How Engaged are Saudi Arabian Diners with eWOM About Restaurants?

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study is to determine the existing state of engagement in eWOM about restaurants in Saudi Arabia in terms of demographics. It also seeks to evaluate how far the benefits, concerns, and obstacles that influence diners' decisions to engage in eWOM are perceived by Saudi Diners. The research employed a mixed methodology by conducting a structured and semi-structured survey of Saudi Arabian restaurant consumers. The results suggest that demographics influence consumer behavior regarding their participation in the eWOM about restaurants. The study also identified some barriers that prevent Saudi consumers from using online reviewing applications, such as forgetfulness, busyness, and a lack of trust in eWOM from unknown people, and suggested the correct motivations to mitigate the negative impact of these barriers.

General Terms
eWOM, restaurant industry

Keywords
Demographics, eWOM, marketing; restaurant industry, reviewing applications, word-of-mouth.

1. INTRODUCTION
eWOM, which is an exemplar of ICT in the realm of business, stands for electronic word-of-mouth, which refers to sharing opinions, reviews, and recommendations about products, services, or brands through digital channels such as social media, review websites, and online communities [1]. One of the main benefits of eWOM is that it allows consumers to gather information and make more informed purchasing decisions based on the experiences of others [2]. Therefore, it is important for businesses to actively manage their online presence and respond to customer feedback promptly and appropriately.

The restaurant industry in Saudi Arabia is growing and evolving, with increasing consumer demand for fast food, casual dining, and online ordering and delivery services. This trend is expected to continue in the coming years, as the market becomes more competitive and new players enter the industry. According to a report by Euro Monitor International, the food service industry in Saudi Arabia has been growing steadily in recent years [3].

In 2020, the total sales value of the food service industry in Saudi Arabia was SAR 62.5 billion (USD 16.6 billion), representing a 2% increase from the previous year. In this particular context, it is observed that the rise in food and restaurant services has a significant influence on the adoption of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) [4]. This practice is extensively employed within the Saudi Arabian restaurant industry, where a wide range of e-WOM platforms can easily be accessed [5]. It is thus expected that the utilization of word-of-mouth (WOM) plays a pivotal role in determining the profitability of restaurants in Saudi Arabia [6].

Previous research on the subject of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has looked at several elements, including external factors that include extra features related to the eWOM author, like demographic data [7]. This is not evident when it comes to eWOM in the Saudi Arabian restaurant industry. In terms of demographics, the current body of research on this topic lacks a comprehensive analysis of their impact on eWOM engagement. Therefore, the goal of this study is to characterize the current state of engagement in eWOM concerning restaurants in Saudi Arabia, as well as the impact of demographics on this state. Simultaneously, to determine how far Saudi diners perceive the benefits, concerns, obstacles, and motives involved with participation in eWOM concerning restaurants. To do this, the study intends to answer the following research questions:

- In light of demographics, how engaged are Saudi Arabian diners currently with eWOM about restaurants?

- Are benefits, concerns, and obstacles associated with participating in eWOM about restaurants perceived by Saudi diners?

- what are the envisions to get people motivated to partake in the eWOM in Saudi Arabia

This research provides a new understanding of how engaged Saudi Arabian diners are with eWOM about restaurants and how far they perceive related issues. Besides, it highlights how such analysis could lead restaurants to compromise their eating ambiance to achieve success in the Saudi Arabian restaurant industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
Numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the impact of sociocultural traits on eWOM in several industries, including the food and restaurant industry.

[8] Aimed at clarifying, from a Bangladeshi viewpoint, how customers' attitudes toward online reviews on social media sites affect their inclination to visit a restaurant. It was shown that attitudes about adopting the eWOM site are positively related to participants' perceptions regarding usefulness ease of use, trustworthiness, and information quality of online reviews. Additionally, focus group discussion findings showed that customers often trust unfavorable reviews, which lowers their intention of going to restaurants.

[9] looked at how argument quality and information value affect how much people trust eWOM sources, how much risk they think there is, and how they use information about food products. It shows that eWOM has a good effect on how risky people think information is based on how trustworthy the source is. Because of this, customers use eWOM to lower the risks they face when making decisions. Through online food product forums and review sites, businesses can tailor their marketing strategies to meet the wants of their most loyal customers.

[10] examined the impact of consumers' e-satisfaction, perceived value, trust, and eLoyalty on eWOM for online food ordering apps in India. It also aimed at examining if eWOM differs based on demographic factors such as age, gender, etc. The findings of the study revealed that eLoyalty, trust, and perceived value exhibited a statistically significant relationship with consumers' intention to engage in eWOM. Also, e-satisfaction, age, gender, order value, shopping experience, and family size did not have a significant impact on the customer's intention to engage in (eWOM).

[11] Studies the impact of Internet reviews on Saudi Arabian consumers' purchase decisions. It examines how customer purchase decisions are influenced by online reviews, taking into account the credibility of the reviewers and the website as a trustworthy information source. The findings indicate that eWOM has a significant impact on Saudi online buyers, and a higher proportion of them rely on these kinds of online communities when deciding which things to buy online.

