



E-WOM on social media associated with the value of online boutique brands Tarapoto 2023

E-WOM en redes sociales asociadas al valor de las marcas de boutiques online Tarapoto 2023

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ABSTRACT

Online boutiques in Tarapoto have a need to timely address the perception of their consumers regarding their brand. They communicate it on virtual platforms such as social networks, so that they can positively or negatively influence the purchase decisions of users and, therefore, affect the brand value held by these companies. Therefore, the objective was to determine the association between E-WOM in networks and the brand value of online boutiques Tarapoto 2023. The research was constructed as applied and correlational (associative), the sample consisted of 384 customers to whom questionnaires were applied. The results showed that 54,4 % considered the EWOM as regular and the brand value was regular in 50,8 %, likewise, it was found that the dimensions E-WOM motivation, intention to consult E-WOM, E-WOM volume, EWOM adoption were significantly associated with the brand value with a significance of less than 0,05. Likewise, the E-WOM in networks is significantly associated with the brand value of online boutiques Tarapoto with a significance equal to 0,000 and a coefficient equal to 0,816. It is concluded that the E-WOM and the brand value of online boutiques presented a significant association, in this sense, in an increasingly digital world, the way in which customers communicate and share their experiences online can have a significant impact on the image of a brand.

Keywords: E-WOM; Brand Value; E-WOM Motivation; Intention to Consult E-WOM; EWOM Volume; E-WOM Adoption.

RESUMEN

Las boutiques online de Tarapoto poseen una necesidad de abordar oportunamente la percepción de sus consumidores respecto a su marca, la cual comunican en plataformas virtuales como las redes sociales; de manera que pueden influir positiva o negativamente en las decisiones de compra de los usuarios y, por ende, afectar el valor de marca que ostentan dichas empresas. Por tanto, se planteó como objetivo determinar la asociación entre el E-WOM en redes y el valor de las marcas de boutiques online Tarapoto 2023. La investigación se construyó como aplicada y de nivel correlacional (asociativo), la muestra se integró por 384 clientes a los cuales les fueron aplicados cuestionarios. Los resultados reflejaron que el 54,4 % consideró el E-WOM como regular y el valor de marca fue regular en un 50,8 %, así mismo, se comprobó que las dimensiones motivación E-WOM, la intención de consultar E-WOM; el volumen E-WOM, la adopción E-WOM se asociaron significativamente con el valor de marca con una significancia menor a 0,05, así mismo, el E-WOM en redes se asocia significativamente con el valor de las marcas de boutiques online Tarapoto con una significancia igual a 0,000 y un coeficiente igual a 0,816. Se concluye que el E-WOM y el valor de marca de boutiques online presentaron una asociación significativa, en este sentido, en un mundo cada vez más digital, la forma en que los clientes se comunican y comparten sus experiencias en línea puede tener un impacto significativo en la imagen de una marca.

Palabras clave: E-WOM; Valor de Marca; Motivación E-WOM; la Intención de Consultar E-WOM; el Volumen E-WOM; la Adopción E-WOM.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the communicative coverage entailed by virtual platforms has been perceived as a profitable opportunity from the perspective of business entities, so that their inclusion is outlined as a strategic tool in order to reduce the distance with their consumers, being able to directly affect their brand loyalty and their purchase intention. Regarding such an initiative, electronic word-of-mouth (E-wom) in social networks since they contribute to the dissemination of information linked to the brand, based on the experience of consumers, who could venture to provide their recommendations.(1)

Therefore, E-wom would be conceived as a convenient ally in the endeavor to promote the positioning of a specific brand, considering indicators such as message evaluation, sender motivation; as well as usability and credibility.(2) In accordance with the "State of Marketing 2020" report, at the global level; 74 % of companies focus their investment on social networks and center their efforts on addressing customer comments and live streams, reaffirming the interactive property that contributes to the percentage of profits and, consequently, to brand value in the market.(3)

Regarding the national landscape, it is asserted that, in general terms, 76% of Peruvians trust content referring to products that can be acquired through internet channels. Specifically, social media platforms were considered reliable from the point of view of 76% of respondents, in contrast with Brazil, where the figure reaches only 51%. Thus, the participation of E-Wom in digital purchases is consistent with the growth in e-commerce profits, which rose to 900%, compared with the previous month of 2020.(4)

From the previous paragraph, it is inferred that customer experience, referring to the consumer's interaction with the product or service associated with a brand, would affect the company's advantageous position in the market. According to marketing specialists, Barnechea (5), consumer experience entails variations in customer loyalty, brand advocacy, and repeat purchases; thereby fostering brand performance. Such a conclusion is not dismissed by Peruvian businesses since it would stimulate their effective commercial progress.(6,7,8,9,10)

