not carry much weight. This research highlights the significance of customers in evaluating specific attributes of the opinion leaders' negative e-WOM on their brand trust and repurchasing intention by measuring changes in their attitudes and behavior towards repurchasing from the tested brand Zara. Furthermore, this research results align with previous studies on the relationship between e-WOM, opinion leaders, and customers' behavior and attitudes and provides new insights by focusing on negative e-WOM specifically.

Considering customers' familiarity with the opinion leaders and their influence, it is suggested that negative e-WOM from opinion leaders can significantly damage a brand's reputation and lead to a decline in customer trust and a decrease in repurchasing intention. Correlation and linear regression were used to assess the research's hypotheses, and the results revealed that 5 of the 6 hypotheses were confirmed while 1 was rejected. A significant correlation and a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables support the study topic. The process of testing hypotheses also contributed to redesigning the research framework, adjusting it in light of prior information, and removing the opinion leader credibility variable to strengthen the research and create a fresh understanding of the subject under study.

Because of the nature of social media, customers are well-informed and highly aware of merchandise and brands. Since information and specifically negative ones, these days spreads fast, marketing managers must be cautious that public perception of a company could alter swiftly at any point of time. The empirical findings primarily highlighted ethical values. The apparent carelessness of customers on social media is another discovery that may interest marketing managers. It is debatable whether this implies that consumer brand trust is an idea that is fundamentally abstract and not a simple matter. Brand trust is subjective, which makes it difficult to forecast. Consumers don't seem to consider whether or not they trust a brand to be a big decision, and the choice is frequently based on a whim. Given how much negative e-WOM consumers encounter, it makes logical that the decisions customers make about brand trust are somewhat impulsive and not always the best or most well-educated. Consumers appear to make judgments on the spur of the moment, which may not necessarily result in well-informed conclusions.

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THE IMPACTS OF OPINION LEADERS' NEGATIVE ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH ON FAST FASHION CUSTOMERS' BRAND TRUST AND REPURCHASING INTENTION

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Master Thesis

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Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Vilnius University

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SUMMARY

The primary purpose of this master thesis is to study customers' brand trust and repurchasing behavior when exposed to a negative e-WOM provoked by an opinion leader. It questions customers' repurchasing decision-making and asks whether customers will rely on their prior experiences and satisfaction, which helped them develop their brand trust. Or, as an alternative, heed the advice of the opinion leader because of their credibility, influence, and familiarity with them. The Master thesis consists of the following parts: the analysis of literature, the research, the results, a conclusion, and recommendations.

Literature analysis reviews the different areas of customers' brand experience, satisfaction, and brand trust. Further, the analysis continues to review previous research on the familiarity of followers with opinion leaders and their influential role and credibility in influencing their followers. Last, research regarding E-WOM and negative E-WOM and Information Adaptation Model were observed.

The author then conducted research into the effects of negative e-WOM from opinion leaders on customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention. Over 263 customers of the brand Zara have responded to the prepared survey. The primary goal of the survey was to determine how negatively influenced electronic word-of-mouth, sparked by opinion leaders, affects customers' brand trust and propensity to repurchase. The research's findings were also contrasted with those of related studies. The SPSS program was used to analyze the research's findings statistically. The alignment of the Likert scales was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha; in every case, it was more significant than 0.7, indicating that the scales were reliable. Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to determine whether there was a correlation between the variables.

The conclusions and recommendations summarize the major themes of the literature analysis as well as the findings of the research. The author thinks that the study's findings could help businesses and future research on how negative electronic word-of-mouth affects brand trust and repurchasing intention.

NUOMONIŲ FORMUOTOJŲ SKLEIDŽIAMO NEIGIAMO ELEKTRONINIO TŪRINIO ĮTAKA GREITOSIOS MADOS KLIENTŲ PASITIKĖJIMUI PREKĖS ŽENKLU IR KETINIMUI JĮ PIRKTI PAKARTOTINAI

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Prižiūrėtojas doc. profesorius R. Časas, Vilnius, 2023 m.

SANTRAUKA

Šio magistro darbo tikslas - ištirti klientų pasitikėjimą prekės ženklu ir pakartotino jo pirkimo elgseną, kai juos veikia neigiama nuomonės lyderio paskleista nuomonė elektroninės žinutės formate. Jame keliamas klausimas, kaip klientai priima sprendimus dėl pakartotino, ir klausiama, ar klientai remsis savo ankstesne patirtimi ir pasitenkinimu, kurie padėjo jiems išsiugdyti pasitikėjimą prekės ženklu. Arba, kaip alternatyvą, atsižvelgs į nuomonės lyderio patarimus dėl prekės ženklo patikimumo, poveikio ir žinomumo. Magistro darbą sudaro šios dalys: literatūros analizė, tyrimas, rezultatai ir jų analizė, išvados ir rekomendacijos.

Literatūros analizėje apžvelgiamos įvairios klientų patirties, pasitenkinimo ir pasitikėjimo prekės ženklu sritys. Toliau analizėje analizuojami ankstesni tyrimai, susiję su sekėjų pažintimi su nuomonės lyderiais ir jų įtaka bei patikimumu darant įtaką savo sekėjams. Galiausiai įvertinti tyrimai, susiję su E-WOM ir neigiamu E-WOM bei informacijos pritaikymo modeliais.