[12] Analyzed the use of positive as well as negative EWOM by food passengers using information from an online poll of 456 tourists who had dining experiences. The research hypotheses are put to the test using the Tobit model. The aspects of the eating experience influence eWOM activity and the racial, ethnic, and psychological attributes it promotes were among the questions that were asked. It was discovered that negative eWOM sharing was more common than positive eWOM sharing. Value and authenticity both had an impact on solely good and bad eWOM, respectively. Only negative eWOM was influenced by value, while only positive eWOM was influenced by authenticity. While younger customers were more involved in positive advocacy, women were more active in negative advocacy. Both positive and negative eWOM were substantially correlated with food engagement.

[13] Studied how different information sources, among which is eWOM, influence purchase intentions by taking different demographic factors like gender, education and personal status, occupation, age, and income. It was found that consumers with high susceptibility to informational influence depend on information from eWOM sources, while the consumers with low susceptibility to informational influence seek information from neutral/third party and manufacturer/retailer sources when making a purchase decision.

[14] Examined the behavior and perceptions of Saudi Arabian people towards online reviews. An exploratory investigation of the current Online Review System (ORS) platform for Saudi Arabian restaurants was conducted. He identified how consumers use online reviews and outlined the concerns/problems they face, especially those related to trust in ORS. Interviews with focus groups revealed that Saudi consumers, especially the younger generation, are enthusiastic about ORS, but trust issues need to be properly addressed to maintain and grow their enthusiasm.

[15] Examined the effect of user experience on the achievement of positive outcomes in Arab restaurants. The findings indicate that understanding varied consumer experiences is required, and restaurant suppliers are expected to pay closer attention to this. Consumers who come to visit restaurants do not only expect the quality of the food served, but sensory, emotional, and behavioral experiences also influence their experience.

Prior research has shown a variety of extensive investigations into the relationship between demographics and the behaviors of those who participate in eWOM activities. Studies [8], [14], and [15] have primarily examined the restaurant industry. Researchers [10)], [11], [12], and [13] have conducted a study investigating the correlation between customers' demographics and their relative eWOM behaviors. [8] examined the perspectives of Bangladeshi individuals while [9] focused on the opinions of Chinese individuals, [10] conducted on individuals from India, and [11] concerned with Saudi Arabians. The proposed study was distinct in that it synthesized a variety of the aforementioned concerns and consolidated them into a single research context, specifically focusing on the restaurant business. We examined national perspectives, focusing on the instance of Saudi Arabia, and investigated the relationship between eWOM behaviors, demographics, and the associated benefits, concerns, obstacles, and motivations as perceived by Saudi diners.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Approach

The study's goal is to describe the current level of engagement in eWOM regarding restaurants in Saudi Arabia, as well as the impact of demographics on this state. At the same time, determine the extent to which Saudi diners perceive the benefits, concerns, obstacles, and motivations associated with participating in eWOM about restaurants. Figure 1 depicts a conceptual view of the study approach.
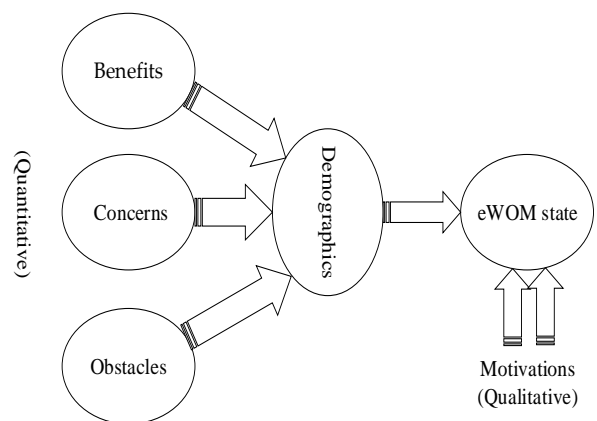

Figure 1. The conceptual view of the study approach

To address the research questions, a mixed methods design is used to collect both the quantitative and the qualitative data. This approach allows us to gain a deeper comprehension of the research problem. Both quantitative and qualitative data are collected via an online structured and semi-structured survey in Arabic.

The quantitative data was analyzed using various descriptive statistics including frequency distribution and percentages, and Cronbach alpha. We used SPSS 20 to conduct the needed analysis and visualize the results.

The Qualitative data was translated from Arabic to English and analyzed using both inductive and deductive thematic analysis approaches [16] to identify recurring themes. The inductive approach involved a bottom-up process, where themes and patterns were derived directly from the raw data without any preconceived notions or pre-existing theoretical frameworks.

3.2 Instrument

To achieve the aims of the study, a multiple-sectional survey design was adopted. The survey comprised demographic questions, open-ended questions for the qualitative part, and multiple-answer questions as well as questions graded on a 4-point Likert scale for the quantitative part. The latter ones are divided into three groups: eWOM-based benefits (4 questions), eWOM-based worries and concerns (4 questions), and eWOM-based obstacles (5 questions). A 4-point Likert scale (4 = strongly agree, 1 = disagree) was utilized to assess the participants' perceptions regarding the provided statements.