Complementary to the foregoing, it should be noted that high competitiveness to achieve and maintain commercial leadership has been linked to two factors, namely changes in consumer preferences and convenience. Consequently, relevance is given to innovation and the promotion of brand value through differentiation, revealing a set of challenges in 2018, among which are highlighted value proposition (68 %), market participation (63 %) and competition (47 %), these being aspects whose impact increased, unlike in 2017. For this reason, it is stated as important that Peruvian companies incorporate the aforementioned data into their strategic marketing approach.(6)

However, from a local perspective, the online boutiques in Tarapoto that have formal sales status, where they offer clothing and accessories, show certain difficulties, since on social media users make unsatisfactory comments about the products they purchased and the boutiques cannot issue a response that resolves the issue. Likewise, the brand equity of these entities would not be sufficiently high, since it does not have a higher level of preference than that held by other brands belonging to the same commercial category; therefore, consumers would not have the products of the aforementioned boutiques among their first purchase options.(11,12,13,14,15,16,17)

Among the factors that would explain the detailed local scenario, it is necessary to indicate that deficiencies regarding the purchasing process and the quality of the products sold are not addressed in a timely manner, since users would be dissatisfied with the speed and appropriateness of the online response; furthermore, there would be no company representatives to handle the negative opinions that some consumers share on social networks, in order to obtain a solution through the appropriate collection of information. Therefore, this would result in consequences such as harming the brand's reputation and adversely affecting income from sales received.

In what way is E-WOM on social media associated with the value of online boutique brands in Tarapoto 2023?

Objective

In what way is E-WOM on social media associated with the brand value of online boutiques in Tarapoto 2023?

METHODS

Scope of the research

Political location

The research was conducted in online boutiques, whose representatives have politically belonged to the district of Tarapoto, located in the province of San Martín and the department of San Martín; housing a population of 86, 897 inhabitants.(7)

Geographic location

The representatives of the online boutiques resided in the Tarapoto district, located in the province of San Martín and this, in turn, in the department of San Martín. The aforementioned district had other geographic areas with which it bordered. Thus, to the north, it bordered the districts of San Antonio and La Banda de Shilcayo; to the south, with the district of Juan Guerra; to the east, with the district of La Banda de Shilcayo; and, to the west, with the districts of Cacatachi and Morales.

Figure 1. Geographic location of the boutiques in Tarapoto



Execution period

This work was carried out in the year 2023.

Authorizations and permits

The measurement of the variables using the questionnaires did not require authorizations.

Environmental control and biosafety protocols

Not applicable.

Application of international ethical principles

The drafting of the research project adhered to the guidelines comprising the regulations provided by the APA, so that authors whose contents were included in the sections of the project were adequately referenced, respecting the relevant citation format.

Likewise, with reference to the ethical precepts that governed the development of the study, the principles of autonomy and beneficence were considered. The precept of autonomy entailed obtaining informed consent, informing potential participants of the purpose of the research and their rights if they were included in the sample. This was based on the premise that the individuals' decision would be voluntary and informed; however, it could be revoked without subjecting them to reprisals. Regarding the principle of beneficence, the aim was to safeguard participants' safety by minimizing the risks to which they might be exposed.(8)

System of variables

Independent variable: E-Wom.

Empirical variable 1: E-Wom motivation; indicators are convenience, risk, and social.

Empirical variable 2: intention to consult E-Wom; its indicators are social media queries and searches for online opinions on search engines.

Empirical variable 3: E-Wom volume; its indicators are user recommendations and criticisms, the review of the number of opinions, and the review of comments and ratings of the boutiques.

Empirical variable 4: adoption of E-Wom; its indicators are acceptance of suggestions from online opinions and purchases by recommendation.

Dependent variable: brand value.

Empirical variable 1: loyalty; its indicators are online purchase, recommendation, and special and valuable attention.

Empirical variable 2: quality; its indicators are compliance with deadlines, fast service, ease of purchase, trained staff, and personalized attention.

Empirical variable 3: image; its indicators are constant activity on social networks and resolution of the purchase need.

Empirical variable 4: trust; its indicators are brand trajectory, differentiation, brand familiarity, and conveying trust.

Empirical variable 5: empathy; its indicators are kindness and respect.

Specific objective No. 1: Determine the level of E-WOM on social media in online boutiques in Tarapoto, 2023.			
Abstract variable	Concrete variable	Recording method	Unit of measurement
E-WOM	E-WOM motivation Intention to consult E-WOM E-WOM volume E-WOM adoption	Instrument	Ordinal

Specific objective No. 2: Define the level of brand value in online boutiques in Tarapoto, 2023.			
Abstract variable	Concrete variable	Recording method	Unit of measurement
Brand value	Loyalty Quality Image Trust Empathy	Instrument	Ordinal

Specific objective No. 3: Establish the association between E-WOM motivation on social media and the brand value of online boutiques in Tarapoto, 2023.			
Abstract variable	Concrete variable	Recording method	Unit of measurement
E-WOM motivation	Convenience, risk, and social factors.	Instrument	Ordinal

