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# Electronic Word-of-Mouth and Social Influence as Predictors of Consumer Behavior among Food Services in Municipality of Kapalong

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## Abstract

The study aimed to determine the domains of electronic word-of-mouth and social influence that significantly predicts or influence the consumer behavior among the food services costumers in the Municipality of Kapalong. The respondents of the study were 384 selected food services costumers in Kapalong, Davao del Norte. The researcher used a quantitative non-experimental utilizing correlational technique in research and utilized the modified and adapted research questionnaires as instrument. The statistical tools used in this research include Mean, Pearson-r, and Regression Analysis. Results revealed that the level of the electronic word-of-mouth of the respondents is high, the level of social influence is high, while the level of the consumer behavior indicates a high level. Furthermore, this study found out that there is a significant relationship been the electronic word-of-mouth and consumer behavior. Also, a significant relationship between the social influence and consumer behavior was determined. Likewise, sender's expertise, eWOM quantity and eWOM quality domains significantly influence consumer behavior. Moreover, in social Influence domains, the role in society, family, and reference group influence consumer behavior. Lastly, the results of the study support the theories of Involvement Theory, Social Judgement Theory, Theory on Reasoned Action, and the Proposition of Erkan and Evan (2016).

## Keywords

Business administration, Electronic word-of-mouth, Social influence, Consumer behavior, Kapalong, Davao del Norte, Philippine

## INTRODUCTION

Attitudes of consumers towards food depend on many attributes which affect in different ways their preferences, either to accept and select the products, or reject them (Nowicki & Sekora, 2018, p. 4). Since buying behavior is influenced by various problematic issues including the impact of social media (Mangold & Folds, 2019, p. 357-365), decision paralysis or information overload (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000, p. 995-1006), marketers need to understand and address these issues to ensure sustainability of resources and maximize marketing effectiveness (Engel, J. F., Blackwell, R. D., & Miniard, P. W., 2018, p 663-675). Studying, therefore, consumer buying behavior is of paramount importance as it provides valuable insights into consumer preferences, motivations, and decision-making processes. This knowledge enables marketers to develop effective marketing strategies, design products and services that meet customer needs, and create impactful promotional campaigns. By understanding why consumers buy certain products or services and how they make purchasing decisions, businesses can tailor their offerings to align with consumer expectations, resulting in increased customer satisfaction and loyalty (Solomon, M. R., Russell-Bennett, R., & Preville, J., 2019, p. 7).

Further, an integral part of consumer behavior in the food industry is raising funds to meet the needs of people which can be regarded as a condition without which there is no process of consumption. This acquisition may take place on the market by consumer purchase, or with the exclusion of the market by the self-supply or acquisition of certain goods. Hence, studying consumer behavior is integral in the part of the food industry owners as it will enable them to sustain their capital, and provide the basic needs of the people (Nowicki & Sekora, 2018, p. 4).

On the other hand, previous studies explained that electronic word-of-mouth is one of the most pertinent ways of online communication (Prasad et al., 2017, p. 18). The growing popularity of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter have transformed the way online word-of-mouth is disseminated and consumed in the digital age (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017, p. 4). Also, by posting recommendations and opinions about a product or service, everyone is socially influenced and motivated and is looking forward to enticing friends, acquaintances, or potential consumers to validate their options on the services they experienced. Hence, consumer behavior, specifically in buying and purchasing foods and services, is greatly affected because of the social influence brought by acquaintances through online postings (Perera & Gayathree, 2017, p. 17).

In addition, electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is a communication between people to people which takes place on various social media platforms. Nowadays, consumers are becoming more and more aware of the products they are purchasing and consuming. Before purchasing the product, consumers search for its details, and look for previous customers' reviews and opinions for validation. People also share their opinion about the product or services with each other before buying/purchasing the product. Hence, customer information plays an integral role in influencing buying behavior like in buying or in precluding from availing the product or services (Hadke & Anute, 2021, p. 387).

In the business industry, marketers always attempt to detect the consumers behavior in purchasing intention due to its importance in understanding how consumers think, feel, and choose from different options. There is an essential factor that influences consumer buying behavior such as cultural, social, personal, and psychological factors. To which, social influence from peers, friends, and family is the most influential. With this, consumers are immensely affected by what they hear (word-of-mouth) from others in their surrounding environment or with their social and personal environment (Mehyar et al., 2020, p. 183-190).

In addition, eWOM has an outstanding influence as compared with other various marketing strategies and advertisements methods. When this form of marketing strategies is used in social media sites, a significant increase in its effect is clearly visible. Meanwhile, another study made several theoretical contributions and showed that consumers' behavior in making a purchase toward certain products vary depending on online review quality, credibility or sender's expertise, and quantity, which would yield different behaviors in making a purchase. As per beta values and significance of the study, the findings indicated that eWOM quantity is the most influential dimension or predictor on consumers' purchasing behavior followed by eWOM quality (Poturak & Turkyilmaz, 2018, p. 138-160).

In fact, there were already published studies which investigated the relationship between eWOM, social influence, and consumer behavior variables. For instance, Mishra and Satish (2016, p. 223-229) studied electronic word of mouth which observed that WOM communication is used for building marketing and communication. The invention of the internet and social media created a new electronic dimension in traditional WOM, because of that, WOM is converted into e-WOM. They focused primarily on various aspects of e-WOM, such as its effects on the purchasing decision process of consumers as well as consumer behaviors in making a purchase. The study concluded that the use of eWOM is an effective marketing strategy in enticing customers to make a purchase within the business.

It has also been pointed out how social influence affects the consumers' behavior in making a purchase. As explained by a study, social media allows consumers to share their opinions about the products and services to create and promote the brand. Consumers are engaging themselves with online reviews as through this way, they can make their purchasing decisions because of the influence of the social media posts. With the development of the internet, eWOM has gained much importance in online shopping especially in food industries. Consumers have the ability to share recommendations with their friends and followers on social media platforms. By directing them to the company's website, where information about various products or services is available, consumers can influence the purchasing decisions of others by providing their suggestions and opinions (Erkan & Evan, 2016, p. 4).

Furthermore, another study emphasized that social media is a great factor in enticing prospective customers and target market. Accordingly, consumers share their brand experiences and feelings by tendering different posts in social media. Electronic word-of-mouth information shared in social media reaches many different users who can use this information in making purchasing decisions. It can be deduced that social media is a social factor that is deemed influential for consumer behavior. In general perspective, it is common in today's consumers that they'll try to search and collect important information first on the product or services before buying them. Consumers are therefore taking product reviews and comments of prior consumers that are available on various social media platforms before making purchase decision and behaviour (Lin et al., 2017, p. 225- 244).

To establish the ground of this study, theoretical perspectives were taken or anchored such as the Involvement Theory of Sherif and Cantril (1947, p. 304) which was first proposed in their study on Social Judgment Theory. They explained that consumer involvement indicates the degree of consumers' familiarity with the internet and their initiative to collect information through the internet which reflects the importance of the internet to them. It was also added that the degree of involvement plays a significant role on consumer purchase intention and behavior as involvement can influence the network and discrimination ability. They emphasized that the higher the involvement of consumers, the stronger their ability to judge and analyze word-of-mouth information. With this, social influence and electronic word of mouth affects the behavior of consumers on their purchase decisions.

