

The mediating role of e-behavior in the relationship between the electronic word of mouth and electronic decision of purchase

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ABSTRACT

The current research aims to recognize the mediating role effect of the e-behavior (henceforth e-behavior) on the relationship between the electronic word of mouth (henceforth e-WOM) and the electronic decision of purchase (henceforth e-DOP) among the students of Jadara University/ Jordan. The research adopted a descriptive analytical methodology in data collection and analyses; and developed a questionnaire to measure the variables of e-behavior, e-WOM, and e-POD. Students using the university Facebook website completed the questionnaire, 400 retrieved questionnaires were valid for statistical analysis. Smart PLS software was used to analyze the collected data. The study found statistical differences of e-WOM on the e-DOP, significant differences were also found of e-behavior in the relationship between e-WOM and e-DOP. The study recommends companies to take interest in e-WOM and to add it to its marketing strategies, because e-WOM effects taking an e-DOP by potential customers and enhances positive purchase behavior.

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1. Introduction

Recently, social networking sites have appeared to furnish virtual social networking around the world. This appearance has fulfilled individual's needs to build relationships and communicate. Users of these sites instantly message, visit friends' pages, view and share photos, and videos. Because of how complicated the business climate is, companies now understand how important it is to have the right information at the right moment in order to support the development of business relationships (Al Daabseh et al., 2023). Modern technologies in communication emergence led to the extinction of the traditional means of monopoly on promoting services and products. Social websites undertook an important role to influence consumer's choices and determine the stages of forming a purchase decision starting from recognizing the need through searching for information, comparing different substitutes until a final purchase decision is taken. The consumers are affected largely by participant's comments and advice (Al-Hassan, 2019). Social networking sites types and usages varied, this variation led to the emergence of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), such as emojis of Like, Share, Comments, Mention and the like expression signs. The e-WOM is more powerful than the traditional marketing channels (face to face or the telephone) and it received high technological appreciation by trademarks such as clothing and fast food (Aljawarneh et al., 2022). Therefore, the importance of the study stems from considering e-WOM, a means of electronic marketing communication that has an important role in companies' electronic marketing plans, and converting it into a new real marketing model where the tools of traditional marketing failed to achieve its goals. Marketing companies must manage e-WOM on a scientifically effective basis regarding the consumer, and factors to persuade him to adopt the product as a sign of later purchase decision. Thus, the researcher intends to examine the mediating role of e-behavior in the relationship

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between e-WOM and decision of purchase (DOP) among Jadara University students, and to identify the level of e-WOM effect on the students DOP.

Based on what is mentioned, the researcher identified the research problem by reviewing studies related to WOM; they focused on the traditional WOM and did not find a clear effect of it on the DOP. The researcher undertook the responsibility to examine the effect of e-WOM on DOP particularly because consumers tend to use internet applications in purchasing products and services. Therefore, the study problem stems from students' lack of ability to make a decision of purchasing through the internet at Jadara University, because of motivations and competitions between different agencies in general and clothing agencies in specific. Therefore, the study attempted to answer the main question of “does e-behavior have a role in the relationship between Jadara university students circulating e-WOM in social networks and organizations blogs and their DOP?”

2. Literature review

2.1 E-behavior

Employing e-behavior contributed to its fast launch due to low cost and the ability to expand in the market. Many individuals established companies concerned with e-behavior. Electronic purchasing allowed customers to obtain relevant information in all domains and for various purposes; it provided them with products from international companies regardless of their location, because the global internet network removed all barriers and geographical borders.

Co-creating value is more common among employees who have positive interaction habits that make them feel appreciated, happy, and sense reciprocity (Al Daabseh & Aljarah, 2021). Researchers consider e-behavior a very important development in marketing, both in terms of scientific and practical aspects; they also consider electronic marketing the future of marketing nowadays. E-behavior contributed in changing methods of buying and selling products and services (Aljawarneh et al., 2021). E-behavior relied on the emergence of electronic trade that helped to minimize the gap between the product and the consumer; it achieved satisfaction of a large number of clients because it provides many purchasing choices on the internet (Kanaan et al., 2023). These days, businesses want to know how electronic behavior affects customer satisfaction and what advantages it offers (Al-Maaitah et al., 2024). Because different employees have different goals, it can be difficult to harmonize and describe the amount and quality of information needed for each employee of a statement (Elrefae et al., 2024). E-behavior strategic importance increased by wide-spread commercial usages of the internet; it opened a new horizon in the world of marketing and offered the organization an opportunity to target buyers, shoppers and consumers on an individual basis (Electronic Individual Marketing). Individual e-behavior enjoys a great promotional importance; the more the organization administration is able to communicate with the buyer individually and personally, the more it is able to better attract him. E-behavior importance deemed it necessary for the success of modern organizations; it became very important to embed this marketing style in any activity or operation.