Specific objective No. 4: Identify the association between the intention to consult E-WOM on social media and the brand value of online boutiques in Tarapoto, 2023.			
Abstract variable	Concrete variable	Recording method	Unit of measurement
Intention to consult E-WOM	Social media queries and online opinion searches in search engines.	Instrument	Ordinal

Specific objective No. 5: Determine the association between E-WOM volume on social media and the brand value of online boutiques in Tarapoto, 2023.			
Abstract variable	Concrete variable	Recording method	Unit of measurement
E-WOM volume	User recommendations and criticisms, review of the number of opinions, and review of boutique comments and ratings.	Instrument	Ordinal

Specific objective No. 6: Determine the association between E-WOM adoption on social media and the brand value of online boutiques in Tarapoto, 2023.			
Abstract variable	Concrete variable	Recording method	Unit of measurement
E-WOM adoption	Acceptance of suggestions from online opinions and purchases by recommendation.	Instrument	Ordinal

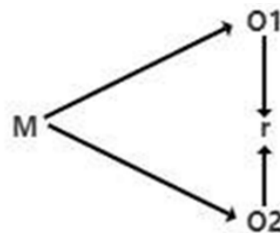
Research procedures

The research was classified as applied insofar as it focused on producing knowledge that facilitates understanding of the phenomena addressed, enabling the testing of the formulated hypotheses.(9) Therefore, the study aimed to examine the variables E-wom and the value of online boutique brands in Tarapoto.

The study was positioned at a correlational level, the purpose of which is to identify the relationship between a single variable or multiple variables; it cannot be interpreted as a cause-effect relationship. On the other hand, such an association can be described as direct or inverse.(10) Therefore, it was established whether the research variables were related.

The graph representing this design was as follows:

Figure 7. Description of variables by specific objective O6



Where:

M	=	Sample
O1	=	E-WOM
O2	=	Brand value.
r	=	Relationship (association)

The population is conceptualized as a set of elements, in this case people, that share common attributes considered of interest for the study, since their analysis, in turn, contributes to achieving the stated objectives.(11) Meanwhile, Arias (12) specified that the population can be infinite or finite, consisting of individuals who share common characteristics; in turn, a distinction is made between a finite population, identifiable by its exact number of components, and an infinite population, characterized by the absence of a precise count of its members or by exceeding 100,000 individuals, for which a formula must be applied to establish its sample. In accordance with the above, the population was infinite and consisted of customers of the online boutiques in Tarapoto.

The sample is conceived as a segment extracted from a given population, whose size depends on the sampling technique applied, which may be probabilistic or non-probabilistic; this, in turn, conditions its representativeness.(13) In this line, the sample was composed of 384 customers of the online boutiques in Tarapoto. Among the main boutiques, Morena Blanca Boutique, Ely Boutique, Casa de Palo Boutique, Beatriz Boutique, and Online Boutique Mega Exclusive stand out.

$$Z_{\alpha}^2 * P(1 - P)$$

Figure 8. Descriptive Analysis of E-WOM

$$N = \frac{Z_{\alpha}^2 * P(1 - P)}{d^2}$$

$$N = \frac{1.960^2 * 0.20 (1 - 0.20)}{0.04^2}$$

$$N = \frac{3.842 * 0.20 (0.80)}{0.0016}$$

$$N = \frac{3.842 * 0.16}{0.0016}$$

$$N = \frac{0.6147}{0.0016}$$

$$N = 384$$

Inclusion criteria

- Customers of online boutiques in Tarapoto.
- Clients who signed informed consent.
- Clients aged 18 years or older.

Exclusion Criteria

- Clients who withdrew from participation.
- Clients who experienced physical and/or psychological discomfort.
- Clients who did not adequately answer the questionnaires.
- Clients who had conflicts of interest.

The study was conducted using a non-experimental design, which avoids intentional manipulation of the variables under evaluation and focuses on the observation, collection, and analysis of data obtained through the application of the technique and instruments to fulfill the objectives already described.⁽¹⁴⁾ Thus, the techniques and instruments are detailed in the following paragraphs: The technique used was the survey, which is characterized by posing questions to participants in order to obtain information relevant to the study. It is a technique commonly chosen for its simple and versatile application; it can be conducted in person or virtually.⁽¹⁴⁾

In this case, the instrument was the questionnaire, which consists of a series of questions or statements in written form whose content is based on the variable or variables in question, with the instruction that it be completed using a specific response modality ⁽¹¹⁾. In this regard, 2 questionnaires were used: the first for measuring E-WOM and the second for assessing brand value, presented below: The self-developed E-WOM questionnaire consisted of 18 items distributed across 4 dimensions, namely E-WOM motivation, intention to consult E-WOM, E-WOM volume, and E-WOM adoption; these items can be scored according to a Likert-type scale with 5 values: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly agree.