Another theory that supports this study is the Theory of Reasoned Action by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980, p. 98-109). Accordingly, the attitude towards behavior plays a significant role in predicting a customer's behavioral intention, which is influenced by their environment, including interactions with peers, family, or acquaintances. It was also

established that consumer attitude towards any advertisement affects consumer exposure, attention, and reaction to the individual advertisement through a variety of cognitive and affective processes. Hence, the theory pointed out that advertisements are social factors that positively and negatively affect the behavior of the customers towards making a purchase and purchase decisions respectively.

Finally, the study also considered the proposition of Erkan and Evan (2016, p. 3-11) which explained and emphasized that social media have created opportunities for the consumers to spread positive word of mouth in the form of product reviews which help other customers in making their purchasing decisions. As added, electronic word of mouth also develops trust among its consumers that result more favorable attitude from consumers towards the brand. Hence, social media is considered influential among behaviors of consumers especially in making a purchase or buying.

The theories and proposition presented and explained above illustrated how the behavior of the consumer was greatly influenced by the internet and others from their social environment. It was clearly emphasized that social media, especially Facebook and other social networking sites, is a factor that affects the decision-making of the consumers in making a purchase especially food-related purchase. The online comments, recommendations, and reviews of other customers became the basis of potential basis of customers in making a purchase as well.

Meanwhile, presented in Figure 1 is the conceptual framework of the study which contains the two independent variables and one dependent variable. For the first independent variable, it has three indicators given by Lin et al (2013, p. 1-15) namely: *eWOM quality* or the positive and negative or may it be the good and bad comments of the customers about the product; *eWOM quantity* or the number of comments and feedback given by the customers; and *sender's expertise* or the competence, knowledge, and understanding of the sender or commentator about the product or service being judged or commented.

The second independent variable is the social influence which has three indicators given by Perreau (2014, p. 6) namely: *reference groups* or a group to which an individual or another group is compared; *family* or the siblings or immediate family member of the customer; and *role in society* or the direct or indirect relationship of someone to the customer.

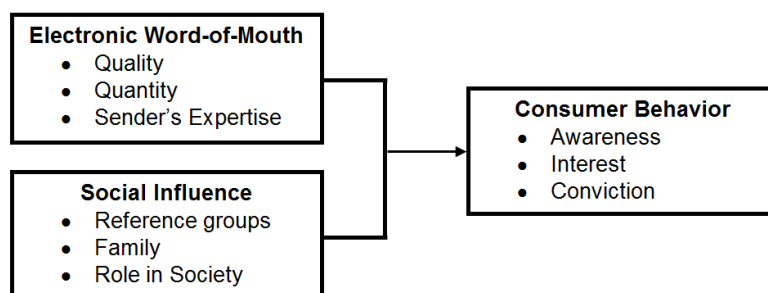


Fig. 1 Conceptual paradigm showing the variables of the study

The dependent variable of the study is consumer behavior which has three indicators given by Sama (2019, p. 17-25) which include: *awareness* or knowledge or perception of a situation or fact or to a thing; *interest* or the level of enthusiasm and positive perception of someone to or with something; and *conviction* or a firm held belief or opinion with something.

Moreover, the reason why the researcher prompted to conduct this study is that there have been only few studies who have come across to conduct research using the same variables of the current study that is conducted in the local context specifically in the Municipality of Kapalong taking the different food services owners and customers as the respondents. This study is perceived to be beneficial and efficient to be conducted in the said municipality since Kapalong is a first-class municipality where its economy is growing and developing. One manifestation is the presence of different food services which connotes that it is a marketable location given the presence of different schools across all year levels especially a local college. Additionally, there were studies conducted like the study of Okazaki (2009, p. 452-461) about social influence and electronic word-of-mouth, but it is a comparison between personal computer and mobile phones as mediums. Another related study is the study of Sama (2019 p. 17-25), but the author focused only on the impact of television advertisements on consumer behavior among customers. No attempts yet had been made to investigate taking three variables in a single study. As a result, this study may fill the gap to the growing body of literature relating to electronic word-of-mouth, social influence, and consumer behavior since there were only limited studies about these variables to which previous studies failed to highlight and answer.

This study aims to determine the influence of electronic word-of-mouth and social influence on the consumer behavior among customers of the different services in Kapalong. Specifically, it seeks to describe the level of electronic word-of-mouth among customers in the different food services in terms of e-WOM quality, e-WOM quantity, and sender's expertise; to describe the level of social influence among customers in the different food services in terms of reference groups, family, and role in society; to describe the level of consumer behavior among customers in the different food services in terms of awareness, interest, and conviction. This study also seeks to determine the significant relationship between electronic word-of mouth and consumer behavior, and social influence and consumer behavior. Finally, this study aims to determine which domain of electronic word-of mouth and social influence best predicts consumer behavior.

Also, the researcher considered the social value and relevance of the study, of which the results and findings of the study would provide the different business owners of the different food services in the locality with pertinent information and guidance on how to improve customer service to their clients and customers so that an optimum sales and income would be guaranteed. In addition, the findings of the study would add to the growing body of literature related to consumer behavior, electronic word-of-mouth, and social influence. Likewise, findings of the study are deemed beneficial to the Local Government Unit of Kapalong for planning and development considering the economic growth of the locality with due consideration to the different businesses specifically relating food services. They can strategize and develop plans and development that would help this individual be a contributory factor to facilitate the development and welfare of the municipality.

Furthermore, this study would also be beneficial among food services owners in understanding the insights and perceptions of the different consumers in relation to their business; to the different customers and consumers especially those who are fond of buying or dining in with food services. The result may help them on how to become a wise and responsible consumer especially on assessing the food being offered by the business owners; to the Local Government Unit of Kapalong specifically the Economic Sector and the Planning and Development Office. Findings of the study would help them analyze the emergent needs of the consumers with the different food services in the municipality; lastly, for other researchers who manifested the enthusiasm to study the same topic and thesis under study which would be utilizing different research design as not used in the current study. This is for them to revalidate and to exemplify more the results and findings of the study.

## **METHOD**

This section presents the research respondents, materials and instruments of the study, and the design and procedure to which this study sternly follows during the conduct of the investigation.

### **Research Respondent**

The respondents of this study were the different customers of the different food services in the different barangays in the Municipality of Kapalong. As of February 2023, there is a total of 104 food services registered in the Municipality of Kapalong. Since the exact number of customers is unknown, the measurement that would be used for sample size is the Cochran formula for an unknown population and an unknown population proportion.

Additionally, the respondents were selected and chosen using the systematic random sampling technique. As explained, The main advantage of systematic random sampling is that, It enables the researcher to incorporate some degree of method or process into the random selection of individuals,. Because of its efficiency, this method makes it very straightforward for researchers and analysts to choose an acceptable sample size. The Strata were 7 barangays namely; Barangay Maniki, Barangay Capungagan, Barangay Gabuyan, Barangay Pag-asa, Barangay Luna, Barangay Sampao and Barangay Semong. The 104 food services had maximum of 3 respondents each, the respondent will be chosen via systematic random sampling, every 3<sup>rd</sup> customer who is fit on the inclusion criterion will be observed.