The interpretation scheme for the 4-point Likert scale assessing attitude, Table 1, is used in the study.

Table 1. 4-point Likert scale assessing attitude

grade	Mean interval	Attitude
1	1.0-1.75	Disagree
2	1.76- 2.50	Slightly agree
3	2.51- 3.25	Agree
4	3.26- 4.00	Strongly agree

For the 4-point Likert scale-based items, the reliability was checked. Cronbach's alpha values for the dimensions of benefits, concerns, and obstacles are shown in Table 2. A suggested reliability threshold of Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.65 was adopted.

Table 2. Cronbach's alpha test

Dimensions	α
Benefits	0.763
Concerns	0.674
Obstacles	0.696

3.3 Procedure

Over two months, a call for participation in the survey was disseminated via various social media platforms such as Twitter, Telegram, and WhatsApp. Furthermore, the survey was circulated through email lists of the university staff and students, with whom the authors are affiliated. Based on purposive sampling, a total of 742 respondents participated in the study. The age groups of 18-25 and 26-35 were predominant, constituting approximately one-third of the sample each, with 31.8% and 32.5%, respectively. The majority of the participants were females, accounting for 62.9% of the sample. Among the participants, those with an income of less than 3k Saudi Riyals (SR) constituted the highest percentage of the sample (32.2%), followed by those with income ranging between 10k and 20k (SR) (29.9%). The demographic information of the participants is depicted in Table 3.

Table 3. Participants' demographics

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-25	236	31.8
	26-35	241	32.5
	36-45	191	25.7
	46-55	60	8.1
	Above 56	14	1.9
Gender	female	467	62.9
	male	275	37.1
Monthly income	< 3K	239	32.2
	3K-10K	172	23.2
	10K-20K	222	29.9
	20K-30K	78	10.5
	> 30K	31	4.2

4. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

This section provides a comprehensive presentation of the results as per the specific research questions. For the surveyed multi-response questions, multiple-response analysis was conducted by using the dichotomies method [17] wherein each multiple-choice response was treated as a variable in SPSS, and each variable was assigned a value of 1 or 0. A value of 1 indicates that this option was selected, while 0 indicates that it has not been selected.

During the data analysis, the 4-point Likert scale replies for some questioned items were collapsed to a binary scale to allow for attaining the state of yes or no for the queries of how frequently the participants review or see reviews of others [18]. Additionally, out of the five participant age categories, two age groups: high and low, were created with the low age group being 17–35 and the high age group being (>35) to simplify the age comparison.

4.1 How engaged are Saudi Arabian diners currently with eWOM about restaurants considering demographics?

The survey included four questions that highlight both passive engagement and active engagement in eWOM as shown in Table 4. Regarding how participants decide to go to restaurants or cafes, according to Table 4, the findings suggest that recommendations from friends and family, which scored a total of 585, have less influence on consumers' restaurant choices in Saudi Arabia than reviews from electronic sources, which scored 893. These findings imply that Saudi Arabians no longer adhere to their cultural norms and practices, especially when it comes to their contacts with eWOM, which is a reflection of the world's growing interconnectedness. Gender-wise, data indicate that 40.19% of women and 20.23% of men accessed electronic resources for advice, as indicated by Figure 2 and Table 4. This is consistent with the findings of other research indicating that gender has a significant impact on the online communication patterns of customers. Regarding this topic, [19] discovered a significant difference in the frequency of online social media platform usage between males and females, with females exhibiting a greater passive involvement as measured by a higher frequency of visits. Furthermore, in terms of age, replies show that 42.51% of those who are

younger used electronic resources, compared to 17.9% of those of higher ages.

When asked if they read reviews before dining, the majority of participants (86.11%) said yes. When comparing the two genders, Figure 3 and Table 4 demonstrate that women, who scored a percentage of 88.2%, are more inclined than males, who scored a percentage of 82.5%, to seek restaurant reviews before dining. According to the comparison across age groups, those who are younger are more likely to read reviews, with a percentage of 88.1% than those who are older, with a percentage of 82.6%. This shows that, from the passive perspective, women and younger ages are more inclined than men and older age groups to seek reviews before selecting a restaurant.

In response to the question, "Do you frequently rate restaurants after dining?", 52.6% of participants said they did not. This means that roughly half of the participants are passive diners whereas rating restaurants holds little significance for them. Combining that with the previously noted finding that most participants read restaurant evaluations before dining, it can be concluded that participants only take restaurant reviews seriously when they choose not to publish their own. This is consistent with the phenomenon known as the "90-9-1 rule". Out of all users, 90% read or watch but make no contributions, 9% make minimal contributions, and the remaining users make complete contributions [20].