Kotler and Armerstrong (2014) said that e-behavior is an important part of the modern comprehensive marketing strategy; it is considered an important marketing style seeking to achieve its goals via the internet. E-behavior is the process of implementing the principal science of marketing through using electronic means and the internet.

E-behavior includes jobs that have different tasks such as communicating and establishing a continuous relation with clients, electronic selling, providing content for products or services, providing a working network customized for the electronic marketing company site. Other jobs relate to clients such as e-mails through which the product or service is offered to potential customers, and offers solutions for analysis and statistics regarding e-mail advertising campaigns results. Hence, to reach a customer and convince him to buy a certain service or product is very close.

Many factors influence e-behavior, first: psychological factors such as needs and desires ignite the individual feeling to purchase, this state starts with the feeling of losing something, this feeling is accompanied by stress and anxiety when it is not fulfilled; second: cognitive factors that determines and explains the individual exposure to the need stimuli, formation of a clear image of the needs and desires depending on accumulative experiences compatible with surrounding instructions and beliefs. In addition to tendencies reflecting the individual feelings toward a certain topic whether the individual likes it or hates it. Filieri (2016) classified these tendencies into: Cognitive approach. It is represented by individuals' knowledge about the quality of the services and products. Emotive approach. It is represented by the feelings toward a certain product. Tendency approach. It is represented by the process of buying or not buying.

2.2 Word Of Mouth (WOM)

The WOM appeared a long time ago, individuals relied on it through ages, and it gained sales-men attention since the fifties of the last century. Many scholars attempted to define WOM and distinguish it from other styles of communication marketing. The success of marketing many products and services depend on mouth to ear communication or WOM communication, this concept

means the free transfer of information related to the service or product from one customer into the other. The importance of this message is attributed to the assumption that the customer believes that this information are more true compared with commercial communication means, because it provides security and reduces the customer cognitive contradiction following unsatisfied purchasing experiences (Makhamreh & Hisham, 2023). The WOM marketing association said that the WOM between consumers means consumer creation and distribution of information related to marketing a certain product with other consumers. For example, marketing a shop means diversifying information about the shop that will attract others to visit it. Al-Bourini et al. (2021) defined WOM as statements that influence the buyer when he is taking the DOP, the WOM source is generally people close to the buyer such as family, neighbors and friends, WOM has a positive or negative effect on the DOP.

WOM has a set of characteristics correlated with the nature or preference of an individual, it might be positive or negative, and that is to say, it may be in favor of the organization or against it (Al Daabseh et al., 2023). The WOM focuses on the six markets model of relationship marketing (customers markets; employee's markets; new members markets; suppliers' markets; alliances markets; and referral markets). The WOM may influence investment decisions (alliances markets), it may be an important source of information for the new members market, it is the initial form of behavior in which the organizational culture is introduced and built, and thus has a significant impact on employees' behavior. Time importance and urging to buy is important in WOM as well. Customers consider WOM a trusted source for many services and products, especially if it has high credibility. Many researchers agreed that the WOM credibility correlates with confidence and experience (Wang & Wu, 2011). The study of Cheol et al. (2011) revealed that WOM credibility is not based on the beliefs and culture of the person transferring it, rather it depends on content of the transferred WOM that might be a source of confidence, and this confidence guides individuals to take a DOP. WOM positive effect is considered one of the main marketing assets; and the opposite is true when WOM is negative. Control of WOM effects is very important for advertisers. One of its benefits resulting from highly satisfied customers is considering them as a moving advertisement of the company, this in turn encourages cost saving to attract new customers (Lovelock & Ball, 2002).