Further, to have uniformity and authenticity of the respondents, the researcher sets an inclusion criterion which include: the customer must be (1) a resident of the Municipality of Kapalong; (2) must have availed the services offered by the different food services store for at least once; (3) can be male or female; (4) and must be at least 18 years old and above, Then the exclusion criteria are those which are not observed or under the stated five (5) inclusion. In addition to this, though respondents are qualified with the set criteria, if they wish to withdraw their participating in the process of conducting the study, the respondents' decision will be truly respected and that they will be withdrawn in the study with no harm and risks.

For the gathering of the possible target population, the researcher sent a letter to the Office of the Registry and Licensing Department in the Municipality of Kapalong to know the total number of registered food services in Kapalong. After which, the researcher opted to have a quota sampling technique in gathering the total samples of which, these samples are a customer of these food services. But before that, the researcher pilot tested the research instrument to check possible sample in Barangay Maniki. These are now those people and residents who qualified in the inclusion criteria. Lastly, the researcher opted to have a total of 384 samples in the conduct of this study.

Additionally, this study was conducted among different food services customers in the Municipality of Kapalong, province of Davao del Norte which is known for its banana industry since the municipality is almost surrounded by banana plantation which became a contributory factor to the growth and progress of the economy of the municipality. Consequently, with the demands of the society and with the need of the people, local entrepreneurs and business owners build and open different food services like cafes, restaurants, and food stalls to cater the need of the people for dine-in and for take-out food services. Also, the municipality comprises of 14 barangays, however, the study was conducted in 7 barangays which contains the highest numbers of registered food services. Other consideration of choosing is that, it is situated in the downtown where different schools from elementary, secondary, and tertiary students are situated. Also, aside from that, there are also a lot of employed individual as the municipality has retail and wholesale merchandising businesses where working individuals are employed as well as the teachers and LGU employees.

### **Materials and Instrument**

The research instrument of the study is an adopted questionnaire from Sama (2019, p. 17-25) for the dependent variable consumer behavior; from Lin, Wu, and Chen (2013, p. s3-39-s3-42) for the independent variable electronic word-of-



mouth; and from the research study of Meral Acemogullari (2020, p. 45-47) for the second independent variable social influence which the indicators were also adopted or taken. For consumer behavior, there are 4 items for awareness; another 4 items for interest; and last 3 items for conviction. For the first independent variable electronic word-of-mouth, there are 5 questions for quality; another 4 questions for quantity; and last 5 questions for sender's expertise. Lastly, for the second independent variable, there are 4 questions for reference group; another 4 questions for family; next 4 questions for role in society.

Furthermore, the adopted research instrument will be further validated by the panel of examiners to check whether the construct and content of the instrument reliably measure the intended outcome of the study as well as to determine the cross-content reliability and validity of the questionnaires. Experts can identify such by evaluating the clarity of directions and items, presentations/organization of items, suitability of items, and adequateness of items per category, attainment of the purpose, objectivity and scale evaluation in rating system. In addition, the instrument will be pilot tested to 30 participants after the researcher will secure a certificate of compliance from the University of Mindanao Research Ethics Committee.

The parameter limits below were used in the level of consumer behavior among customers in the different food services in the Municipality of Kapalong for better interpretation of data and results.

Range of Means	Descriptive Equivalent	Description
4.20 - 5.00	Very High	If the measure described in consumer behavior item is always observed.
3.40 - 4.19	High	If the measure described in consumer behavior item is oftentimes observed.
2.60 - 3.39	Average	If the measure described in consumer behavior item is sometimes observed.
1.80 - 2.59	Low	If the measure described in consumer behavior item is seldom observed.
1.00 - 1.79	Very Low	If the measure described in consumer behavior item is never observed.

Another parameter limits below were used in the level of electronic word-of-mouth among customers in the different food services in the Municipality of Kapalong for better interpretation of data and results.

Range of Means	Descriptive Equivalent	Description
4.20 - 5.00	Very High	If the measure described in electronic word-of-mouth item is always evident.
3.40 - 4.19	High	If the measure described in electronic word-of-mouth item is oftentimes evident.
2.60 - 3.39	Average	If the measure described in electronic word-of-mouth item is sometimes evident.
1.80 - 2.59	Low	If the measure described in electronic word-of-mouth item is seldom evident.
1.00 - 1.79	Very Low	If the measure described in electronic word-of-mouth item is never evident.

This parameter limits below were used in the level of social influence among customers in the different food services in the Municipality of Kapalong for better interpretation of data and results.

Range of Means	Description	Interpretation
4.20 - 5.00	Very High	If the measure described in social influence item is always evident.
3.40 - 4.19	High	If the measure described in social influence item is oftentimes evident.
2.60 - 3.39	Average	If the measure described in social influence item is sometimes evident.
1.80 - 2.59	Low	If the measure described in social influence item is seldom evident.
1.00 - 1.79	Very Low	If the measure described in social influence item is never evident.

## Design and Procedure

This study was utilized a quantitative study in descriptive and correlational approach which attempts to determine the extent of a relationship between two or more variables using statistical data. As defined, quantitative research tries to find answers to concrete questions by generating numbers and facts. The goal of this research design is to establish a representation of what consumers do or what consumers think (Barnham, 2015, p. 2). On the other hand, descriptive study is defined as a research method primarily focuses on describing the nature of a demographic segment, without focusing on why a particular phenomenon occurs. In other words, it describes the subject of the research, without covering why it happens (Pamaran & Pamaran, 2013, p. 1-12).

In addition, this study employed a descriptive-correlational approach to describe and explain the relationship of electronic word-of-mouth and social influence on consumer behavior. Furthermore, it was defined that a correlational study is a study that aims to find out if there are differences in the characteristics of a population depending on whether or not its subjects have been exposed to an event of interest in a naturalistic setting (Collado-Mateo et al., 2017, p. 54).

In the context of the current study, quantitative design was used through the use of research instruments which are the adapted questionnaires to quantify the variables under study and to describe the electronic word-of-mouth, social influence, and consumer behavior among food services customers in the Municipality of Kapalong. After which, the data being gathered was statistically treated to identify the level of its relationship which is the main purpose and usage of correlational studies which is to describe the relationship between the variables being studied.

Furthermore, for the collection of the the different data needed in the study, the following steps was observed by the researcher:

- 1) Seeking Permission to Conduct the Study. The researcher secured approval to conduct the study from the Dean of the Graduate School after the thesis proposal defense was approved by the Panel of Examiners. Then, the researcher complied with all the documents requested by the University of Mindanao Review Ethics Committee

(REC), since the committee will likewise review the research proposal, and then granted the researcher an approval to proceed and conduct the study. Also, the researcher sent a letter to the Municipal Mayor to inform her that the researcher would be conducting a study inside the municipality that used different customers of the different food services in the municipality under her supervision. Then, after getting the approval of the mayor, the researcher conducted a survey to identify his respondents. Then, after getting the samples, the researcher conducted an orientation on the objectives, risks, and benefits of the study for the participants involved.

