



# Social Media Influence on Movie Consumption: Insights from Tunisian Audiences

Mohamed Lamari<sup>1</sup>, Neji Bouzlama<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1st and 2nd</sup> (Faculty of Economic Sciences and Management of Tunis, University of Tunis El Manar, Tunisia)

Corresponding Author: Mohamed Lamari

**ABSTRACT:** This study explores how electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and social media advertising (SMA) influence consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions toward movie tickets in Tunisia. Grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior and persuasion-based communication models, the research investigates the relative effectiveness of digital communication sources in shaping consumer responses within the entertainment industry. Data were collected from 289 Tunisian consumers through an online survey, and the conceptual model was assessed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings reveal that social media advertising exerts a significant positive effect on consumers' attitudes toward movies, highlighting the persuasive role of paid promotional content in shaping favorable evaluations. However, the effects of both eWOM on attitudes and purchase intentions, as well as the effect of SMA on purchase intention, were not supported, suggesting that these forms of digital communication alone may not directly drive ticket purchase behavior. Attitude toward a movie, in contrast, emerged as a strong and significant predictor of purchase intention, underscoring its central role in the decision-making process. Overall, the study contributes to understanding how social media communication mechanisms operate in emerging markets and provides actionable insights for film marketers seeking to design more effective digital strategies that foster positive attitudes and, consequently, consumer purchase decisions.

**KEYWORDS:** Electronic word-of-mouth, Social media advertising, Simulation, Attitude, Purchase intention, Movie industry

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The increasing prominence of social media communication has fundamentally transformed consumer behavior within the film industry, where information dissemination and audience engagement have been revolutionized by digital platforms. The proliferation of social media has introduced novel dimensions of interaction, notably through electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and targeted advertising strategies. Consumers, empowered by technology, now seek and share opinions about films in ways that differ significantly from traditional marketing channels. This communication paradigm has a substantial impact on consumer attitudes, behaviors, and purchase intentions for movies (Kumar et al., 2013). eWOM, defined as the sharing of opinions and experiences through digital platforms, has become a critical factor in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions regarding films. Research indicates that eWOM serves as a source of information and influences consumers through the experiences and reviews of others (Chiu et al., 2019). The dynamics of eWOM are characterized by its capacity to spread quickly and widely, often leading to immediate effects on consumer attitudes and behaviors. High volumes of positive movie reviews can enhance audience anticipation and positively influence box office performance, while negative comments can deter potential viewers (Chakravarty et al., 2010). The interactive nature of social media platforms allows for rapid engagement and feedback loops among users, amplifying the effect of eWOM in real-time (Sen & Lerman, 2007).

Furthermore, social media advertising has taken a central role in marketing strategies within the film industry. The adaptability and targeting capabilities of social media ads enable film marketers to reach specific demographics effectively and engage audiences through tailored content (Dao et al., 2024). Studies have shown that well-executed social media advertising can enhance brand visibility and positively influence consumer

attitudes toward films (King et al., 2014). Applications of persuasive communication, creative content, and interactive elements in social media ads contribute significantly to generating excitement and interest around movie releases, facilitating enhanced purchase intentions among potential viewers (Kumar et al., 2013). Moreover, the matrix created by eWOM and social media advertising manifests a complex relationship that shapes pre-purchase behaviors. Research suggests that consumers are more likely to discuss film content and share reviews in response to advertising campaigns across social media platforms, which can create a synergy that amplifies promotional efforts (Chakravarty et al., 2010). As consumers share their experiences and recommendations online, the potential for peer influence intensifies, driving conversations that can lead to increased movie attendance and heightened success for film releases. Additionally, cultural and contextual factors come into play when analyzing the impact of eWOM and social media advertising. Different cultural settings can modulate consumer responses to online reviews and marketing messages. Various studies have explored how cultural nuances affect the interpretation and impact of consumer-generated content, suggesting that personalized and culturally relevant messaging can enhance the effectiveness of eWOM and social media strategies in different markets (Chiu et al., 2019).