Figure 4 and Table 4 compare the percentages of the two genders in this active conduct, showing that females have a lower percentage (44.2%) than males (52.7%). This means that they are less likely than males to frequently rate restaurants. This could be due to Arab women's conservative nature. When age groups are compared, the findings indicate that younger people—who scored 47%—are less active than older people—who scored 48.3%—despite being extremely close. This is
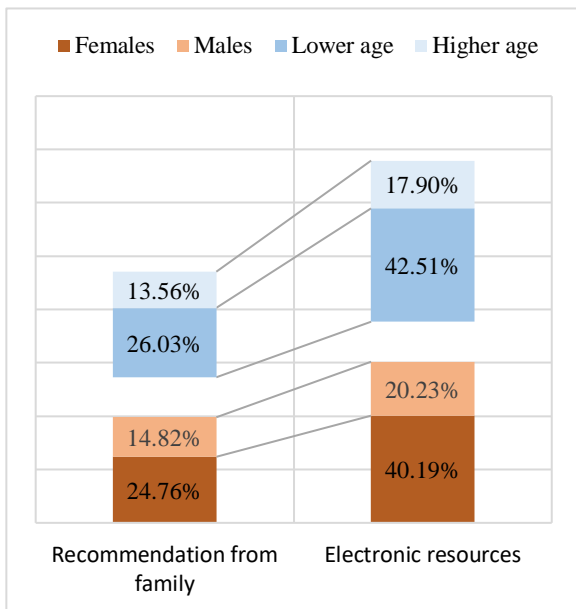
interpreted to indicate that they are less likely than older age groups to frequently rate restaurants. This discrepancy may indicate that younger people, who are used to playing top-notch international games daily, find the HCI design of eWOM platforms dull and dislike using them.

In response to the multiple-choice question, "What application do you use for rating restaurants?" Figure 5 and Table 4 show the number of applications utilized in restaurant reviews. Three groups of participants were identified: those who use no apps at all, those who use one app, and those who use many

applications. 46% of participants do not use any applications. They are distributed as follows: 30.36% of women and 15.36% of men; 31.17% of those in lower ages and 14.98% in higher ages. Similarly, the 35% of participants who use only one app are dispersed by age and gender, with 20.62% of females and 14.69% of men; by age, 22.13% of participants in lower age groups and 13.23% of participants in higher age groups.

Furthermore, those who use more than one app, which accounts for 19% of participants, are divided by gender (11.46% for females and 7.01% for men) and by age (10.93% for lower ages and 7.56% for higher ages). This shows that although women and younger people were more likely than men to not use any apps, they were also more likely, among this 19% group, to be frequent app users and to be seen as "techies".

These findings show that the majority of people do not use any eWOM platform, let alone multiple. Besides social and cultural issues, this may also be explained by their dislike of actively

using eWOM platforms due to their user-unfriendliness. That is, besides obstacles and cultural concerns that may prevent people from participating in eWOM, they probably feel less at ease and are reluctant to use eWOM platforms as a result of their poor HCI design.
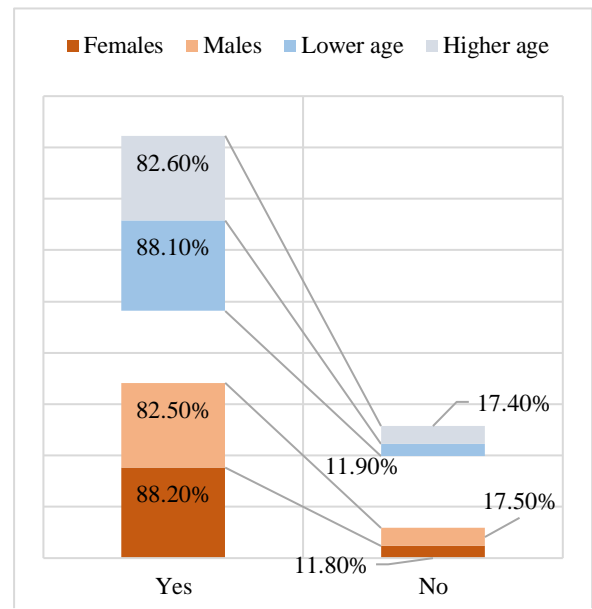

Figure 1. Family recommendation vs. e- resources

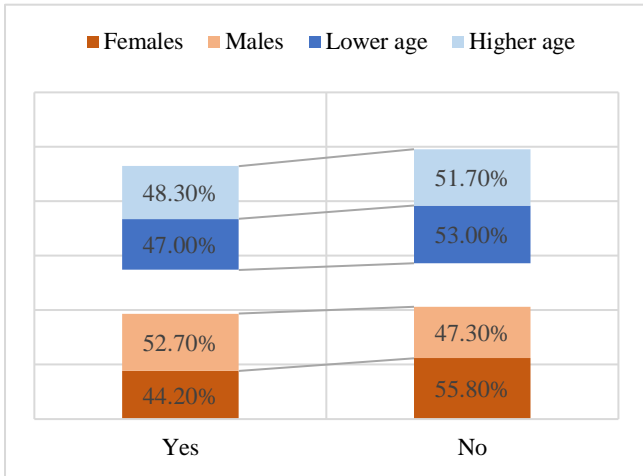**Figure 2. Do you frequently read reviews before dining?**

Figure 3. Do you frequently Rate restaurants after dining?