In addition, the total score can fall into any of 3 levels: low, regular, and high. The brand value questionnaire comprised 24 items distributed across 5 dimensions, namely loyalty, quality, image, trust, and empathy; these items can be rated according to a Likert-type scale with 5 values: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly agree. Furthermore, the total score can fall into any of 3 levels: low, average, and high.

Regarding the properties of the instruments, the reliability of the questionnaires was established from a pilot test using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Regarding validity, content validity was performed through the judgment of three experts in the field, so that it would be possible to determine whether the items that make up the instruments measure what they are intended to measure.

In the present study, the approach was restricted to the variables of E-WOM and brand equity of online boutiques in Tarapoto. For this reason, a thorough review of current scientific literature was conducted accordingly to select previous research at the international and national levels. Likewise, theoretical bases were considered for proposing the operationalization of the variables, and based on the information collected, the questionnaire was chosen as the data collection instrument, which enabled obtaining information from statements.

After the application of questionnaires, the data were transferred to an Excel spreadsheet in order to carry out the descriptive statistical treatment, so that the results obtained could be organized in tables and/or figures. Then, the statistical software SPSS 27 was used for inferential statistical processing with the purpose of first determining the fit of the data distribution to normality, which allows defining the suitable correlational test to meet the stated objectives. Such correlational tests of Spearman's rho (non-parametric) were used. Lastly, the findings were presented and interpreted; and, on the other hand, the conclusions were stated in accordance with each proposed objective.

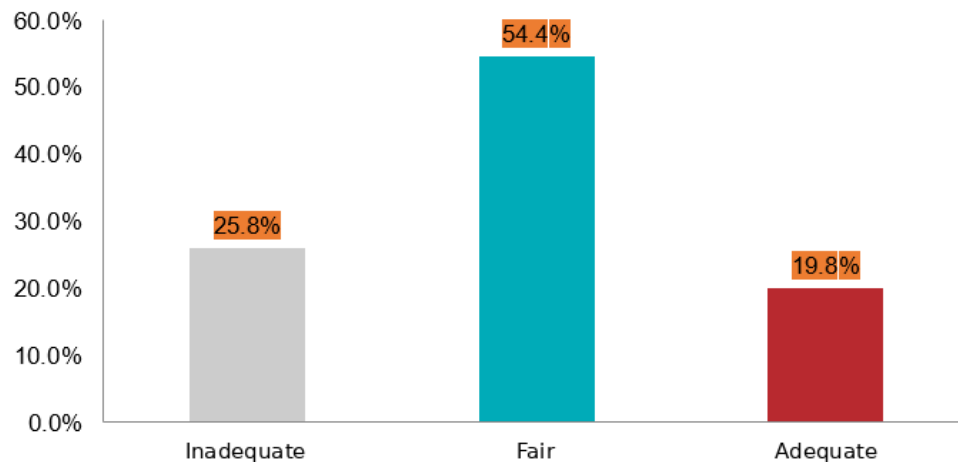
Results and Discussion

Specific Result 1

Objective 1: Determine the level of E-WOM on social media in online boutiques in Tarapoto, 2023.

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis of E-WOM

	Range From	Up to	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate	18	42	99	25,8
Regular	43	67	209	54,4
Adequate	68	90	76	19,8
Total			384	100

Figure 9. Descriptive analysis of brand equity

Regarding the previous table, it can be seen that most participants rated the E-WOM of online boutiques in Tarapoto as regular (54.4%), followed by 25.8% who classified it as inadequate and 19.8% who categorized it as adequate, because they consider that reviewing opinions on social media does not always allow them to identify the risks of buying online; for this reason, they prefer to review each of the social media platforms and define their purchase, since they consider positive comments on different platforms to be more reliable. In addition, they state that these social media platforms are valuable sources of information not only because they provide guidance on the boutique's trajectory but also on its handling of problems with other customers, which allows them to guide their purchasing decision. Therefore, most participants consider that their purchase orientation is guided by how other users perceive the boutique through their comments and the information that the boutique discloses through its social media platforms.

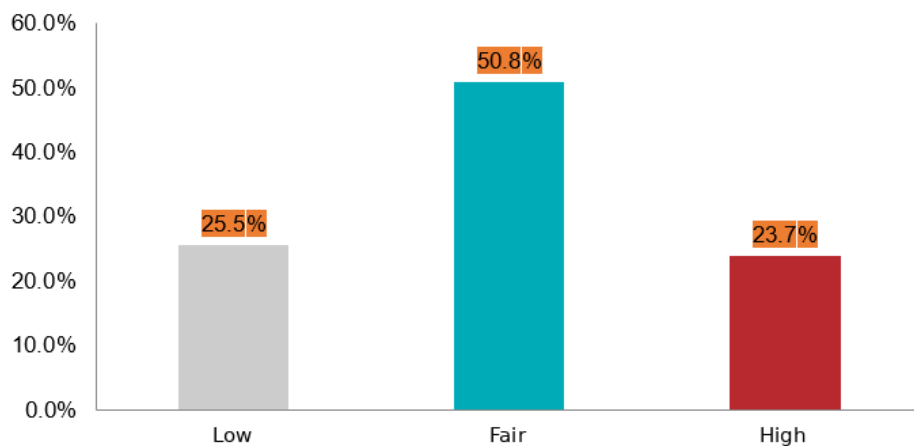
Specific Result 2

Objective 2: Define the level of brand value in online boutiques in Tarapoto, 2023.