These two phenomena have rapidly become pivotal in determining consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions towards movies. As audiences increasingly turn to online platforms for information and peer recommendations, the relevance of understanding how eWOM and social media advertising (SMA) affect these consumer behaviors has never been more pronounced (Dang & Raška, 2021). Electronic word-of-mouth has established itself as a formidable force in influencing consumer decision-making. The nature of eWOM, which encompasses consumer-generated content ranging from reviews and ratings to social media posts, enables swift dissemination of information that can significantly alter consumer perceptions. Research indicates that sentiments conveyed through eWOM substantially affect brand equity and purchase intentions (Seifert & Kwon, 2019). Furthermore, eWOM has been shown to enhance brand equity, thereby directly correlating with consumers' willingness to purchase tickets for movies (Dang & Raška, 2021). In addition to eWOM, the role of social media advertising as a contributor to shaping consumer attitudes cannot be overlooked. Effective advertisements on platforms like Facebook or Instagram can foster positive consumer perceptions, which subsequently enhance purchase intentions. Studies have documented that well-targeted social media ads, combined with engaging content, cultivate favorable attitudes and drive ticket sales for movies, making SMA a valuable tool for marketers. While specific source citations for SMA's impact in this context are not provided, the general trends in consumer behavior support this assertion (Chiu et al., 2019). When eWOM and SMA are analyzed together, their combined effects can delineate how contemporary digital communication strategies can enhance or diminish consumer interest in films, emphasizing the need for careful analysis of these influences.

This study aims to assess the direct effects of eWOM and SMA on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions toward movies. By exploring the interplay between these two paradigms, the research seeks to discern how these modern communication strategies shape consumer behavior in a rapidly evolving marketplace. Understanding this dynamic is essential for marketers aiming to optimize their strategies, ensuring that they effectively engage contemporary audiences and capitalize on the persuasive power of online communication. Theoretically, this research will elucidate the mechanisms through which eWOM and SMA directly affect consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, reinforcing existing frameworks on consumer decision-making in the digital age and clarifies how these digital marketing strategies shape the consumer journey in the context of movie consumption (Wang et al., 2012). From a managerial perspective, the implications of this study are profound. Understanding the direct effects of eWOM and SMA on consumer behavior can empower film marketers to devise more targeted and effective promotional strategies. By identifying key factors that influence consumer attitudes, marketing executives can tailor their content and engagement tactics to maximize reach and resonance with audiences (Halkias et al., 2017). Additionally, insights gained from the research could facilitate the design of comprehensive marketing campaigns that leverage the persuasive power of both eWOM and SMA, leading to increased ticket sales and enhanced movie performance. Ultimately, the findings will provide actionable frameworks for industry practitioners looking to navigate the evolving landscape of digital marketing in film.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theoretical Background**

A comprehensive understanding of how external communication stimuli, such as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and social media advertising (SMA), influence consumer attitudes and purchase intentions can be grounded in several solid theoretical frameworks. The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) fundamentally posit that individuals' behavioral intentions are driven by their attitudes toward the behavior and subjective norms surrounding that behavior (Seifert & Kwon, 2019). In the context of this study, eWOM and SMA serve as critical external stimuli that shape consumers' attitudes toward movies,

thereby influencing their purchase intentions, as consumers often rely on perceived social consensus from their peers and online communities when making decisions about which films to watch (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) provides a pertinent lens to examine the persuasive power of eWOM and advertising. ELM suggests that the effectiveness of persuasive communication depends on the audience's likelihood to engage in elaborate processing (Domenico et al., 2021). In cases where consumers encounter credible eWOM, particularly from sources they relate to or trust, they are likely to engage with the information more deeply, leading to an increased likelihood of developing positive attitudes toward the advertised films and subsequently fostering purchase intentions (Mahapatra & Mishra, 2017). The dynamics of source credibility, as outlined in Source Credibility Theory, further elucidate why eWOM can be more persuasive compared to traditional advertising; consumers are more inclined to take recommendations seriously when they perceive the source as reliable and knowledgeable (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