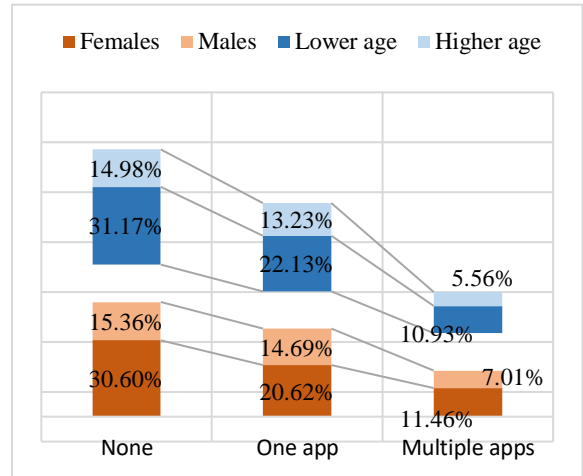**Figure 4. Number of used apps in rating**

Table 4. State of eWOM in terms of demographics

Statement		(counts/ percentage)											
		Gender						Age					
		Females		Males		Total		Low age		High age		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	V	%
How do you decide to go to restaurants?	Family advice	366	24.76	219	14.82	585	39.58	384	26.03	200	13.56	584	39.59
	E-resources	594	40.19	299	20.23	893	60.42	627	42.51	264	17.9	891	60.41
Do you frequently read reviews before dining?	Yes	413	88.2	227	82.5	640	86.14	420	88.1	219	82.6	639	86.11
	No	55	11.8	48	17.5	103	13.86	57	11.9	46	17.4	103	13.89
Do you frequently rate restaurants after dining?	Yes	207	44.2	145	52.7	352	47.4	224	47.0	128	48.3	352	47.4
	No	261	55.8	130	47.3	391	52.6	253	53.0	137	51.7	390	52.6
Number of used apps in rating	None	229	30.36	114	15.36	343	46	231	31.17	111	14.98	342	46.13
	One app	153	20.62	109	14.69	262	35	164	22.13	98	13.23	262	35.36
	Multiple apps	83	11.46	55	7.01	138	19	81	10.93	56	7.56	138	18.49

4.2 How do diners perceive the benefits, concerns, and obstacles associated with participating in eWOM about restaurants?

4.2.1 What are the perceived benefits of the eWOM about restaurants?

Table 5 shows that 89.1% of all participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "rating restaurants is useful for me." This is in contrast to the 4.6% of respondents who slightly agreed or disagreed that reviewing restaurants is beneficial for the participant.

In terms of whether restaurant ratings are beneficial to restaurant management, 94.8% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they are. On the other side, 5.3% of participants slightly agreed and disagreed that the restaurant evaluations were valuable to restaurant managers. Regarding benefits to the employees, 82.2% of respondents agreed and

strongly agreed that they are. 17.8% of respondents said they slightly agreed or disagreed with the statement.

A total of 93.3% of survey participants agreed and strongly agreed with the statement "whether restaurant ratings are beneficial to other diners". 4.7% of the participants expressed a slight agreement or disagreement with this statement.

The statement "Restaurant ratings are useful to restaurant managers "is the highest-ranking item in this portion of the questionnaire, with a mean score of 3.5. This suggests that participants understand the restaurant industry well from a business perspective. All the means, however, lie between the agree and strongly agree categories on the Likert scale, suggesting that Saudi diners have a high perception of the overall benefits of eWOM. The findings are illustrated in Figure 6.
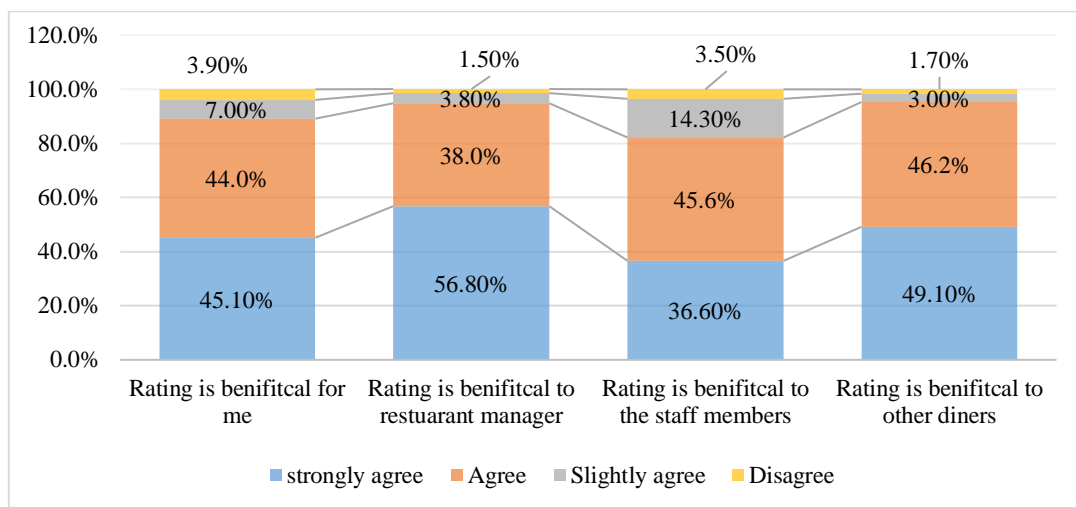

