

The Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM) Research: A Scope of Literature Review

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Abstract –

There has been a lot of research on word of mouth. The findings show that research on e-WOM has grown in terms of publications. This research was conducted with the aim of (1) what is the cumulative growth trend of publications about electronic Word Of Mouth (e-WOM) from 2020 - 2023. (2) how are publications about electronic Word Of Mouth (e-WOM) according to geography (3) what is the research approach and focus research related to e-WOM. The method used was a scope of literature review and after selection it resulted in 13 papers. The results of this research are that there is an increasing trend in publications in the Journal of Business Research and the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services from 2020 until 2023. The research was conducted in eight countries. In the research approach there were seven papers with a quantitative approach and six mixed methods papers. For the research focus in relation to e-WOM, in the first to sixth papers, e-WOM is the dependent variable which is influenced by other variables. Meanwhile, in other papers, e-WOM is used as a source of information, both positive and negative. Recommendations for publication for Indonesia using a mixed method research approach.

Keywords: e-WOM, a Scope Literature Review, Research Approach, Research Focus, Quantitative and Mixed Methods

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background

One of the most effective and influential forms of marketing communication is Word of Mouth (WOM). Consumer attitudes, perceptions and behavior towards certain products, services and brands are influenced by WOM and can become positive or negative recommendations. (Ismagilova, 2020). WOM can be conveyed verbally between consumers, without any commercial influence from the product and service provider. WOM can spread quickly and widely both through offline and online social networks (Siguaw, 2019).

Word of mouth is important for companies because it can provide several benefits, including (1) Increasing brand popularity and reputation, because satisfied consumers will talk about and recommend the company's products or services to others. (2) Increase sales and consumer loyalty, because consumers who get recommendations from those closest to them will be more confident and interested in buying the company's products or services (3) Save marketing costs, because consumers who become brand ambassadors will carry out promotions for free and naturally, without the need to pay for advertising or endorsements. (Ismagilova, 2020)

Consumer behavior in seeking information and interacting with other people has changed drastically since the advent of the internet. Initially, when consumers look for information on goods and services produced by companies, consumers will search for information and seek information by contacting friends or family to ask for advice and consider purchasing these goods and services. The emergence of electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) has enabled customers, both actual customers and customers who have made purchases, to make positive or negative statements about a product or company to many people and institutions via the internet (Kusawat & Teerakapibal, 2022)

With the development of information and communication technology, WOM has evolved into Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM), namely verbal communication carried out through electronic media, such as social media, blogs, forums, etc. e-WOM has several characteristics that differentiate it from traditional WOM, such as anonymity, accessibility, interactivity, and virility. (Siguaw, 2019) e-WOM also has a significant impact on consumer behavior and attitudes, as well as business performance. In recent decades, companies have become increasingly aware of the importance of encouraging and utilizing electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) to help improve their image and reputation, as well as increase consumer demand. E-WOM has undergone a revolution especially in how the consumer purchasing process is created, communicated and sustainable (Chen, Yuan, Huang, & Liu, 2023)

There have been a lot of research on word of mouth. The findings show that this research has grown rapidly in terms of publications. His publications come mostly from the United States and Europe. Contributors to this field favor mixed research designs with a greater focus on theory building. The geographic focus of this study is on North America and Europe, which is consistent with the pattern of contributions. Prominent topics in this area include negative word of mouth, consumer behavior and beliefs, word of mouth on social networks, online reviews and ratings, brand loyalty, social media, service failure and service recovery, social responsibility enterprise, user-generated content and viral marketing, service quality and service marketing (Donthu, Kumar, Pandey, & Mishra, 2021)

Therefore, it is important to conduct and develop a literature review regarding electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), the objectives of this research are (1) what is the cumulative growth trend of publications regarding electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) from 2020-2023? (2) How are publications about electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) according to geography? (3) What is the research approach and research focus related to e-WOM?