Table 2. Descriptive analysis of brand equity

	Range From	Up to	Frequency	Percentage
Low	24	56	98	25,5
Fair	57	89	195	50,8
High	90	120	91	23,7
Total			384	100

Figure 10. Normality test



Regarding the previous table, most participants rated the brand equity of online boutiques in Tarapoto as regular (50.8%), followed by 25.5% who classified it as inadequate and 23.7% who categorized it as adequate. They consider that the purchase process in the boutiques is not always quick and simple, they have had some problems with the customer service they received, and they believe that this experience has not been entirely satisfactory. In addition, they indicate that they have made purchases and the delivery time may or may not be met; therefore, this service does not always meet their needs. However, they usually receive assistance with their purchase, which is favorable to them; moreover, this makes them feel secure in their purchase, and for this reason they continue as customers of the same boutiques, although there are aspects that require improvement.

Inferential analysis

Before presenting the results obtained for each objective, and because these are inferential results, the following normality test was performed:

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
E-WOM	0.089	384	0.000	0.965	384	0.000
E-WOM motivation	0.085	384	0.000	0.981	384	0.000
Intention to consult E-WOM	0.078	384	0.000	0.978	384	0.000
E-WOM volume	0.060	384	0.002	0.979	384	0.000
E-WOM adoption	0.061	384	0.002	0.972	384	0.000
Brand value	0.059	384	0.003	0.964	384	0.000

The previous table shows that the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic was used because the sample size is 50. It is observed that the factors presented a significance value less than 5%, which confirms that the variables and their dimensions presented data that do not conform to normality, demonstrating the use of a non-parametric test for correlations, in this case the Rho Spearman coefficient.

Specific result 3

Specific objective 3. Establish the association between E-WOM motivation in social networks and the value of online boutique brands in Tarapoto 2023.

Ho: E-WOM motivation in social networks is not significantly associated with the brand value of online boutiques in Tarapoto 2023.

Hi: E-WOM motivation on social networks is significantly associated with the value of online boutique brands in Tarapoto 2023.

Table 3. Relationship between E-WOM motivation and brand equity

	E-WOM motivation	Brand value
Spearman's rho	Sig. (bilateral)	0,000
	Correlation coefficient	0.801**
	N	384

The empirical evidence supports the significant and positive association between E-WOM motivation and brand equity, as observed in the results, where the significance value is less than 5%, that is, the p value obtained was less than 0.05 and the “Rho” value is 0.801, which reflects a considerable degree of association; therefore, as E-WOM motivation improves, brand equity will improve. Based on this, a considerable association is indicated between the dimension and the variable; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the hypothesis proposed in the research study is validated.

Specific result 4

Specific objective 4. Identify the association between the intention to consult E-WOM on social media and the value of online boutique brands in Tarapoto 2023.

Ho: The intention to consult E-WOM on social media is not significantly associated with the value of online boutique brands in Tarapoto 2023.

Hi: The intention to consult E-WOM on social media is significantly associated with the brand value of online boutiques in Tarapoto 2023.

The empirical evidence supports the significant and positive association between the intention to consult E-WOM and brand equity, as observed in the results, where the significance value is less than 5%, that is, the p value obtained was less than 0.05 and the “Rho” value is 0.769, which reflects a considerable degree of association; therefore, as the intention to consult E-WOM improves, brand equity will improve. Based on this, a considerable association is indicated between the dimension and the variable; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the hypothesis proposed in the research study is validated.

Specific result 5

Table 4. Relationship between the intention to consult E-WOM and brand equity

	Intention to consult E-WOM	Brand value
Spearman's rho	Sig. (bilateral)	0,000
	Correlation coefficient	0.769**
	N	384

Specific objective 5. Find the association between the volume of E-WOM in social networks and the brand value of online boutiques in Tarapoto 2023.

Ho: The volume of E-WOM on social media is not significantly associated with the value of online boutique brands in Tarapoto 2023.

Hi: The volume of E-WOM on social media is significantly associated with the value of online boutique brands in Tarapoto 2023.