2.3 Decision Of Purchase (DOP)

DOP correlates with the tendencies or attitudes toward offered services, increased positive direction leads to more purchasing or more using of the service. DOP refers to selecting the proper item from many available items, and it refers to the comparison of item characteristics and costs. The DOP is complex because it is the product of a set of partial decisions to purchase a specific commodity from a particular kind from a certain place in a fixed time and price using a certain paying method to complete the purchase (Maabara & Al-Haija, 2020). DOP passes through stages, the most important stage is to acknowledge the problem then to search for the related information, followed by defining available alternatives then to assess these alternatives and provide the best alternative in taking DOP (Taamneh et al., 2022).

2.4 E-behavior, e-WOM and DOP

Many studies tackled one of the current study variables or more, for instance, Lin and Fang (2006) examined the positive effects on the e-WOM spread from confident senders on the receivers, they also said that the effect varies from one product to another and from one service to the other. Herr et al. (1991) confirmed that e-WOM has a powerful role in creating organization knowledge, offering products, building expectations and cognition, forming good intention, and purchase behavior, and that e-WOM is 7 times powerful compared with written advertisement; this strength is attributed to the high credibility and personal interaction between consumers. Flanagin and Metzger (2013) showed that electronic comments that include a huge volume of information positively influence the customer's confidence. Many individuals prefer expert's opinions when the volume of information is low in the comments which influence the consumer's intention to buy. Cheung et al. (2008) stressed the importance of the information quality shared through e-WOM effect on the receivers' future confidence in the product or service. The author discussed criteria of measuring the information quality transferred through e-WOM such as precision, importance, understanding, complete information and value. Vermeulen and Seegers (2009) pointed out that comments made by non-experienced individuals are ineffective, while the experienced comments in general clearly influenced the receiver's DOP. Sirjius (2021) found that e-WOM strongly influenced marketing through social networking sites; the effect scored 32%, and found that trademark awareness and mental image mediated the relationship between marketing activities and e-WOM through social networking sites. The study addressed customer's interaction through social networking sites, customizing information to customer's needs, information updating and customers enjoyment of the content. The study revealed that organizations investment in marketing activities through social networking sites has direct and indirect roles in activating e-WOM.

Basit (2020) found a positive impact of social networking marketing on trademark awareness, e-WOM, and the DOP of the trademark. Al-Bourini et al (2021) found that offering high quality reasonable cost products have a positive influence on the DOP, and customers purchase power in the targeted markets. Bueamir (2018) found that e-WOM variables of credibility, focus, and quality enhanced the trademark image, and the receiver experience significant effect was missing. Al-Omari (2015) found that friends, celebrities, and social networking sites WOM combined influence women cosmetics purchasing behavior, but social networking sites cosmetics advertisements alone have a weak effect on women DOP. Al-AI-Adayluh (2015) found that information transfer

and product evaluation through social networking sites influenced the DOP, while customer support had no effect on purchasing decisions. Wolny and Mueller (2013) found that social networking sites' motivations of product sharing, self-share, sharing with others, search for advice and need of social interaction combined influence the consumers' sharing of e-WOM through social networking sites of the fashion sector in Britain. The study showed that interaction through social networking sites and recurrent shares of e-WOM correlation and user's awareness of the social benefits that occur when commenting or sharing correlates with certain trademark popularity with friends. The study found that seeking advice is not significant in influencing purchasing behaviour of trademark fashion being discussed by e-WOM. Based on the previous introduction the researcher presents the main hypothesis, and sub hypotheses:

H₀: *There is a statistically significant celebrity and friends' opinion e-WOM on the DOP.*

H₁: *There is a statistical significance of celebrity opinion on DOP.*

H₂: *There is a statistical significance of a friend's opinion on DOP.*

H₃: *There is a statistically significant celebrity and friends' opinion e-WOM on the e-behavior.*

H₄: *There is a statistical significance of e-behavior on DOP.*

H₅: *There is a statistical significance of e-WOM on DOP mediated by e-behavior.*

3. Methodology

The researcher attempted to identify the mediating role of e-behavior in the relationship between e-WOM and DOP. The study adopted a descriptive analytical methodology to analyze the data collected through a questionnaire distributed on Jadara university students using PLS Smart software. The population of the study consisted of the students of Jadara university students (No. 5000) enrolled in different educational levels. The researcher established the questionnaire using Google form software and uploaded it on the university social networking sites. A total number of 400 students completed the questionnaire; the retrieved questionnaires were valid for analyses and represent the population of the study according to Sakeran (2016). The researcher implemented SmartPLS software to analyze the data. The researcher computed percentages, repetitions, standard deviations, means, reliability and validity tests, and critical path, the questionnaire validity and reliability were insured as illustrated in Table 1, Cronbach's scored ($\alpha > 0.6$), and this result indicates the appropriateness of the questionnaire (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 1