2. Literature

Online message sharing behavior is motivated by the need for self-enhancement and the urge to express a sense of identity when advertising is perceived to be consistent with the internet user's self-concept (Taylor, 2012) most research on place images also finds that effective place images are positively related to tourists' intention to recommend a goal to other people, as well as to residents' positive WOM towards a place. Likewise, electronic WOM (e-WOM) plays an important role in expanding electronic commerce in the tourism industry given the growing popularity of virtual interactions among tourists (Vermeulen, 2009). In general, tourists encounter extensive tourism information and make online reservations during the pre-travel period and share experiences about their travel (e.g. activities, services, and products) in the post-travel period. Many tourism companies are integrating social media as search engines on smart devices to offer a variety of travel information (e.g. destinations) and services (e.g. travel activities), thereby providing travelers with the opportunity to assess information directly. (Tsai & Bui, 2020)

Congruence with place concerns the process of matching and perceiving a match or mismatch between symbolic cues or stereotypical images of users of a place, such as its visitors, and the self-image of individual visitors. Studies on self-conformity show that individuals tend to identify more with the places they use. Further research shows that personal congruence with a place has good results regarding a series of behavioral intentions such as visiting and returning to a place as well as brand advocacy behavior such as positive WOM (Strandberg, Styvén, & Hultman, 2019). Place advocacy research shows that feelings of attachment to a place have a positive influence on restaurant visitors' WOM intentions towards a place, tourists' intentions to recommend a destination to others, and residents' positive WOM towards a place (Line, 2018).

WOM is defined as informal communication such as recommendations and evaluations of goods and services (Moliner, Monferrer, Estrada, & Vidal, 2023). WOM is a social process that is motivated by a sense of social obligation, the desire to help others (altruism) and/or the feeling of pleasure from telling others about one's own experiences (Keiningham, 2018). WOM is considered very important for brands to evaluate first, as is with purpose and place. (Litvin, 2008)

The definition of Word of Mouth is as informal communication between a sender and a recipient about a brand, product, organization, or service for non-commercial purposes. (Tsai & Bui, 2020) acknowledge that WOM plays an important role in influencing and shaping consumer behavior and attitudes. There is a large body of literature on the role of WOM, especially how global online networks have revolutionized the distribution and influence of WOM (Sen, 2017). WOM as "voluntary communication after consumer purchase". This occurs when consumers have strong feelings about their experience with a supplier, so they feel motivated to share their experience with others (Viralta, et al., 2023).

Information quality can predict information application and purchase intention. In the context of WOM, information quality shows the relevance, completeness, accuracy, current ness, value, reliability and usefulness of information. Consumers prefer consumer experiences over misleading advertising messages. The greater the reliability of the information, the more useful the information is in cognitive decision making (Tsai & Bui, 2020). Negative WOM significantly influences the destination image because dissatisfied visitors tend to give negative comments. The destination image is mainly formed through WOM and independent and autonomous information sources. Easy access to various information sources on social media, including traveler reviews, WOM, peer expertise, and shared resources, can increase the reliability of information (Chung, 2015).

Technology that is perceived as an interesting and valuable instrument is likely to evoke feelings of pleasure or excitement and encourage increased use. Enjoyment motivates tourists to use social media as a source of tourism information to help the decision-making process and interact with other people. The enjoyment obtained from online chat groups influences user satisfaction in chatting. Likewise, the joy of using a blog has a positive impact on tourists' intentions to visit a destination. Enjoyment is described as a key factor motivating engagement in virtual communities and in promoting e-WOM (Cheung, 2012)