- 2) Distribution and Retrieval of the Questionnaire. After the researcher conducted the basic orientation with the respondents, the researcher personally distributed the research instruments to the respondents. After the respondents completely answer the test questionnaire with ample time given, the researchers retrieved the test questionnaire from them. Also, the researcher will give the participants a key chain that will serve as a token of appreciation for their time and effort that they spent for the study.
- 3) Collection and Tabulation of the Data. The research instrument was retrieved, checked and gathered together for the tabulation of the data which done by the researcher. Lastly, the whole data collection process will be observed from Septemebr 2023-December 2023.

For the statistical tools, mean, standard deviation, Pearson-r, and multiple regression were used. Mean was used for getting the average score in measuring the level of consumer behavior, electronic word-of-mouth, and social influence among customers in the different food services in the Municipality of Kapalong. Then, standard deviation was used to analyze how far the individual responded to a question vary or deviate from its mean. It was used to analyze how spread the responses of the respondents are. If the respondents totally agree, disagree or neutral. Furthermore, Pearson r was used to determine the significant relationship between consumer behavior and electronic word-of-mouth and consumer behavior and social influence among customers in the different food services in the Municipality of Kapalong. Lastly, multiple regression was used to analyze the association and significant influence between the two independent variables, electronic word-of-mouth and social influence, to the dependent variable which is the consumer behavior.

Consequently, the current study was also observed different measures to adhere to the ethical considerations in doing research. As explained, ethical consideration is an integral part of the research design process. It can be clarified by consulting the ethical guidelines of one's professional association (Silverman, 2016, p. 885-899). In the study, the researcher was immensely process and comply first the approved UMERC certification and number to certify that the study undergone through review of the ethics committee of the research university.

In the conduct of the study, the researcher also considered that the participation of the respondents is voluntary and not coerced. Also, the researcher will adhere to Republic Act No. 10713 of the Data Privacy Act of 2012, extreme confidentiality and privacy of the data is observed by which the names of the participants are blackened and optional if they wish not to mention their personal information. Other than that, before the conduct of the study, there is an orientation first of the goals and objectives of the study with the research respondents. After the orientation, open forum commenced by which, if the respondents have no more questions, an informed consent was given to them which they need to sign as reflection of their voluntary participation of the study. Again, the researcher will personally ask for their participation and in the time that they have decided to decline, no harm were taken against them.

In addition, there are no known risks in the conduct of the study. However, the study has a lot of benefits. The primary benefactor of this study were the food services owner in the Municipality of Kapalong as results of this study would help them broaden their understanding on the preference, desire, and interest of the different customers. Second, is the LGU Officials as they can use the results of the study in establishing legal different practices among food services owners so that these entrepreneurs continue to offer quality service and best of customer experience. Lastly, to the Department of Trade and Industry, for them to evaluate the current situation of the business owners among different food services in the Municipality. They can raise awareness among these owners by having different trainings and seminars that will help them improve their business.

On the other hand, to ensure the integrity of this research study, it was guaranteed that any form of replication would be avoided. Furthermore, the gathered literature reviews were in line with the study and were published with proper citation and referencing. Also, with all carefulness, the output of this study was ensured to be free from any alterations. the act of intentionally modifying the gathered information and the conclusions was avoided. To stress this, this research study was free from falsification of information and data. Intentional misinterpretation, excessive claiming, and too much exaggeration of facts will be prudently avoided. With great emphasis, conflict of interest was carefully avoided. Personal judgment and views will be set aside. Moreover, all information in this study will purely rely on the gathered data from the participants

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## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The data obtained from the respondents on the level of electronic word-of-mouth, the level of social influence, and the level of consumer behavior among the food services customers in the Municipality of Kapalong are presented, analyzed,

and presented in this chapter based on the objective of the study. The order of presentations on the mentioned topic is as follows: level of electronic word-of-mouth of food services customers in the Municipality of Kapalong; level of social influence of food services customers in the Municipality of Kapalong; level of consumer behavior among the food services customers in the Municipality of Kapalong; correlation between the level electronic word-of-mouth and level of consumer behavior; correlation between the level of social influence and level of consumer behavior; regression analysis of the influence of the level of the electronic word-of-mouth on the level of consumer behavior among the food services customers in the Municipality of Kapalong, and the regression analysis of the influence of the level of the social influence on the level of consumer behavior among the food services customers in the Municipality of Kapalong.

### Level of Electronic Word-of-Mouth

Table 1 shows the level of the electronic word-of-mouth of the food services customers in the Municipality of Kapalong in terms of eWOM quality, eWOM quantity, and senders' expertise. Among the three indicators, eWOM quantity got the highest mean of 3.91 with a descriptive equivalent of high, followed by senders' expertise and eWOM quality with a mean of 3.87 and 3.87, respectively. Generally, the level of the electronic word-of-mouth of the food services customers in the Municipality of Kapalong is high with an average mean of 3.89 and a standard deviation of 0.56. This denotes that the ratings acquired in this study are very close to the mean showing consistency of responses. This statement is true also in Tables 2 and Tables 3.

**Table 1** Level of Electronic Word-of-Mouth among the Food Services Customers in the Municipality of Kapalong

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
eWOM Quality	3.87	0.60	High
eWOM Quantity	3.91	0.62	High
Sender's Expertise	3.87	0.56	High
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.89</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>High</b>

The results simply denote that the customers in food services establishments in Kapalong always check on the huge numbers of online reviews, comments and high recommendations which indicates popularity, good sales, and good reputations of the services and products. This implies further that although the food establishments in the locality have established their reputations and marketability of their products and food services as evident by enormous reviews and comments they received from costumers online, they also see to it that they do not only consider on the number of sales, but they also have ensured that the reviews and comments are clear, understandable, helpful, credible, and with sufficient of information which could help them to be informed well about the quality of the services and products that the establishments are offering. Finally, the results also indicate that the costumers of food service providers in Kapalong also considered that the senders of comments and reviews have demonstrated expertise and they check if they are experienced, well-adept on the services or products that they reviewed, have varied insights from others, and have the ability to give well-informed judgement towards the food services or products.

Specific findings on the level of electronic word-of-mouth among the food services customers in Kapalong, as shown in the appended Table 1 revealed that on the eWOM quantity, item No. 2, *have great quantity of online reviews/comments, and information inferring that they have good sales* got the highest mean of 3.93 which denotes a high level, while item No. 1, *have enormous number of online reviews/comments inferring that they are well-known or popular obtained a lower mean*, but still signifying a high level.

Reflected on appended Table 1 are the results on the level of electronic word-of-mouth in terms of senders' expertise. It can be gleaned that item No. 1, *are experienced* got the highest mean of 3.98 indicating a high level, while item No. 5, *have mentioned some things that I had not considered* yielded 3.78 mean which is considered the lowest mean among all items of the indicator, however, it still signifies a high level of measurement.

Finally, found on appended Table 1 is the result of the same indicator in terms of the eWOM quality. It is clear from the statistical findings that among all the items, item No. 3, *have online reviews/comments which are helpful* got highest mean of 3.97 with a descriptive equivalent of high. Meanwhile, item No. 4, *have credible online reviews/comments* obtained the least mean which is 3.82, but still considered a high level of measurement, and the customers perceived that the item remains to be evidently observed oftentimes.