Table 5. Relationship between E-WOM volume and brand equity

	Volume of E-WOM	Brand value
Spearman's rho	Sig. (bilateral) Correlation coefficient	0,000 0.787**
	N	384

Empirical evidence supports the significant and positive association between E-WOM volume and brand equity, as observed in the results, where the significance value is less than 5%, that is, the p value obtained was less than 0.05 and the “Rho” value is 0.787, which reflects a considerable degree of association; therefore, as E-WOM volume improves, brand equity will improve. Based on this, a considerable association is indicated between the dimension and the variable; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the hypothesis proposed in the research study is validated.

Specific result 6

Specific objective 6. Determine the association between the adoption of E-WOM on social media and the brand value of online boutiques in Tarapoto 2023.

Ho: The adoption of E-WOM on social networks is not significantly associated with the value of online boutique brands in Tarapoto 2023.

Hi: The adoption of E-WOM on social media is significantly associated with the value of online boutique brands in Tarapoto, 2023.

The empirical evidence supports a significant and positive association between the adoption of E-WOM and brand equity, as observed in the results where the significance value is less than 5%; that is, the obtained p-value was less than 0.05, and the “Rho” value is 0.811, reflecting a considerable degree of association. Therefore, as the adoption of E-WOM improves, brand equity will improve. Based on this, a considerable association between the dimension and the variable is indicated; thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the hypothesis proposed in the research study is validated.

Overall result

Table 6. Relationship between E-WOM adoption and brand equity

	Adoption of E-WOM	Brand value
Spearman's rho	Sig. (bilateral) correlation coefficient	0,000 0.811**
	N	384

General objective. To determine the association between E-WOM on social networks and the brand value of online boutiques in Tarapoto, 2023.

Ho: E-WOM on social networks is not significantly associated with the value of online boutique brands in Tarapoto, 2023.

Hi: E-WOM on social networks is significantly associated with the value of online boutique brands in Tarapoto, 2023.

Table 7. Relationship between E-WOM and brand equity

	E-WOM	Brand value
Spearman's rho	Sig. (bilateral)	0,000
	Correlation coefficient	0.816**
	N	384

Empirical evidence supports a significant and positive association between E-WOM and brand equity, as observed in the results where the significance value is less than 5%; that is, the obtained p-value was less than 0.05, and the “Rho” value is 0.816, reflecting a considerable degree of association. Therefore, as E-WOM improves, brand equity will improve. Based on this, a considerable association between the variables is indicated; thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the hypothesis proposed in the research study is validated.

DISCUSSION

After fulfilling the first specific objective, it was found that E-WOM motivation and brand value were significantly associated, with a p-value of 0.000 and a coefficient of 0.801. Since customers who are motivated to share their experiences and opinions online have a positive influence on others' perception of the boutique's brand, when consumers speak well of the brand online, this can have a direct impact on how the brand is valued and positioned in the market.(18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25) This agrees with evidence from Purwianti (15), who reports that brand image has a positive and significant effect on purchase intention (t=3.028, p=0.003); it is also linked to Torres (16), who stated that E-WOM on social media is directly and significantly related to the score given by users to the brand, as well as to the sentiment developed toward the brand.(26,27,28,29,30,31,32) Based on this, it is noted that E-WOM and customer motivation to share their opinions online are key factors in building brand image and commercial success, where online consumer opinions play an increasingly important role in purchase decision-making.(33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40)

Theoretically, this is supported by Ruiz (17), who points out that the online brand experience (sensory and affective) had a greater impact on the model and a better association with variables such as trust, E-WOM, and satisfaction. Therefore, it is argued that when customers have a positive online experience, this experience not only influences their own perception of the brand but also triggers a series of beneficial secondary effects. This impacts trust and credibility, which increase since personal recommendations are considered more credible than direct advertising; moreover, social influence becomes relevant, as shared online experiences can inspire other consumers to try the brand. The viral effect can cause these experiences to spread rapidly, reaching a much broader audience than expected; coupled with this, the positive emotions evoked by shared experiences can generate an emotional bond between the brand and consumers, strengthening loyalty. (41,42,43,44,45) Ultimately, positive E-WOM increases the brand's online visibility, attracting new customers and providing constant conversion opportunities; these elements combine to make the positive online experience an essential component in building and consolidating a brand's reputation in today's digital world. (46,47,48,49,50,51,52)

Regarding the second specific objective, it was found that the intention to consult E-WOM and brand equity were significantly associated, with a p-value of 0.000 and a coefficient of 0.769. Since customers who intend to search for and trust online opinions and recommendations have a positive influence on how they perceive the boutique's brand, when consumers show interest in consulting E-WOM before making a purchase, this may be related to a higher brand valuation. This agrees with evidence from Sun et al. (18), who show that positive E-WOM significantly affected both national ($\beta=0.387$, $p=0.000$) and foreign brands ($\beta=0.376$, $p=0.000$); this also agrees with Domínguez (19), who stated that E-WOM was significantly related to purchase intention ($r=0.786$, $p=0.000$). These findings underscore the importance of online boutiques effectively managing their online presence and fostering customer trust in E-WOM, which could be achieved through strategies that promote positive reviews, active participation in review platforms, and transparency in information about products and services online. (53,54,55,56,57,58)