Cronbach Alpha

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	CR
Word Of Mouth	0.851	0.897
E-behavior	0.745	0.814
Decision of purchase	0.763	0.826

In the next section the researcher attempts to test the first hypothesis of "there is a statistically significant of celebrity and friends' opinion e-WOM on the DOP", by implementing the critical path analyses of e-WOM on DOP, results are illustrated in Table 2, and Fig. 1 explains that (42.3%) of the sample DOP was influenced by WOM, B value score was ($B = 0.856$) and a significance of ($\text{Sign.} = 0.00$). Fig. 1 illustrates the effect size score of (0.733) (Müller, Schubert and Henseler, 2018), this result is considered good, and therefore the assumption of e-WOM influence on DOP is accepted.

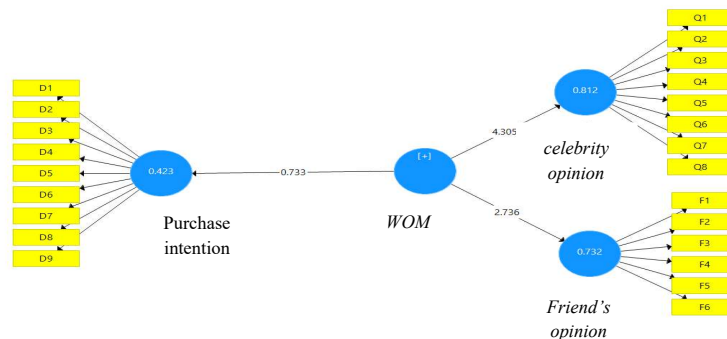


Fig. 1. R^2 and f^2 values of e-WOM effect on DOP

Table 2
e-WOM effect on DOP

Variables	B	Mean	S. D	T	P
e-WOM > friends' opinion	0.856	0.855	0.027	31.847	0.000

Further inspection is required to gain an overall insight about the correlation between e-WOM and DOP; therefore, the researcher examined the sub-hypotheses. The first sub-hypothesis of “there is a statistical significance of celebrity opinion on DOP” analyses results are illustrated in Table 3, while Fig. 2 shows that (37.4%) of the variance in DOP was influenced by celebrities' opinion, B value score was (B = 0.612) and a significance of (Sign. = 0.00). Fig. 2 shows the effect size score of (0.598), (Müller, Schuberth and Henseler, 2018), this result is considered good, and therefore the assumption of celebrities influencing DOP is accepted.

Table 3
R² value and f² of celebrity's opinion in the DOP

Variables	B	Mean	S. D	T	P
Celebrity opinion > DOP	0.612	0.632	0.046	13.329	0.000

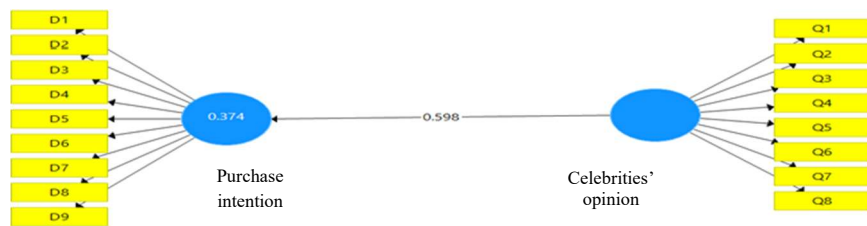


Fig. 2. f² value of celebrities' opinion in the DOP

The second sub-hypothesis of “there is a statistical significance of friend's opinion on DOP” analyses results are illustrated in Table 4, and Fig. 3 shows that (31.5%) of the variance in DOP was influenced by friend's opinion, B value score was (B = 0.561) and a significance of (Sign. = 0.00). Fig. 3 shows the effect size score of (0.459), this result is considered as Müller, Schuberth and Henseler (2018) stated good, and therefore the assumption of friends' influence on DOP is accepted.