The study incorporates findings from prior research, like Lee et al.'s 2017 (p. 347-469) study, which highlighted consumers' increasing use of online platforms like blogs and social media to voice opinions on products and services, as well as research companies. These platforms are significantly changing consumer lifestyles and reshaping interactions between businesses and their customers due to their societal impact.

In addition, the same finding is true like the study of Yang et al. (2017, p. 113-127) which stated that the quantity of hotel-related remarks constitutes electronic word-of-mouth and, as such, it serves as a crucial indicator for managers to bear in mind. The hotels were able to reach a greater number of target or prospective consumers as the number of comments increased. Therefore, considering the significance of this factor in determining the value of products that depend on information regarding prior experiences, it significantly affects the opinions of potential customers and merits further examination.

The study's findings also align with Liang and Corkindale's (2019, p. 50-63) research, which found that negative remarks are rarely posted, with recommendations dominating the discourse. This perspective suggests that both positive



and negative comments can coexist, with negative ones often offering valuable insights in reviews and comments. Tsao and Hsieh (2017, p. 519-541) noted that high-quality reviews hold more credibility and utility for consumers compared to low-quality ones, assisting in informed purchasing decisions. Thus, superior reviews play a significant role in shaping consumer choices. Additionally, various studies have shown that the quality of arguments positively influences purchasing intentions.

Ultimately, the study's findings align with the notion that businesses view both types of recommendations as a chance to gain deeper insights into their target market's needs and adjust their marketing strategies accordingly to enhance returns. Customers' intentions to make future purchases are influenced by their perception of a product or service, shaped by their ability to compare its actual performance with their expectations (Nieto et al., 2018, p. 115-123-).

### Level of Social Influence

Table 2 displays the results on the level of social influence among the food services consumers in the Municipality of Kapalong. It can be gleaned from the table that computed overall-mean of the three indicators, which is 3.94 indicates high level manifestation of social influence and that the responses of the consumers on this parameter is very close to each other as indicated by the computed standard deviation of 0.50. Of the three indicators, *Role in Society* got the highest mean which is 4.09 or high, followed by *The Influence of Social , Family* with second highest mean of 3.89, and *Reference Group* with the lowest mean of 3.84, however both of these items signifies high level manifestations from the consumers.

We can infer from the results that the consumers or buyers of the food services and products in Kapalong were usually influenced by their respective roles in the society, and that they make wise decisions with respect to the values, norms and expectations that prevail in the society or community where they belong. This further means that before purchasing, they see to it that what they are buying are eco-friendly and sustainable, within the capacity of their financial condition to avoid unnecessary financial constraints, and with approval from the people around on whether it aligns with expectations or preferences of the social group or the community of Kapalong.

**Table 2** Level of Social Influence among the Food Services Customers in the Municipality of Kapalong

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
Reference Group	3.84	0.66	High
Family	3.89	0.63	High
Role in Society	4.09	0.59	High
<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>High</b>

In the addition, the food services costumers in the Municipality of Kapalong were also influenced by their respective family and reference group like their friends, colleagues, and the people in the society in general. This means that before buying any food products or availing food services in their place, they have to consider first the opinions, advice, recommendations, and approval of these significant individuals.

Specifically, Appended Table 2 revealed the parameters of social influence in terms of the role in society. From this indicator, item No. 4, *consider the prices before purchasing or buying* got the highest mean which is 4.20 with a descriptive equivalent of high. Item No. 4, *consider my financial condition when buying or purchasing* has the second highest mean of 4.17, followed by item No. 1, *take my societal norms and beliefs into consideration when buying* and item No 2, *care about the opinions of others when doing a purchase*, which both yielded 3.99 mean with high descriptive equivalent.

On Appended Table 2, results on social influence in terms of family is displayed, which revealed a high level of manifestation. This is due to the high mean obtained by all items, specifically item No. 4, *values and preferences play a significant role in my buying behavior* which obtained the highest mean of 3.97. The second highest mean is item No. 2, *opinion and advice influence my buying decisions* with 3.88 and standard deviation 0.79, followed by item No. 3, *recommendations carry significant weight in my buying choices* and item No. 1, *is the most influential group on my buying behavior* with a mean of 3.87 and 3.85 respectively, both are described as also high.

Lastly, in terms of reference group as indicator of social influence, Appended Table 2 disclosed that item No. 1, *my society affect my buying behavior* has the highest mean of 3.92, followed by item No. 2, *my family affects my buying behavior* with a mean of 3.90. The third highest mean is from item No. 4, *my friends affect my buying behavior* with a mean of 3.80, and item No. 3, *my colleagues affect my buying behavior* with a mean of 3.74. All items of this indicator have yielded a high level of descriptive equivalent signifying that consumers manifested these measures oftentimes.

The results and findings on the social influence as variable on the purchase decisions and behavior of consumers in the Municipality of Kapalong is significantly supported by various authors and researchers. Recent research has shed light on the significant impact of social influence mechanisms on consumer purchase behavior. Liu and Li (2018, p. 332-347) discovered that informational social influence, particularly through social media channels, plays a crucial role in shaping consumers' decision-making processes, as evidenced in the restaurant industry in China. Lee (2019, p. 274-290) further affirmed the influence of normative social influence, exemplified in online reviews, on consumers' purchase intentions, with the effects moderated by factors such as product type and trust in the reviews. Xu and Zeng (2020, p. 102-174) delved into the realm of word-of-mouth influence on social media platforms, revealing its substantial impact on the



purchase intentions of young consumers in China, especially within the fashion and beauty industries. Moreover, Luo et al. (2020, p. 78-89) demonstrated the significance of online reviews as a form of social proof, influencing consumers' decision-making processes through heuristic and systematic processing modes. Lastly, Chen et al. (2019, p. 331-339) explored the application of social comparison theory to users' engagement with branded Facebook pages, highlighting its role in shaping consumer behaviors within online brand communities. These findings collectively underscore the enduring relevance of social influence mechanisms in guiding consumer purchase decisions, particularly in the context of digital platforms and online interactions.

The study of Kumar, V., & Karande, K. (2020, p. 132-149) is parallel to the results of the study as it investigates how reference groups influence brand switching behavior among consumers. It proposes a moderated-mediation framework, demonstrating that reference groups exert both direct and indirect effects on brand switching behavior, mediated by perceived brand performance and moderated by individual-level factors such as self-esteem and susceptibility to normative influence.

Finally, Peñaloza, Toulouse, and Visconti (2019, p. 78-88) investigated the influence of extended family members on young adults' luxury consumption behaviors, revealing the significant role of family in shaping individuals' attitudes, values, and consumption practices regarding luxury goods. Wang, Wang, and Shao (2020, p. 102022) explored the effects of social norms and peer influence, including friends and colleagues, on purchasing intentions in the context of group-buying social commerce in China. Their findings demonstrated that both social norms and peer influence play crucial roles in shaping consumers' purchasing intentions, highlighting the importance of social relationships in consumer decision-making processes. Additionally, Jamal and Sharifuddin (2018) emphasized the impact of societal factors, such as community engagement and norms, on purchase decisions from a Malaysian perspective. They argued that community values, norms, and expectations significantly influence individuals' purchase decisions and consumption behaviors, illustrating the broader societal influence on consumer behavior.