Figure 6. Comparison of responses on the perceived benefits of the eWOM regarding restaurants

Table 5. Descriptive analysis of participants' responses regarding the benefits of eWOM

Statement		Disagree (1)	Slightly agree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly agree (4)	Mean	SD	R
Rating restaurants is useful for me	F	29	52	327	335	3.3	.766	3
	%	3.9	0.7	44.0	45.1			
Restaurant ratings are useful to restaurant managers.	F	11	28	282	422	3.5	.644	1
	%	1.5	3.8	38.0	56.8			
Restaurant ratings are beneficial to the staff members who work there.	F	26	106	339	272	3.15	.791	4
	%	3.5	14.3	45.6	36.6			
Restaurant ratings are beneficial to other diners.	F	13	22	343	365	3.43	.640	2
	%	1.7	3.0	46.2	49.1			

4.2.2 What are the perceived worries and concerns associated with engagement in eWOM about restaurants?

Table 6 shows that 31.9% of all participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Fear of invading my privacy prevents me from rating restaurants after dining." This contrasts with the 68% of respondents who slightly agreed or disagreed that privacy concerns restrict them from reviewing restaurants.

Concerning the statement "fear of legal consequences prevents me from rating restaurants after dining", 25.6% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that such legal implications hinder them from reviewing restaurants. On the other hand, 74% of participants agreed or disagreed that legal difficulties have an impact on whether or not they rank restaurants after dining.

A total of 32.6% agreed and strongly agreed with the statement, "I am not willing to rate restaurants after dining because I don't trust other people's ratings". On the other hand,

67.3% of participants are slightly in agreement or disagree with the statement of how the trust issue affects rating.

33.9% of participants agreed or disagreed with the statement "I am not willing to rate restaurants after dining because I am concerned about the negative influence of my ratings on their staff.", while 46.1% of participants slightly agreed or disagreed with that statement.

The statement "I am not willing to rate restaurants after dining because I am concerned about the negative influence of my ratings on their staff "is the highest ranking item in this portion of the questionnaire, with a mean score of 2.53. This implies that participants are sympathetic and concerned that the restaurant staff might lose their employment because of rating restaurants after dining and they rank this concern above all others. However, all statements' means fall in the Likert scale's slightly agree or agree categories, indicating that Saudi diners view issues and concerns regarding restaurant-related eWOM as fairly significant. The findings are illustrated in Figure 7.
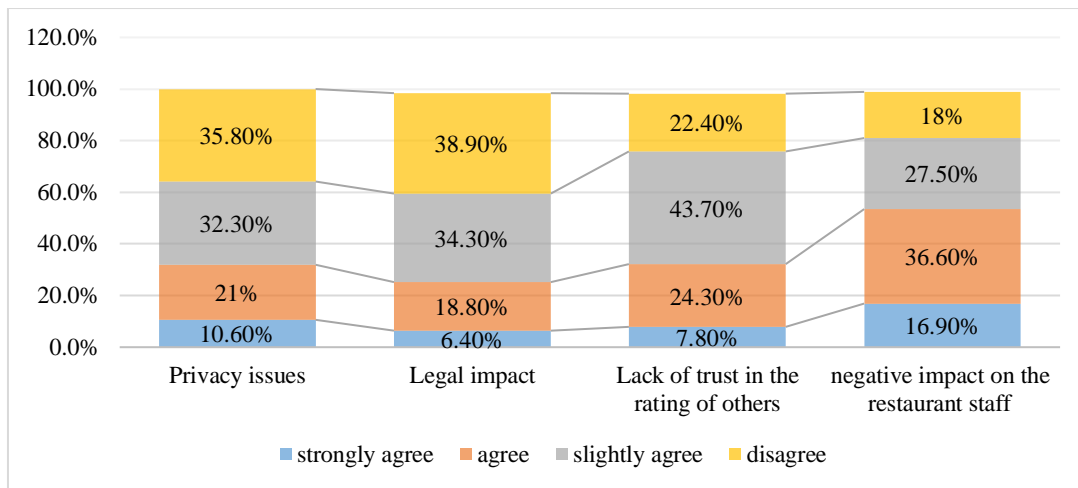

Figure 7. Comparison of responses of the perceived concerns associated with engagement in eWOM about restaurants

Table 6. Descriptive analysis of participants' responses regarding the concerns about eWOM

Statement		disagree (1)	slightly agree (2)	agree (3)	strongly agree (4)	Mean	SD	Rank
Fear of invading my privacy keeps me from rating restaurants after dining.	F	264	238	157	78	2.07	.966	3
	%	35.8	32.3	21.3	10.6			
Fear of legal consequences prevents me from rating restaurants after dining.	F	290	265	140	48	1.93	.918	4
	%	39.5	34.9	19.1	6.5			
I am not willing to rate restaurants after dining because I don't trust other people's ratings.	F	167	326	181	58	2.18	.873	2
	%	22.8	44.5	24.7	7.9			
I am not willing to rate restaurants after dining because I am concerned about the negative influence of my ratings on their staff.	F	134	205	273	126	2.53	.977	1
	%	18.2	27.8	37.0	16.9			

4.2.3 What are the perceived Obstacles associated with engagement in eWOM about restaurants?

According to Table 7, 70.2% of all participants agreed or strongly agreed that laziness keeps them from reviewing

restaurants. This is in contrast to the 19.8% of respondents who slightly agreed or disagreed.