## **2.2 Electronic word-of-mouth**

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has emerged as a critical component in contemporary marketing discourse, significantly impacting consumer behavior, particularly within the film industry. Defined as any positive or negative statement made by present or previous customers about a product, service, or company, which becomes available to large audiences via the internet, eWOM has proven to be an influential force, affecting consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (Abubakar et al., 2016). The digital landscape allows for rapid dissemination and feedback, resulting in instantaneous effects on how consumers perceive films and their subsequent willingness to engage with them through ticket purchases.

Prior research has established a robust connection between eWOM and consumer attitudes. For instance, significant findings illustrate that positive eWOM sentiments enhance consumer attitudes toward brands or products, while negative sentiments can diminish perceived value and likelihood of purchase (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). In the specific context of the film industry, studies have noted that favorable online reviews and discussions can create heightened anticipation and positive perceptions of upcoming movies, directly translating into stronger consumer interest and enhanced purchase intentions (Chiu et al., 2019). Furthermore, research has indicated that the credibility of eWOM sources significantly mediates its effects, with consumers showing greater trust and acceptance of recommendations from peers or influencers compared to traditional advertising (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

Operationalizing these insights in the context of this research leads to the formulation of the following hypotheses:

- H1: eWOM positively influences attitudes toward a movie.
- H2: eWOM positively influences purchase intention.

## **2.3 Social media advertising**

By utilizing engaging content, including trailers, behind-the-scenes footage, and interactive posts, film marketers can effectively capture audience attention and create positive associations with their movies (Mukherjee, 2019). The persuasive nature of SMA leverages social proof and peer endorsements, which enhance perceived credibility and trustworthiness. This phenomenon aligns with the principles of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which posits that consumers engage in either central or peripheral processing of information depending on their motivation and ability to process the messages (Mochon et al., 2017). When consumers are motivated to engage with content such as advertisements that resonate with their values or interests, they are more likely to develop a favorable attitude toward the film being promoted.

Prior research has underscored the efficacy of SMA in influencing consumer attitudes. Studies indicate that advertisements featuring relatable content foster positive attitudes towards brands and significantly impact purchase intentions (Mazzarolo et al., 2021). Additionally, the capability of social media platforms to facilitate immediate feedback and interaction enhances the effectiveness of advertising campaigns, allowing users to feel more connected to the films and their promotional efforts. This interconnectedness translates into heightened enthusiasm and a greater likelihood of purchasing movie tickets.

The theoretical framework for understanding these phenomena can be illustrated through the following hypotheses:

- H3: Social media advertising positively influences attitudes toward a movie
- H4: Social media advertising positively influences purchase intention

## **2.4 Attitude toward a movie and purchase intention**

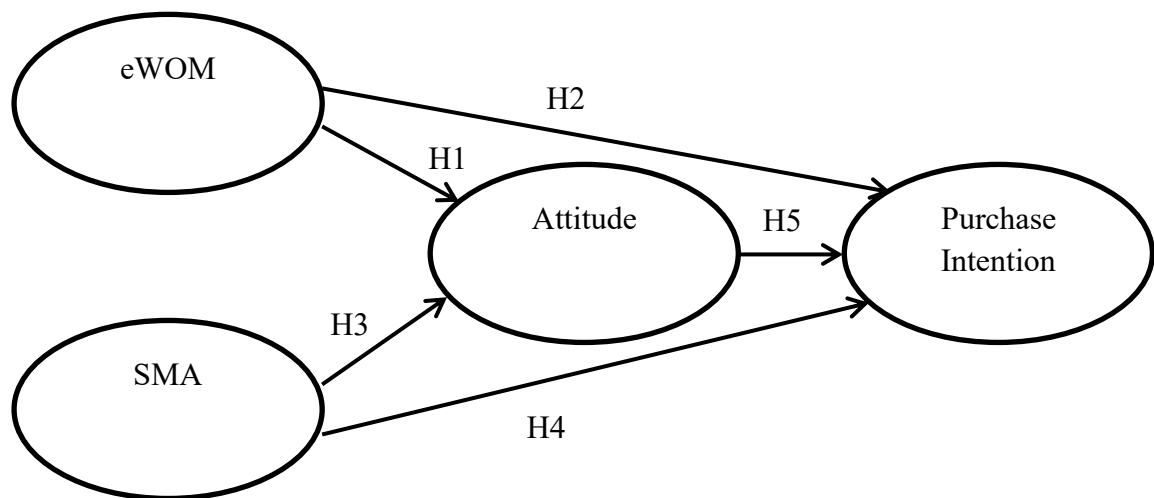
Attitude toward a movie is a psychological construct that embodies an individual's evaluative response concerning that movie, encompassing a spectrum of feelings, beliefs, and behavioral intentions. This construct is significant not only in the context of consumer psychology but also as a predictor of behavioral outcomes, particularly in influencing purchase intentions. The attitude captures individual judgments derived from various