Theoretically, this is supported by Farzin (20), who explains that eWOM played a role in shaping brand image in consumers' minds and their consequent purchase intention. Consequently, eWOM becomes a bridge between consumer experiences and brand image, because when customers share their experiences and opinions online, they contribute to the construction of the perception that other consumers have of the brand, and these digital conversations act as authentic testimonials that can influence brand image more effectively than traditional advertising. (59,60,61,62,63)

Regarding the third specific objective, it was found that E-WOM volume and brand value were significantly associated, with a p-value of 0.000 and a coefficient of 0.787, which highlights that the volume of online conversations and mentions can have a substantial impact on the way customers perceive a boutique's brand; in other words, when there is a greater amount of positive or relevant E-WOM around a brand, that brand is more likely to be valued positively by consumers. This agrees with the evidence of Purwianti (15), who reports that e-WOM directly and significantly influences purchase intention ($t = 8.000$, $p = 0.000$). It also coincides with Villarroel (21), who states that received e-WOM significantly influenced brand equity (coefficient = 0.264, $p = 0.000$); in other words, when consumers see a greater volume of positive or relevant E-WOM around a brand, they tend to value it more positively. This may be because the opinions and recommendations of other customers act as validation of the brand's quality and authenticity. (64)

Theoretically, this is supported by Bilal et al. (22), who stated that presence in virtual media responds to a need to forge personal identity, increasing users' confidence and sharing their experience about the products purchased; therefore, there is a greater probability that, when users generate identification on the digital platform, they will have a more satisfactory purchase experience.

Regarding the fourth specific objective, it was found that E-WOM volume and brand equity were significantly associated, with a p-value of 0.000 and a coefficient of 0.811, since the number of online conversations and mentions about a brand has a direct impact on how customers perceive its value; therefore, when E-WOM is abundant and positive, it tends to increase consumers' valuation of the brand. This agrees with the evidence from Budiman (23), who reported that e-WOM exerts a positive and significant effect on both brand image ($\beta = 0.222$, $p = 0.008$) and brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.284$, $p = 0.000$); likewise, it coincides with Seo et al. (24): e-WOM significantly influenced only a single dimension of brand equity: brand awareness ($\beta = 0.472$, $CR = 5.598$, $p < 0.01$). In other words, when E-WOM is abundant and positive, consumers tend to value the brand more positively; this is because online conversations act as authentic testimonials that validate the quality and authenticity of the brand; moreover, E-WOM can increase brand visibility and generate a constant flow of positive opinions and recommendations, which further reinforces its value.

Theoretically, this is supported by Carvalho et al. (25), who state that E-WOM entails that commercial companies maintain a closer connection with consumers. Consequently, when commercial companies foster and effectively manage E-WOM, they actively participate in online conversations and respond to consumers' opinions and recommendations; this creates a closer and more authentic connection between the company and its customers. Consumers appreciate that companies listen to their comments and engage in online dialogue, which can strengthen the trust relationship.(65)

Finally, regarding the general objective, it was evidenced that E-WOM and brand equity were significantly associated, with a p-value of 0.000 and a coefficient of 0.816, given that E-WOM involves not only monitoring social media and review sites, but also actively participating, responding to customer comments, and promoting the generation of authentic and valuable content that motivates customers to share their positive experiences, which will make it possible to strengthen brand image and achieve market success. This agrees with the evidence of Purwianti (15), who stated that positive e-WOM produces a direct and significant effect on brand image ($t = 3.931$, $p = 0.000$); likewise, it coincides with Budiman (23), who states that e-WOM significantly impacts brand equity ($\beta = 0.222$, $p = 0.008$). Consequently, companies that actively participate in online conversations, foster positive E-WOM, and generate authentic content are better positioned to build a solid and successful brand in the digital environment.

Theoretically, this is supported by Carvalho et al. (25), who stated that social networks constitute virtual scenarios where information regarding their perception or assessment of a given brand, both favorable and unfavorable, is disseminated; this can affect other users' decision-making regarding the same brand. Therefore, companies must be aware of the importance of social networks as channels for E-WOM and must actively participate in these conversations, which entails responding to customer comments, fostering positive reviews, and promoting the generation of authentic and valuable content that motivates customers to share their positive experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

A predominance of the regular level has been identified, represented by 54.4% in the E-WOM of online boutiques in Tarapoto from the customers' perspective. Therefore, the lack of differentiation among online boutiques in terms of products, prices, or services can lead to a generalized perception of regularity among customers. Likewise, information saturation on social media and the influence of multiple sources of feedback could also dilute the perception of experiences, thus contributing to a predominant percentage of regular opinions. This is accompanied by a lack of incentives to express extreme opinions, leading to a greater proportion of neutral feedback.