Regarding the statement "My tendency to rate restaurants after dining is influenced by technical issues," 7.4% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that technical issues make it difficult

for them to review restaurants. On the other side, 92.6% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they did not.

Regarding the third statement in Table 1, 34.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they were hesitant to review restaurants after dining because of the uncertainty produced by the various rating apps, while 65.7% disagreed or were in slight agreement.

Regarding the perception of language as a hindrance that keeps participants from rating restaurants, 29.7% of participants strongly agreed or agreed.

On the other hand, 70.3% of respondents slightly agreed or disagreed with that.

Furthermore, 35.5% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Uncertain rating criteria make me hesitant

to rate restaurants after dining." At the same time, 64.6% were either slightly agreed or disagreed.

The statement "Laziness prevents me from rating restaurants" is the highest-ranked item in this section of the questionnaire, with a mean score of 2.83. This implies that being lazy is the main reason they can't discipline themselves when it comes to engaging with eWOM concerning restaurants.

Except for technical issues, whose mean falls in the disagreement category of the Likert scale, all of the other statements' means, on the other hand, fall into the slightly agree or agree categories, indicating that Saudi customers view most of the barriers mentioned regarding restaurant-related eWOM as fairly significant. The findings are illustrated in Figure 8.
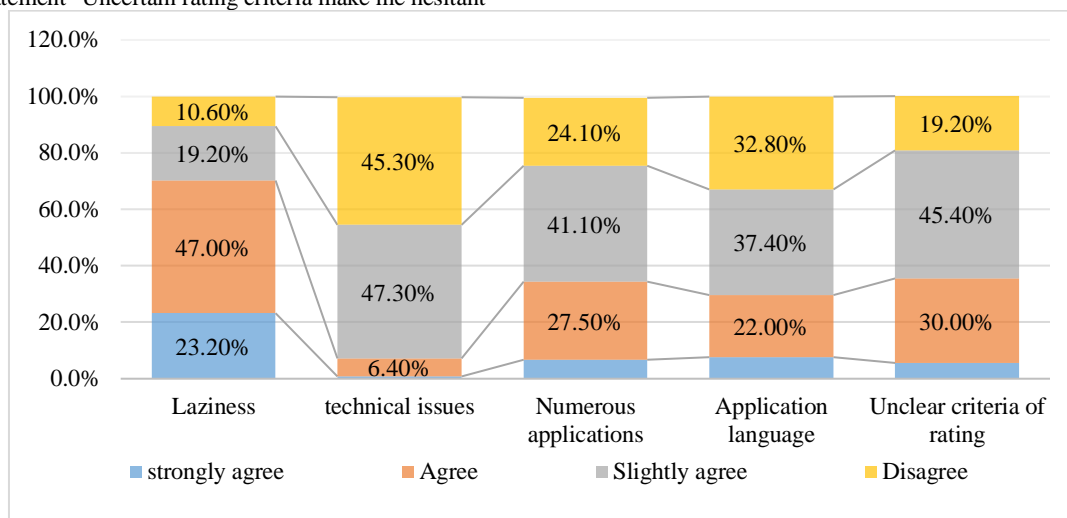

Figure 8. Comparison of responses regarding the perceived obstacles associated with engagement in eWOM about restaurants

Table 7. Descriptive analysis of participants' responses regarding the obstacles to engaging in eWOM

Statement		disagree (1)	Slightly agree (2)	Agree (3)	Strongly agree (4)	Mean	SD	Rank
Laziness prevents me from rating restaurants	F	78	141	345	170	2.83	.906	1
	%	10.6	19.2	47.0	23.2			
My tendency to rate restaurants after dining is influenced by technical issues	F	331	346	48	6	1.63	.644	5
	%	45.3	47.3	6.4	0.8			
I'm hesitant to rate restaurants after dining because of the confusion caused by the numerous rating apps.	F	180	301	201	50	2.17	.867	3
	%	24.1	41.1	27.5	6.8			
Language barriers prevent me from rating restaurants	F	242	276	162	57	2.05	.926	4
	%	32.8	37.4	22.0	7.7			
Uncertain rating criteria make me hesitant to rate restaurants after dining.	F	140	332	219	40	2.22	.815	2
	%	19.2	45.4	30.0	5.5			

4.3 Open-ended questions

Other open-ended queries have been posted. They seek to gain a better comprehension of all concerns regarding the engagement in the eWOM about Saudi Arabian restaurants. The analyses of the responses to these questions are provided below.

4.3.1 What are the barriers to your participation in eWOM about restaurants?

Participants reported many barriers to their participation in eWOM about restaurants. They are as follows: forgetfulness, busyness, the difference in taste, lack of motivation, the reviewing process, the redundant number of applications, uncertainty about the benefits, and missing features of the reviewing applications.