sources and personal experiences ultimately shaping how likely a consumer is to engage with the film which is most tangibly reflected in their intent to purchase a ticket (Seifert & Kwon, 2019).

Research has shown that attitudes are integral to the decision-making processes of consumers. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) posits that intentions are formed as a function of attitudes toward specific behaviors, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, highlighting the importance of a favorable attitude in prompting actual behavior (Cheah et al., 2015). In the context of movies, a positive attitude is often linked to higher purchase intentions, as it can stimulate emotional engagement and connection with the film (Shah et al., 2022). Numerous studies have affirmed that favorable attitudes toward a movie significantly correlate with consumers' willingness to buy tickets, as these attitudes serve as a strong predictor of actual consumer behavior (Chan & Edwards, 2024). Building on these insights, this study formulates the following hypothesis to articulate the expected relationship between attitude and purchase intention:

- H5: Attitude toward a movie positively influences purchase intention among consumers.

The proposed hypotheses are displayed in the conceptual model of this study (Figure 1)



**Figure 1. Research conceptual model**

### III. METHODS

#### 3.1 Data collection

The present study aims to test the effect of electronic word of mouth and social media advertising on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions in the context of movie theater tickets purchase. A preliminary data collection was done in order to verify the clarity and minimize biases in the assessments of the research's constructs. Then the final online survey was conducted in Tunisia targeting members of online communities of cinemagoers. Purposive sampling was used in the current research, gathering data from 295 respondents. After removing outliers and missing values, we retained 289 complete surveys. This number adheres to the recommendation of Jöreskog and Sörbom (1982) as the sample size should be at least 10 times the number of items used for all the constructs in the study.

The survey also included a section for gathering the socio-demographic information of the participants and their habits on social media. The sample consists of 52.2% women and 47.8% men. 39% are aged between 18 and 24 years and 59.9% of respondents hold a bachelor's degree. 43.6% of the survey's respondents declare a household income ranging between 1000 and 2000 Tunisian Dinars and 33.6% of respondents are students. The sociodemographic characteristics of the sample are further explained in Table 1.

**Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample**

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	138	47.8
	Female	151	52.2
Age Group	18–24 years	115	39.8
	25–34 years	103	35.6
	35–44 years	46	15.9
	45 years and above	25	8.7
Education Level	Secondary or below	38	13.1
	Bachelor’s degree	173	59.9
	Master’s degree or higher	78	27.0
Occupation	Student	97	33.6
	Private sector employee	89	30.8
	Public sector employee	51	17.6
	Self-employed	29	10.0
	Unemployed / Other	23	8.0
Monthly Household Income (TND)	< 1000	72	24.9
	1000–2000	126	43.6
	2001–3000	59	20.4
	> 3000	32	11.1

### 3.2 Measurement scales

To measure the constructs used in the proposed research model, multi item scales validated by previous research were used in order to improve reliability and validity. The 6-item scale of Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold (2011) was used for measuring electronic word of mouth. Social media advertising was assessed with the scale of (Schivinski et Dabrowski, 2016) using 4 items. Attitude was measured using the scale of Villarejo-Ramos and Sanchez-Franco (2005) containing 3 items. The 3-item scale of Shukla (2011) was used to assess purchase intention.