### Level of Consumer Behavior

Table 3 shows the level of consumer behavior of the food services consumers in the Municipality of Kapalong. Three significant and established indicators were accounted to measure the level of this variable which include Awareness, Interest, and Conviction. Consequently, computed statistical results of these indicators revealed a high level of consumer behavior after having obtained an overall mean of 4.04 and standard deviation of 0.50. Among the three indicators, *conviction* topped the list with a mean of 4.06, followed by *interest* and *awareness* which yielded 4.03 and 4.02 means. All these indicators are all described as high level.

The results on the level of consumer behavior implies that consumers of Kapalong in its food establishments have high perceptions and beliefs on the advertisements, social media posts and information posted in various online platforms of the owners or managers with regards to the food services and products that they offer, which thereby affect and influence their buying or purchase behavior. When these consumers understand the products or services, in a way how the business owners utilize these platforms to present detailed information and demonstrate the usage of the services and products, they will be interesting to make a purchase and avail the services.

**Table 3** Level of Consumer among the Food Services Customers in the Municipality of Kapalong

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
Awareness	4.02	0.58	High
Interest	4.03	0.58	High
Conviction	4.06	0.65	High
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.04</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>High</b>

As shown in Appended Table 3, on the level of consumer behavior in terms of awareness, item No. 1, *I am aware that advertisements, word of mouth, social media posts, online search, and others help me to know about the new products/food services in Kapalong*, has the highest mean of 4.12. This was followed by item No. 2, *give due attention to the advertisements, word of mouth, social media posts, online search, and other sources of information before I buy the products in Kapalong* with a mean of 4.00, then item No. 3, *look for the advertisements, word of mouth, social media posts, online search, and other sources of information before I buy the products in Kapalong* with a mean of 3.98, and lastly item No. 4, *regularly watch, read or/ and listen to the advertisements, word of mouth, social media posts, online search, and others to make my self-updated about the products/food services in Kapalong* which garnered the lowest mean of all items, which is 3.96. All these items are described as high level which signifies that the consumers oftentimes manifested these parameters.

On the other hand, the level of consumer behaviour in terms of interest is presented in Appended Table 3. It is clear that among the items, item No. 4, *can tell that advertisements, word of mouth, social media posts, online search, and others demonstrate the way of usage of the services and products* got the highest mean of 4.06 with high level of descriptive equivalent. The second highest mean is 4.06 with high description, which is from item No. 2, *feel that most of the advertisements, word of mouth, social media posts, online search, and others create interest in me as a consumer*. The third highest mean is obtained by item No. 1, *am Interested to advertisement, word of mouth, social media posts, online search, and others are informative, and provide detailed description about the products/food services* with also high

descriptive equivalent. Lastly is item No. 3, *believe that advertisements, word of mouth, social media posts, online search, and others are easy to understand* which yielded the lowest mean of 4.00, but it is also described as high level. The consumers oftentimes manifested these items under interest indicator of consumer behavior.

The last indicator under consumer behavior is conviction. Appended Table 3 revealed the computed mean and standard deviation which depict high descriptive rating and close responses from the respondents. Item No. 1, *perceive that advertisements, word of mouth, social media posts, online search, and others can change my perception regarding the products or food services*, topped the list while item No. 3, *often get convinced about the claims made by the companies and the sources of the advertisement, word of mouth, social media posts, online search, and others* is the second highest, and the least is item No. 2, *believe that most of the advertisements, word of mouth, social media posts, online search, and others are necessary to watch, read and / or listen for the consumers before buying or purchasing*. These three have computed means 4.07, 4.06, and 4.05, which are very close to each other, and are described as high-level manifestation from the consumers.

To support these findings, Kotler and Armstrong (2018, p. 317) claimed that consumer behavior is influenced by a myriad of factors spanning from broad cultural and social influences to deep-seated motivations, beliefs, and attitudes. These factors can be categorized into internal and external influences. Internal factors encompass cultural, social, personal, and psychological dimensions. Cultural factors shape the behavior of larger consumer groups, while social influences emanate from reference groups like family, social roles, and consumer status. Personal factors, such as age, profession, income, lifestyle, and personality, play a significant role in buying decisions. Psychological factors delve into individual motivations, attitudes, perceptions, and learning behaviors. These elements collectively shape consumer behavior.

In terms of awareness, the findings of Meyrick (2018, p. 341-344) is similar to this study as it asserted that the primary purpose of advertising is to persuade target markets or potential customers to purchase and utilize a product by explaining its qualities and advantages. Additionally, it was determined that brand recognition is necessary for the development of purchase intent. As a result, in order to increase consumer awareness of the existence of new and existing products, advertising must consistently disseminate information regarding them.

On the high level of consumer behavior in terms of interest, which means that they oftentimes manifested the said indicator which implies that both customers and proprietors within the food services industry demonstrate considerable interest in perusing online reviews and comments. This engagement, in turn, stimulates their desire to make purchases and their intention to buy. This conforms to the study of Kong et al. (2018, p. 178-189) which clearly emphasized that interest, motivation, and attitude were all regarded as overlapping constructs in the whole and holistic being of a person. Consequently, motivational potential and productive engagement are sparked by interest, hence, affect the consumer behavior in making a purchase. When one is engaged in something, doing it gives it meaning, and as a result, they have a positive attitude toward it.

Finally, at a heightened level of consumer behavior marked by conviction, it is evident that customers within the food services industry exhibit a robust sense of commitment when exposed to various online advertisements and comments. This finding resonates with the research of Yin and Laing (2017), who addressed the enduring challenge of consumer purchasing behavior across nations. Specifically, due to entrenched purchasing patterns, many individuals remain unfamiliar with the concept of sustainable food. Convincing people to embrace a new concept and develop strong convictions capable of altering their current behaviors poses a considerable challenge. Given the close relationship between knowledge and personal beliefs, access to sufficient information becomes imperative for fostering interest in sustainable eating. Ultimately, adequate information empowers individuals to make informed decisions.

### Correlation between Measures

One of the objectives of this study is to determine the relationship between the electronic word-of-mouth with a mean rating of 3.88 and consumer behavior with a mean rating of 4.03 among food services consumers in the Municipality of Kapalong. Table 4 presents the significance of the relationship between electronic word-of-mouth and consumer behavior among food services consumers in the Municipality of Kapalong, Davao del Norte. The relationship between the two variables was tested using the Pearson-r coefficient, which shows a positive correlation between variable with the computed r-value of 0.400, and probability level (p) of 0.001. With  $p < 0.05$ , the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between electronic word-of-mouth and consumer behavior was rejected.

**Table 4** Significant Relationship between Electronic Word-Of Mouth and Consumer Behavior

Variables	Mean	R-Value	P-Value	Decision @=0.05
Electronic Word-of Mouth	3.88	.400	<.001	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
Consumer Behavior	4.03			

\* $p < 0.05$

The results entail that a significant relationship exists between electronic word-of-mouth and consumer behavior. This further means that the level of the word-of-mouth of the respondents has a link to their consumer behavior. This also signifies that there is a connection between the electronic word-of-mouth of the respondents to their consumer behavior.