- Forgetfulness: Several participants reported forgetfulness as an obstacle to reviewing, often citing being in a rush or busy as contributing factors.
- Busyness: Some participants mentioned that the reviewing process and researching the credibility of the restaurant takes up a lot of time.
- Difference in Taste: Several participants expressed their hesitancy to provide reviews due to their respect for individual differences in taste.
- The Reviewing Process: Several participants expressed their difficulties with the reviewing process and emphasized their need for its simplification. These claims were substantiated by observations made about the process.

4.3.2 What are the visions to get people motivated to partake in the eWOM?

- A considerable number of participants pointed out that receiving feedback on their reviews can be a significant motivation for them to engage in the reviewing process. Furthermore, some participants suggested that the reviewing process could be made more engaging by introducing a system that rewards frequent reviewers.
- A considerable number of participants viewed the interaction of restaurant owners or managers with their comments and feedback as a great motivation for them.
- The third motivation identified by the participants was related to the reviewing process itself. They also wanted the review process to be simple, requiring only a few steps and a minimum amount of writing with generalized standards.
- Many participants expressed that encouraging participation in eWOM could be achieved by raising awareness of the importance of reviews.
- There were also raised concerns about the credibility of the evaluations. The public's education was seen as a viable remedy for this problem that

5. CONCLUSION

The present study provides empirical evidence of the current state of the engagement in eWOM about restaurants in Saudi Arabia in terms of the participants' demographics. In addition, to complete the picture, it also, through the qualitative portion of the study, identified some extra obstacles that prevent Saudi consumers from engaging in eWOM about restaurants as well as the motivations needed to mitigate the negative impact of these obstacles. Regarding how participants decide to go to restaurants or cafes, the findings suggest that recommendations from friends and family, which scored a total of 585, have less influence on consumers' restaurant choices in Saudi Arabia than reviews from electronic sources, which scored 893. This goes against the prevailing research trend, which indicates that Arab culture is centered around family values and customs, with family ties being recognized as defining linkages for Arab people [21, 22]. The research results suggest that things have changed. Saudi Arabians no longer uphold their traditional customs and cultural principles, particularly in their interactions with eWOM, which can be seen as a manifestation of the globalized society.

According to the statistics, women and younger age groups are more likely than males and older age groups to read reviews before choosing a restaurant. Additionally, the results did not reveal that women and younger ages are driven to actively participate in eWOM as a way of self-expression in the digital era since they are less likely to review restaurants than men and older age groups. However, certain studies that aim to explain eWOM behavior have regarded age to be an important factor

and stated that different age groups can have different perspectives on certain issues [23].

Furthermore, 46% of participants do not use any eWOM platform, let alone multiple. In addition to obstacles, concerns, and cultural influences, this may also be explained by their dislike of actively using eWOM platforms due to their user-unfriendliness. That is, people probably feel less at ease and are reluctant to use eWOM platforms as a result of their poor HCI design. This is in line with [24] where website design effects on users' desire to use the e-WOM platform have been investigated. The findings in that research demonstrated that consumers' interest in an e-WOM platform is influenced by its design and ease of use.

The findings indicate that participants have a good understanding of the restaurant industry from a business standpoint since they put the benefits of eWOM for restaurant managers above all other benefits. Nonetheless, they show that Saudi diners have a positive attitude toward the overall benefits of eWOM.

According to research on participants' concerns about participating in eWOM about restaurants, people are sympathetic and worried that restaurant employees might lose their jobs as a result of reviewing establishments after dining, and they prioritize this worry over all others. They do, however, imply that Saudi customers consider concerns about restaurant-related eWOM to be fairly significant.

As for obstacles, the results imply that being lazy is the main reason the participants can't discipline themselves when it comes to engaging with eWOM concerning restaurants. Except for technical issues, participants viewed the addressed obstacles in the quantitative portion of the questionnaire regarding restaurant-related eWOM as fairly significant. This is complemented by the findings from the study's qualitative portion which suggest that several obstacles prevent Saudi diners from using online reviewing applications and providing their feedback on the services provided by the restaurant industry in Saudi Arabia. The major obstacles that were identified by the participants include forgetfulness, busyness, difference in taste, lack of motivation, confusion, and frustration about the redundant number of reviewing applications, and uncertainty about the benefits of reviewing. These obstacles can be addressed by incorporating features that promote user motivation. Offering tailored suggestions, enhancing accessibility and usability, and emphasizing the advantages of posting reviews are a few of the elements that stem from the philosophy and principles of human-computer interaction (HCI).

This research has significant contributions and implications. It is the first study that examines and compares eWOM-based behavior in terms of demographics in the context of rating restaurants and seeking others' ratings in the Arab world. It serves as an example of how eWOM-based behaviors can be used to investigate how demographics impact eWOM engagement style. By doing this, it is simpler for restaurant operators to distinguish between different customer groups depending on their demographics, and to target them with the most effective marketing message.

6. REFERENCES

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