The predominance of the regular level accounts for 50.8% of brand equity in online boutiques in Tarapoto from the customers' perspective. This phenomenon can be attributed to several interrelated factors. First, the online boutique market is undergoing a consolidation phase, in which differentiation between brands becomes less evident to consumers. Furthermore, the lack of exceptional experiences can lead to a more neutral perception of brand equity among customers. Therefore, the lack of importance of differentiation strategies and the absence of memorable brand experiences can hinder standing out in an increasingly competitive and diversified market.

It was found that E-WOM and the brand equity of online boutiques show a significant association. In this sense, in an increasingly digital world, the way customers communicate and share their experiences online can have a significant impact on a brand's image and, therefore, on its commercial success, because consumers increasingly value authenticity and the quality of online interactions with brands, which can influence their overall perception and purchase decision. Therefore, the need for online boutiques to proactively manage their online presence and encourage positive customer feedback is highlighted.

It was established that there is a significant association between E-wom motivation on social media and the value of online boutique brands. Therefore, marketing and brand management strategies must include a strong focus on engagement and interaction on social media platforms, emphasizing the importance of actively listening to customers on social media, responding efficiently to their comments and concerns, and encouraging positive word of mouth. Furthermore, this suggests that online boutiques can benefit greatly from engaging their followers and customers on social media by creating relevant and authentic content that generates positive discussions and comments.

There is a significant association between the intention to consult E-wom on social media and the value of online boutique brands. In this sense, consumers increasingly use social media

as reliable sources of information and recommendations about products and brands, which may be due to the search for opinions and experiences of other consumers before making purchase decisions. In this context, online boutiques have the opportunity to strengthen their presence on social media and encourage positive reviews and favorable word of mouth.

The significant association between the volume of E-wom on social media and the value of online boutique brands prevails. This suggests that the number of online conversations and mentions can directly impact how these boutiques are perceived and their commercial performance. Therefore, online boutiques must actively pay attention to what is said about them in these spaces and participate effectively in conversations; this includes responding to customer comments, addressing concerns, and fostering positive dialogue.

There is a significant association between the adoption of E-wom on social media and the brand value of online boutiques. Therefore, online boutiques that understand and leverage the power of online recommendations and opinions can reap important benefits. Thus, it is noted that online boutiques that actively adopt strategies to encourage and manage these conversations can influence the perception of their brand and, ultimately, their commercial success.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is suggested that online boutiques focus on offering unique or exclusive products, as well as personalized services that generate memorable experiences for customers. In addition, it is important to actively manage their social media presence, highlighting distinctive aspects of the boutique and encouraging customer participation through contests, surveys, or interactive promotions. Providing tangible incentives, such as special discounts or gifts, for leaving extreme opinions could also stimulate more diverse and useful feedback. These actions will help break away from perceived regularity and stand out in a competitive market, generating a stronger and more attractive brand image for consumers.

It is recommended to invest in staff training so that staff can provide expert and personalized advice to customers, thereby creating an emotional connection and a unique shopping experience. Likewise, developing creative marketing campaigns that highlight the brand's values and identity will help achieve differentiation in a saturated market. By doing so, online boutiques can increase customer loyalty and stand out from the competition, even in an increasingly diversified and competitive environment.

It is suggested that boutique owners in Tarapoto establish, during the current year, a team responsible for actively monitoring and managing the social media platforms on which the boutique has a presence. This team should respond to customer comments and questions in a timely and professional manner, display a receptive and service-oriented attitude, monitor mentions and reviews of the brand on social media, and address any negative comments constructively, resolving problems whenever possible.

It is recommended that, during the current year, boutique owners in Tarapoto offer discounts or special promotions to customers who leave positive reviews about their purchase. This strategy not only encourages greater customer participation in the creation of positive E-WOM but can also result in a virtuous circle in which satisfied customers generate more sales and, in turn, more opportunities to receive positive reviews.

Boutique owners in Tarapoto, together with the marketing team, are advised to create, during the current year, authentic and valuable content that attracts followers on social media. This content may include posts about products, brand stories, tips related to the boutique's niche, among other types, since this will allow a deeper and more emotional connection to be established with users by sharing authentic stories about the brand and its origin, which can strengthen customer loyalty.

It is recommended that, during the current year, owners of boutiques in Tarapoto implement loyalty programs that reward customers for their commitment to the brand and for sharing their experiences online. These programs should aim to offer incentives such as exclusive discounts, gifts, or early access to products and promotions, since this will motivate customers to actively participate in the creation of positive E-WOM by sharing their experiences and recommending the brand through online reviews and comments.

It is suggested that boutique owners in Tarapoto ensure, during the current year, that boutique profiles on social media are complete and updated with contact information, business hours, and relevant details. This will improve the credibility and trust of the audience by showing that the boutique operates professionally and transparently, and will help avoid confusion or misunderstandings on the part of customers about how to contact or visit the physical store.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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