This could probably mean that a high level of electronic word-of-mouth corresponds to either a low or high level of consumer behavior of the respondents.

A clear correlation has been observed between electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and customer behavior, indicating that online comments and reviews posted by previous and current customers significantly influence the actions of food service owners and customers alike. As eWOM activities increase, so does the behavior of both parties (Riquelme & Rios, 2010, p. 328-341). These findings resonate with the Involvement Theory proposed by Sherif and Cantril (1947, p. 304-327), which suggests that consumer engagement with the internet, including information gathering, reflects its importance in their lives. Moreover, this engagement substantially impacts consumers' purchasing intentions and actions, affecting their networking ability and information discernment (Kumar et al., 2020, p. 132-149).

In today's digital age, social media platforms play a pivotal role in facilitating eWOM and shaping consumer behavior. Recent research by Erkan and Evans (2016, p. 3-11) highlights how social media platforms enable consumers to share positive eWOM through product evaluations, aiding others in making informed purchasing decisions. Furthermore, eWOM fosters consumer confidence, leading to a more favorable perception of the brand. Consequently, social media emerges as a significant influencer of consumer behavior, particularly in purchasing decisions (Lee et al., 2019, p. 274-290).

The impact of eWOM extends beyond mere purchase decisions; it also influences brand loyalty and advocacy. Consumers are more likely to trust recommendations from their peers or online reviews than traditional advertising messages (Zhang & Watts, 2008, p. 73-94). Therefore, businesses must actively manage their online reputation and engage with customers through social media platforms to leverage the power of eWOM effectively. In conclusion, the correlation between eWOM and consumer behavior underscores the importance of online reputation management and social media marketing strategies in today's competitive landscape. By understanding and harnessing the influence of eWOM, businesses can cultivate stronger relationships with customers, enhance brand perception, and drive positive purchasing behaviors.

**Table 5** Significant Relationship between Social Influence and Consumer Behavior

Variables	Mean	R-Value	P-Value	Decision @=0.05
Social Influence	3.94	.556	<.001	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
Consumer Behavior	4.03			

\**p* < 0.05

Another objective of this study is to determine the relationship between the social influence and consumer behavior among food services consumers in the Municipality of Kapalong. Table 5 presents the significance of the relationship between social influence and consumer behavior among food services consumers in the Municipality of Kapalong, Davao del Norte. With the use of statistical analysis and treatment, the relationship between the two variables was tested using the Pearson-r coefficient, which shows a positive correlation between variable with the computed r-value of 0.556, and probability level (p) of 0.001. With  $p < 0.05$ , the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between social influence and consumer behavior was rejected.

The results entail that a significant relationship exists between social influence and consumer behavior. This further means that the level of the social influence of the respondents has a link to their consumer behavior. This also signifies that there is a connection between the social influence of the respondents to their consumer behavior. This could probably mean that a high level of social influence corresponds to either a low or high level of consumer behavior of the respondents.

The findings are in conformity with the various studies and literatures venturing on finding the connection between the two variables. Accordingly, social influence significantly shapes consumer behavior across various dimensions. Berger and Milkman (2012, para. 1) delve into the viral spread of online content, highlighting the role of informational social influence in shaping consumer behavior. Meanwhile, Kumar, V., & Karande, K. (2020, p. 132-149) develop a scale to measure consumers' susceptibility to normative social influence, emphasizing its impact on consumer behavior. Chen, Y., & Li, E. Y. (2020, p. 331-339) explore the influence of word-of-mouth communication, particularly through online reviews, on sales and consumer behavior. Additionally, Luo, X., Li, H., Zhang, J., & Shim, J. P. (2020, p. 103) examine the dual nature of social influence and word-of-mouth in the purchase decision process, emphasizing its significant impact on consumer behavior. Moreover, Kim, Y., Sohn, D., & Choi, S. M. (2019) introduce social comparison theory, which explains how individuals use others as a benchmark for evaluating themselves, influencing their attitudes and behaviors. These recent studies collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of social influence on consumer behavior, spanning informational and normative influence, word-of-mouth communication, and social comparison processes.

Additionally, social influence significantly impacts consumer behavior in purchase decisions. Studies highlight how social media enables consumers to share opinions about products and services, contributing to brand promotion. Consumers engage with online reviews, leveraging them to inform purchasing decisions influenced by social media posts. The internet's rise elevates electronic word-of-mouth's importance in online shopping, particularly in the food industry. Consumers provide recommendations on social media, exploring company websites for product information, influencing



purchasing intentions (Erkan & Evan, 2016, p. 3-11). Another study underscores social media's significance in attracting customers and target markets. Consumers share brand experiences and sentiments through posts, disseminating electronic word-of-mouth information, impacting purchasing decisions. Social media emerges as a crucial factor in consumer behavior. Today, individuals seek information from social media, including product reviews and comments shared by previous consumers, before purchasing (Lin et al., 2017, p.1-15).

### Regression Analysis

Another objective of the study is to determine which domain of electronic word-of-mouth would significantly influence the consumer behavior of the food services consumers in the Municipality of Kapalong, Davao del Norte. This is with the aid of regression analysis. The test of significance was done further using the correlation approach with regression analysis clearly which shows what domains of the electronic word-of-mouth significantly influence consumer behavior.

**Table 6** Regression Analysis on the Influence of the Domains of the Level of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on the Consumer Behavior among Food Services Consumers in the Municipality of Kapalong

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	p-Value	Decision @=0.05
	Beta	SE	Beta			
(Constant)	2.473	0.159				
eWOM Quality	0.107	0.045	0.128	2.367	.018	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
eWOM Quantity	0.122	0.044	0.151	2.744	.006	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
Sender's Expertise	0.173	0.045	0.194	3.797	< .001	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected

**Dependent Variable:**  
**Consumer Behavior**

Note: R= 0.402, R<sup>2</sup>=0.162 F-ratio= 33.136 P-value= < .001

The results of the study as shown in Table 6 indicated that the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value is 0.162 as shown in the regression model. This explains that 16.2% of the total variability of consumer behavior is explained by three domains of electronic word-of-mouth. The F-value is 33.136 with p<0.001, so, there is a significant influence of the electronic word-of-mouth and consumer behavior. This further illustrates that the independent variable (electronic word-of-mouth) is a significant contributor to consumer behavior. The sender's expertise has the p-values <0.001, the eWOM quantity has 0.006 p-value, and eWOM quality with p-value of 0.018. Based on these results per domain, we can claim that the null hypothesis (there is no domain of electronic word-of-mouth that significantly influences consumer behavior) was rejected. This shows that all of the domains in electronic word-of-mouth have significant influence on the consumers's behavior.

The results indicated that of the three domains electronic word-of-mouth, the sender's expertise has the greater influence on the consumer behavior as it obtained a 0.173 beta coefficient which is greater than the beta coefficient obtained by other domains such as eWOM quantity and eWOM quality which are 0.122 and 0.107 respectively. This implies that the knowledge and credibility of the senders of review/comments, and the quantity and quality of comments/reviews and recommendations received by the owners from the consumers influence the consumer behavior most particularly in terms of their conviction, awareness and interest to buy and avail the food services and products.