Toliau darbe autorius sudarė nuomonės lyderių neigiamo e-WOM poveikio klientų pasitikėjimui prekės ženklu ir ketinimui jį pirkti pakartotinai tyrimo metodologiją ir atliko tyrimą. Į parengtą anketą atsakė daugiau kaip 263 prekės ženklo "Zara" pirkėjai. Pagrindinis tyrimo tikslas buvo nustatyti, kaip neigiamą įtaką darantis elektroninis žodis iš lūpų į lūpas, sukeltas nuomonės lyderių, veikia klientų pasitikėjimą prekės ženklu ir polinkį jį pirkti pakartotinai. Tyrimo rezultatai taip pat buvo sugretinti su susijusių kitų atliktų tyrimų rezultatais. Tyrimo rezultatams statistiškai analizuoti naudota SPSS programa. Likerto skalių suderinamumas įvertintas naudojant Cronbacho alfa; visais atvejais jis buvo didesnis nei 0,7, o tai rodo, kad skalės buvo patikimos. Pirsono koreliacijos koeficientas taikytas siekiant nustatyti, ar tarp kintamųjų yra tarpusavio ryšys.

Išvadose ir rekomendacijose apibendrinamos pagrindinės literatūros analizės temos ir tyrimo rezultatai. Autorius mano, kad tyrimo išvados galėtų padėti įmonėms ir būsimiems tyrimams, kaip neigiamas elektroninis žodis iš lūpų į lūpas daro įtaką pasitikėjimui prekės ženklu ir ketinimui jį pirkti pakartotinai.

ANNEXE
Questionnaire

Dear participants,

My name is Souhel Milad Alkallas. To complete my Master in Business Management from Vilnius University, I am researching the impacts of opinion leaders' negative electronic word-of-mouth on fast fashion customers' brand trust and repurchasing intention.

I kindly invite you to complete the attached questionnaire. The expected completion time is approximately 15-20 minutes.

The questionnaire is anonymous, and answers will stay confidential and solely used for the aggregate analysis of this research study for academic purposes. Participation and withdrawal from the research questionnaire are voluntary. You are not obligated to complete the survey if you would not like to participate.

Kindly contact me in case of any inquiries or need for additional details concerning this research.

Email: milad.alkallas@evaf.stud.vu.lt

Screening Question:

Would you consider yourself a customer of Zara?

Yes. No.

Survey Questions:

1. If you need a clothing item in the future, how likely are you to try Zara?

Highly likely Highly unlikely

2. If you ever purchase a clothing item again, how likely are you to buy it from Zara?

Highly likely Highly unlikely

3. How likely are you to revisit Zara for your shopping needs?

Highly likely Highly unlikely

4. I have enjoyed my overall experience with Zara.

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

5. As a whole, I have not enjoyed my experience with Zara.

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

6. How would you rate your overall experience of Zara?

Extremely good Extremely bad

7. I am satisfied with my overall experience with Zara.

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

8. As a whole, I am not satisfied with Zara.

Strongly Agree Strongly Disagree

9. How satisfied are you overall with the quality of Zara?

Highly satisfied Highly unsatisfied

10. I trust Zara brand.

Highly trust Highly untrust

11. I rely on Zara brand.

Highly reliable Highly unreliable

12. Zara is an honest brand.

Extremely honest Extremely dishonest

13. Zara brand is safe.

Extremely safe Extremely unsafe

Please watch the *Deutsche Welle Planet A* [video](#) on fast fashion brand Zara.

14. After watching the video please indicate how familiar are you with Deutsche Welle (Planet A)?

1) Extremely familiar Not at all familiar.

2) Definitely recognize Definitely do not recognize.

3) Definitely have heard of them before Definitely have not heard of them before.

15. After watching the video please rate how influential was the video of Deutsche Welle (Planet A) using the following descriptions:

1) Good Bad

2) Influential Uninfluential

3) Favorable Unfavorable

4) Positive Negative

5) Reputable Not reputable

6) Like the opinion leader a lot Dislike the opinion leader a lot.

16. After watching the video in your opinion how would you rate Deutsche Welle (Planet A) credibility?

- | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1) 1. Not an expert | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Expert |
| 2) 2. Inexperienced | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Experienced |
| 3) 3. Unknowledgeable | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Knowledgeable |
| 4) 4. Unqualified | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Qualified |
| 5) 5. Unpaid | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Paid |

17. After watching the video if you need a clothing item in the future, how likely are you to try Zara?

Highly likely Highly unlikely

18. After watching the video if you ever purchase a clothing item again, how likely are you to buy it from Zara?

Highly likely Highly unlikely

19. After watching the video how likely are you to revisit Zara for your shopping needs?

Highly likely Highly unlikely

20. After watching the video: I trust Zara brand.

Highly trust Highly untrust

21. After watching the video: I rely on Zara brand.

Highly reliable Highly unreliable

22. After watching the video: Zara is an honest brand.

Extremely honest Extremely dishonest

23. After watching the video: Zara brand is safe.

Extremely safe Extremely unsafe

24. Please indicate your age _____

25. Please indicate your gender _____

26. Please indicate your ethnicity _____