All the items were measured using a 7-point likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used in this study for data analysis. This method permits an analysis of variables that cannot be directly measured and poses fewer restrictions as it does not require data distribution assumptions that are not a realistic expectation in social science (Hair et al., 2019). This study follows an analytical approach with three steps. The measurement model will be first evaluated followed by the assessment of the structural model. The testing of the research hypotheses will be done in the first step by using the bootstrap method. All the analysis done in this study was employed with the software SmartPLS version 4

## IV. RESULTS

### 4.1 Measurement Model Estimation

The estimation of the measurement model evaluated the internal consistency, convergent validity and the discriminant validity (Hair et al. 2019). Factor loadings were measured for every item used and all the results exceed the threshold value of 0.708 confirming that these items capture the related latent constructs. Convergent validity was assessed with the indicator of average variance extracted (AVE) and all the variables show results superior to 0.5. Composite reliability and Cronbach’s alpha results are superior to 0.7 which confirms the reliability of the constructs used. These findings are detailed in table 2.

**Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity Results**

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's $\alpha$	Composite Reliability	AVE
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	6	0.782 – 0.939	0.915	0.939	0.747
Social Media Advertising	4	0.769 – 0.869	0.855	0.903	0.701
Attitude	3	0.880 – 0.922	0.875	0.923	0.801
Purchase Intention	3	0.884 – 0.926	0.888	0.931	0.818

Discriminant validity was assessed with the Fornell-Larcker criterion that calculates the root squares of AVE values for variables as they must be superior to their correlation with other constructs. The results confirm the discriminant validity of our constructs as each diagonal value (square root of AVE) is higher than any off-diagonal correlation in its row and column. Results are further detailed in Table 3.

**Table 3. Discriminant Validity**

Construct	eWOM	SMA	Attitude	Purchase Intention
eWOM	<b>0.864</b>	0.651	0.602	0.624
SMA	0.651	<b>0.837</b>	0.667	0.642
Attitude	0.602	0.667	<b>0.895</b>	0.754
Purchase Intention	0.624	0.642	0.754	<b>0.905</b>

#### 4.2 Structural model evaluation

The inner model of this research was evaluated by calculating the Q2 value as it can be an indicator of the predictive relevance or a research model (Kusumawati and Rahayu, 2020). The results of the Q2 values of the endogenous variables are 0.283 and 0.398, both surpassing the threshold of 0.1 that can confirm the predictive relevance (Hair et al. 2017). The R2 index was also calculated to estimate the variance of endogenous variables explained by the model's exogenous variables. The results were 0.420 and 0.576 surpassing the required value as a result that is equal or superior to 0.1 is considered adequate (Falk and Miller, 1992).

#### 4.3 Hypothesis Testing

In order to test the different hypotheses of this study, the bootstrapping method was used in the software SmartPLS 4 to test the significance of the relationships in the proposed conceptual model. T-statistic and P-value results were calculated and the results show that H3 and H5 are supported as their T-statistics are superior than 1.96 and their P-values are inferior to the threshold of 0.05 as shown in Table 4. On the other hand H1, H2 and H4 are not supported.

**Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results**

Hypothesis	Path Description	T-statistic	P-value	Result
H1	eWOM → Attitude	0,219	0,827	Not supported
H2	eWOM → Purchase Intention	1,700	0,090	Not supported
H3	SMA → Attitude	7,549	< 0.001	Supported
H4	SMA → Purchase Intention	0,973	0,331	Not supported
H5	Attitude → Purchase Intention	8,914	< 0.001	Supported

## V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Theoretical implications

The results of this study provide insights into the relationships between electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), social media advertising (SMA), consumer attitudes, and purchasing intentions concerning movie tickets in Tunisia. Notably, while some hypotheses were supported, others revealed complexities in consumer behavior that warrant further discussion.