The findings are in conformity with the studies of (Cheung et al., 2018, p. 743-767), which opined that electronic word of mouth (eWOM) plays a significant role in shaping consumer behavior in the digital age. Studies have shown that positive eWOM, such as online reviews and recommendations, can significantly influence consumer purchase intentions. Additionally, the trustworthiness of eWOM sources is crucial, as consumers are more likely to trust and act upon recommendations from sources they perceive as credible, such as friends or reputable review platforms (Dellarocas et al., 2007, p. 23-25). Moreover, the credibility of eWOM sources, such as experts or individuals with relevant expertise, can further enhance its impact on consumer behavior (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 38-52). Finally, social influence plays a key role in eWOM, with consumers being more likely to trust and act upon recommendations from their social networks, such as friends or family members, compared to anonymous online sources (Liu, 2006, p. 74-89).

The last objective of the study is to determine which domain of social influence would significantly influence the consumer behavior of the food services consumers in the Municipality of Kapalong, Davao del Norte. The fulfillment of this objective was possible with the aid of regression analysis. The test of significance was done further using the correlation approach with regression analysis clearly which shows what domains of the social influence significantly influence consumer behavior.

The results of the study as displayed in Table 7 indicated that the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value is 0.327 as shown in the regression model. This explains that 32.7% of the total variability of consumer behavior is explained by three domains of social influence. The F-value is 83.696 with p<0.001, so, there is a significant influence of the social influence and consumer behavior. This further illustrates that the independent variable (social influence) is a significant contributor to consumer behavior. The Influence of Social Role in Society has the p-value <0.001, the Influence of Social- Family has also <0.001 p-value, and the Influence of Social- Reference Group yielded 0.002 p-value. Based on these results per domain, we can claim that the null hypothesis (there is no domain of electronic social influence that significantly influences consumer behavior) was rejected. This shows that all the domains in social influence have significant influence on the consumers' behavior.



**Table 7** Regression Analysis on the Influence of the Domains of the Level of Social Influence on the Consumer Behavior among Food Services Consumers in the Municipality of Kapalong

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	p-Value	Decision @=0.05
	Beta	SE	Beta			
(Constant)	1.734	0.0147				
The Influence of Social Reference Group	0.100	0.033	0.132	3.047	.002	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
The Influence of Social- Family	0.187	0.037	0.235	5.126	< .001	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected
The Influence of Social - Role in Society	0.290	0.035	0.341	8.310	< .001	H <sub>0</sub> Rejected

**Dependent Variable:**

**Consumer Behavior**

Note: R= 0.572, R<sup>2</sup>=0.327 F-ratio= 83.696 P-value= < .001

The results indicated that of the three domains of social influence, the third domain namely *The Influence of Social – Role in Society* has the greater influence on the consumer behavior as it obtained a 0.290 beta coefficient which is greater than the beta coefficient obtained by other domains such as *The Influence of Social – Family* and *The Influence of Social – Reference Group* which are 0.187 and 0.100 respectively. This implies that the societal norms, expectations, opinions of others, financial conditions, and the prices influence the consumer behavior most particularly in terms of their conviction, awareness and interest to buy and avail the food services and products. Furthermore, the preferences, values, recommendations, opinions, and advice of the consumers' family, friends, and colleagues also influence their purchase behavior.

The findings corroborate with several studies which investigated and claimed that social influence plays a significant role in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in the digital age where social media platforms have become integral to daily life. For instance, a study by Wang and Sun (2021, p. 12) investigated the impact of social influence on consumer purchase intentions in the context of social commerce. They found that social influence, manifested through factors such as social ties and online reviews, positively influenced consumer attitudes and purchase intentions. Similarly, research by Chen et al. (2020, p. 9-24) examined the role of social influence in shaping consumer preferences for sustainable products. They found that social influence from peers and social networks significantly impacted consumers' willingness to adopt sustainable behaviors and purchase eco-friendly products. These studies highlight the pervasive influence of social factors on consumer decision-making processes and underscore the importance of understanding and leveraging social influence in marketing strategies.

## CONCLUSION

Following the results of the study, the researcher has come up with the following conclusions:

The level of electronic word-of mouth (eWOM) of the food services consumers in the Municipality of Kapalong is high in terms of eWOM quantity, eWOM quality, and senders' expertise. In addition, the level of social influence of the the food services consumers in the Municipality of Kapalong is also high in terms of the influence of social – reference group, the influence of social – family, and the influence of social – role in society. Lastly, the level of the consumer behavior of the food services consumers in the Municipality of Kapalong is high in terms awareness, interest, and conviction.

Further, this study found that there is a significant relationship between electronic word-of mouth and consumer behavior. Also, a significant relationship between social influence and consumer behavior was determined. Finally, the domains of electronic word-of mouth namely eWOM quantity, eWOM quality, and senders' expertise significantly influence consumer behavior, while the influence of social – reference group, the influence of social – family, and the influence of social – role in society domains of social influence significantly influence consumer behavior.

Finally, the results of the study support the theories of Involvement Theory and Social Judgement by Sherif and Cantril's (1947, p. 304-307), highlights that higher consumer involvement leads to greater ability to assess and analyze such information, thus impacting purchase intentions and behavior. In addition, the results approve the theoretical underpinnings of the Theory of Reasoned Action by Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980, p. 98-109), which suggests that consumer attitudes toward advertisements can shape their exposure, attention, and reactions, ultimately impacting purchasing decisions. Finally, the result converge with the proposition Erkan and Evans (2016, p. 3-11) who proposed that social media facilitates the spread of positive electronic word-of-mouth, fostering trust among consumers and influencing their attitudes toward brands, particularly in purchase decision-making processes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

First, since the level of Electronic Word-of-Mouth is high, it can be increased to very high by amplifying the quality, quantity and the expertise of senders as manifested by their immense positive, understandable, and credible online reviews and recommendations. This can be achieved by intensifying the quality of food products and services, actively engaging with customers on social media platforms, and incentivizing them so there is an honest, confident, and eminent sharing of reviews and comments online on the services and products they received.

Second, since the level of social influence is high, it can be increased to very high by elevating the domains of social support network such as the influence of the customer's family, society, and peers. This can be achieved when the food establishment owners build strong relationships with social reference groups, families, and influential individuals in

the community. Aside from the quality of their services, they have great chance of high recommendations from potential customers since rapport, connections, linkages and network have already been established and assured.

Third, since the level of consumer is high it can be increased to very high by increasing consumer awareness, generating interest, and fostering conviction in the food establishments' products or services. Implementing relevant marketing strategies targeting these domains are feasible such as utilizing advertising campaigns, educational content, and promotional activities that highlight the unique value proposition of the food services and products.

Fourth, since there is a significant relationship between both independent variables, eWOM and social influence towards consumer behavior, it is recommended that food services customers to consider eWOM and social influence in improving the consumer behavior of their consumers.

Fifth, since there are domains of eWOM, namely, sender's expertise, eWOM quantity and eWOM quality that significantly influence consumer behavior, it is recommended that food services customers must plan or consider spending on these indicators to improve consumer behavior.

Lastly, since there are domains of social influence namely, role in society, family and reference group, it is recommended that food services continue to consider these indicators should they want to improve consumer behavior.

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