Table 4
Friends' opinion path analysis in the DOP

Variables	B	Mean	S. D	T	P
Friends' opinion > DOP	0.561	0.582	0.050	11.131	0.000

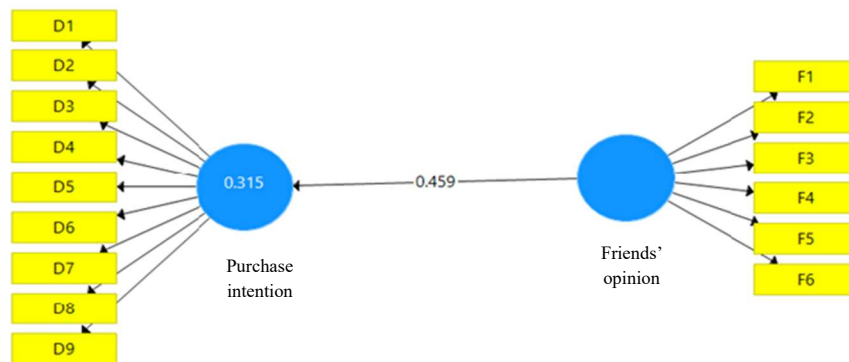


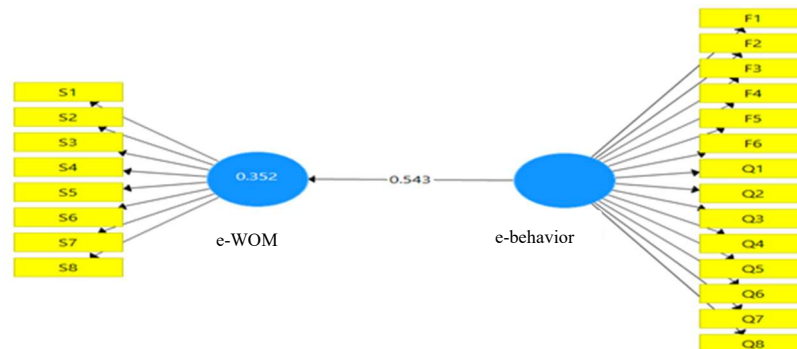
Fig. 3. f² value of friend's opinion in the DOP

The third sub-hypothesis of “there is a statistically significant of celebrity and friends' opinion e-WOM on the e-behavior” analyses results are illustrated in Table 5, and Fig. 4 shows that (35.2%) of the variance in DOP was influenced by friend's opinion, B value score was (B = 0.593) and a significance of (Sign. = 0.00). Fig. 4 shows the effect size score of (0.543), this result is considered as Müller, Schuberth and Henseler (2018) stated a good result, and therefore the assumption of e-WOM influence on e-behavior is accepted.

Table 5

e-WOM path analysis in e-behavior

Variables	<i>B</i>	Mean	S. D	T	<i>P</i>
e-WOM > e-behavior	0.593	0.614	0.035	16.821	0.000

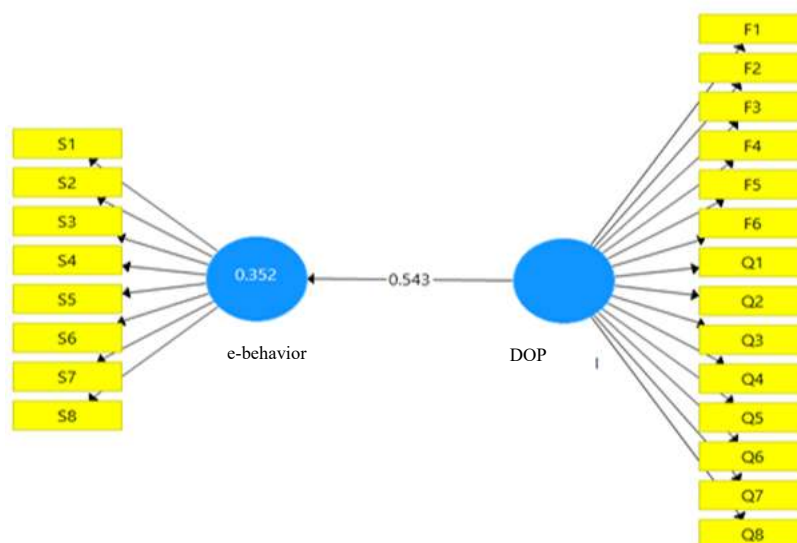
**Fig. 4.** R² value of e-WOM on e-behavior

The fourth sub-hypothesis of “there is a statistical significance of e-behavior on DOP” analyses results are illustrated in Table 6, and Fig. 5 shows that (38.2%) of the variance in DOP was influenced by friend’s opinion, B value score was ($B = 0.618$) and a significance of ($\text{Sign.} = 0.00$). Fig. 5 shows the effect size score of (0.382), this result is considered as Müller, Schubert and Henseler (2018) stated is considered a good result, and therefore the assumption of e-behavior influence on DOP is accepted.