Starting with H1 and H2, which posited that eWOM positively affects attitudes toward a movie and purchase intentions, respectively, the findings did not support either hypothesis. This outcome is particularly intriguing given the established literature that highlights the significance of eWOM in driving consumer behavior in various contexts (Rosario et al., 2016). One potential explanation for the lack of support for these hypotheses in the Tunisian film market may relate to the cultural context and the relatively nascent stage of digital consumer engagement in Tunisia. Prior studies have suggested that cultural factors heavily influence the effectiveness of eWOM, particularly in markets where consumers may be less familiar with the concept or more skeptical about online reviews (Prasad et al., 2019). This skepticism could hinder the ability of eWOM to positively influence attitudes or intentions in this setting, suggesting that marketers should consider strategies to enhance the credibility and relatability of online reviews in Tunisia.

In contrast, H3 was supported, showing that SMA positively influences consumer attitudes toward a movie. This result aligns with research emphasizing the persuasive nature of social media advertising in shaping perceptions (Yang et al., 2022). The immediate and interactive nature of social media allows promotional content to engage users effectively, potentially creating more favorable attitudes than static forms of advertising. However, while SMA successfully influenced attitudes, H4 revealed that it did not translate into a corresponding increase in purchase intentions. This disconnect could imply that while consumers may have positive attitudes following interaction with social media advertisements, other factors—such as financial constraints or competition from alternative entertainment options—might limit actual purchase behavior (Johnston et al., 2018). Additionally, the entertainment environment in Tunisia may play a role; if advertising does not effectively capitalize on cultural or consumer preferences, particularly in a diverse market, it may not spur ticket sales despite generating positive attitudes (Noguti & Waller, 2024).

Lastly, H5 showed that attitudes toward a movie positively influence purchase intentions, a finding that reaffirms the established relationship between consumer attitudes and actual behavior. This result highlights the importance of strategies aimed at fostering positive consumer attitudes through SMA, as these attitudes are critical precursors to driving ticket sales (Seifert & Kwon, 2019). For film marketers in Tunisia, this finding suggests the necessity of aligning advertising content with audience interests and preferences to build positive attitudes, which can subsequently translate into purchasing actions.

## **5.2 Managerial implications**

In light of this information, it is preferable for filmmakers who aim to make their works profitable to focus their communication efforts on messages that create a set of positive and favorable beliefs about the film, rather than simply trying to encourage ticket purchases. This can be achieved by posting more content that highlights the film's qualities through trailers, teasers, posters, and photos. It is also essential to make use of one of social networks' ability to target audiences precisely based on criteria such as social media use habits or sociodemographic variables.

To address the lack of impact that electronic word of mouth has on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions, filmmakers could consider organizing private preview screenings dedicated to renowned critics and influential cultural figures at both local and international levels. These individuals can generate high-quality word of mouth with greater impact, thanks to the credibility of their opinions among the target audience and their ability to assess a work with deep technical and artistic understanding.

## **5.3 Limitations and Future Research**

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The data were collected from a relatively limited sample of Tunisian moviegoers which may restrict the generalizability of the results to other cultural or entertainment contexts. In addition, the study focused exclusively on direct relationships between constructs, without considering possible mediating or moderating effects that could offer a more nuanced understanding of consumer behavior. To address these limitations, future research could collect a larger number of observations from a more diverse sample in terms of age, occupation, and place of residence. A better understanding of the relative importance of each component grouped within a single variable would also improve the precision of their estimation. This is particularly relevant for advertising, which could be divided into elements such as trailers, teasers, behind-the-scenes videos, and posters. Regarding electronic word-of-mouth, future studies could examine the impact of its specific forms (reviews, photos, ratings, etc.) and its orientation, whether positive or negative. Such extensions would provide a more comprehensive perspective on how different digital communication mechanisms influence moviegoers' attitudes and purchase intentions.

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