Table 6

Conscious e-behavior path analysis on DOP

Variables	<i>B</i>	Mean	S. D	T	<i>P</i>
E-behavior > DOP	0.618	0.637	0.045	13.736	0.000

**Fig. 5.** R² value of e-behavior on the DOP

The fifth sub-hypothesis of “there is a statistical significance of e-WOM on DOP mediated by e-behavior” analyses results are illustrated in Table 7, and Fig. 6 shows that (50.5%) of the variance in DOP was influenced by e-behavior and e-WOM as Hair and colleagues (2010) stated it is a good result. B value score was ($B = 0.453$) and a significance of ($\text{Sign.} = 0.00$). Table 7

illustrates that e-behavior significant effect in the DOP, B-value score is (0.345) and the significance score is (0.000), e-WOM significant effect in e-behavior is apparent by the B-value score of (0.580) and the significance of (0.000), the results also showed that e-behavior mediates the relationship between e-WOM and DOP, this result indicates a moderate effect of the mediating variable. Therefore, the assumption of e-behavior influence on the relationship between e-WOM and DOP is accepted.

Table 7

E-behavior path analysis in the relationship between e-WOM and DOP

Variables	B	Mean	S. D	T	P		
E-behavior> DOP	0.345	0.347	0.066	5.251	0.000		
e-WOM> e-behavior	0.580	0.594	0.040	14.575	0.000		
e-WOM> DOP	0.453	0.459	0.064	7.111	0.000		
e-WOM> e-behavior	e-behavior> DOP	Indirect Effect	SE	t-value	95% LL	95% UL	Decision
0.453	0.345	0.156	0.040	3.907	0.078	0.235	Mediation

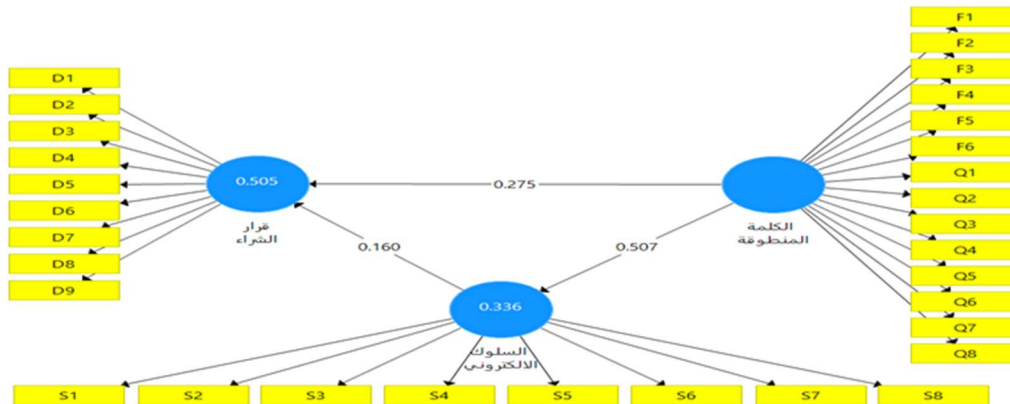


Fig. 6. R² value of e-behavior in the relationship between e-WOM and DOP

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The main results of the study yielded; There is an impact of e-WOM in the DOP, percentage score (42.3%). There is an impact of celebrities' opinion in DOP, percentage score (37.4%). There is an impact of a friend's opinion in DOP, percentage score (31.5%). There is an impact of e-WOM in e-behavior, percentage score (35.2%). There is a partial effect of e-behavior in the relationship between e-WOM and DOP. There is an impact of e-WOM in the DOP, percentage score (42.3%). The researcher recommends Jadara university students to rely on e-WOM more in DOP, to consult friends more and celebrities less in DOP, and reinforces positive purchasing behavior in e-WOM.

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