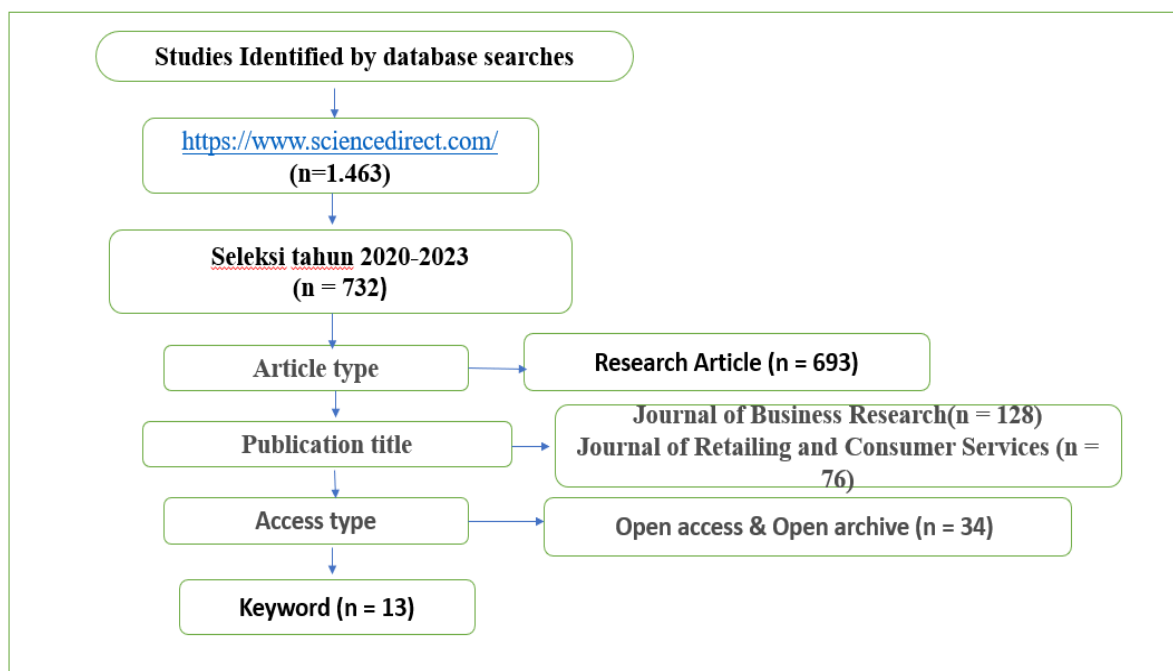
Any positive or negative statement made by potential and actual customers about a product or company, which is available to many people and institutions via the internet can be considered a form of e-WOM (Gerrath, Mafael, Ulqinaku, & Biraglia, 2023). Online product reviews, as a form of electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM), are a key driver in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. In the United States, more than 80% of consumers indicate that they use online reviews before purchasing a product (Salminen, Kandpal, & Kamel, 2022)

With e-WOM text content, companies also get a great opportunity to deepen their relationship with brand image. Stories and language in communication, psychology and marketing state that language is a way for people to express thoughts and internal emotions. Therefore, personality traits can be obtained from linguistic cues (Jaeger & H`ohler, 2021).

II. METHODS OF RESEARCH

This research uses the scope literature review method, a method used to determine the scope or scope of a collection of literature on a particular topic and provide a clear indication of the volume of literature and studies available as well as a general description of the research focus (Degerman & Wallo, 2023).

The steps in the scope literature review method are (1) identifying research questions and review objectives (2) identifying research questions and review objectives (3) determining inclusion and exclusion criteria to select relevant literature (4) conducting a comprehensive literature search and systematically using various data sources (5) filtering literature according to criteria and exclusions (6) presenting the results of literature searches in the form of tables, diagrams or narratives (7) analyzing and discussing literature findings and their implications for research and practice.



Picture 1: Flow chart of the identification process.
Source: Processing Data (2024)

From Figure 1, it can be explained that the steps are to determine focus, content and boundaries according to the research objectives. Next, criteria were formulated for which studies would be included. The inclusion criteria were a focus on electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM). The research must be a scientific article in English. Studies that did not meet the criteria were excluded. A search was carried out in the database on science direct via <https://www.sciencedirect.com/> resulting in 1,463 studies. Search using the word e-WOM. Then filtered based on the year of publication, namely from 2020 to 2023.

The next selection using the article type is the selection criteria contained in science direct with the research article type to obtain 693 relevant studies. Of the 693 filtered again using the publication title criteria, 2 criteria were selected, namely the Journal of Business Research with 128 papers and the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services with 76 papers. To facilitate the selection process, the open access and open archive type criteria were selected. 34 papers. Next, based on keywords, 13 papers were obtained with the e-WOM keyword.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Result

According to the data which is gotten from thirteen papers chosen based on the publication from 2020 until 2023, there are some conclusions:

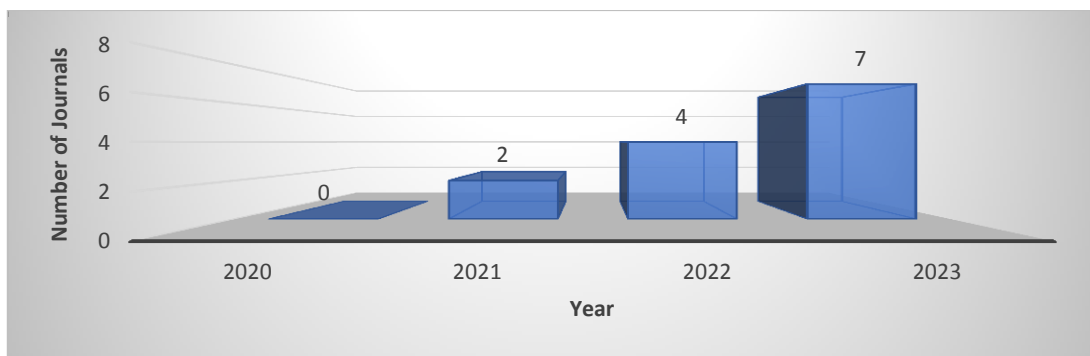
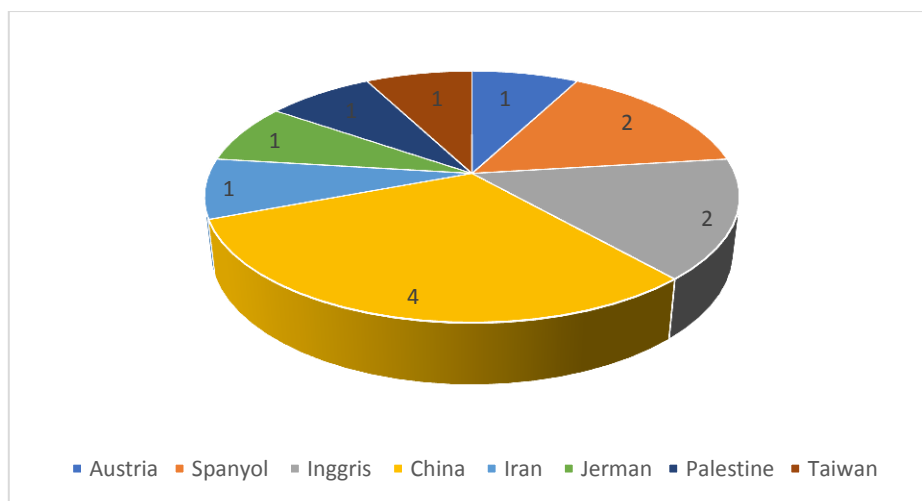


Figure 1: Electronic Publication Word of Mouth during 2020 to 2023
Source: Processing Data (2024)

Figure 1 depicts the cumulative growth of paper publications with the e-WOM theme by year, from 2020 to 2023. In 2020, according to the criteria in the selection process for publication, no papers were published. Meanwhile, the most publications will be in 2023 with a total of seven papers published. Meanwhile for 2021 there are two papers and four papers for publication in 2022. The growth pattern of publications has increased from year to year since 2021.

Research on e-WOM is research that examines the phenomenon of communication between consumers via online media, such as reviews, testimonials, or product or service recommendations. E-WOM research has increased from year to year since the Covid-19 pandemic for several reasons, namely the Covid-19 pandemic has influenced consumer behavior in shopping, traveling or using online services. Therefore, e-WOM is an important and influential source of information for consumers in making decisions (Sharma, 2020).



Picture 2: Geography of scientific production during 2020 to 2023
Source: Processing Data (2024)

In Figure 2 you can see the countries where research was conducted from 2020 - 2023. The most locations were conducted in China with four studies. For England and Spain twice, while for the remaining countries Austria, Iran, Germany, Palestine and Taiwan only had one publication each. Geographically, if mapped according to continent, there are seven studies for the Asian continent and the rest from the European continent. Research on e-WOM is mostly carried out in developed countries because the use of technology is already widely used compared to developing countries. In the United States, more than 80% of consumers indicate that they use online reviews before purchasing a product (Salminen, Kandpal, & Kamel, 2022)

Tabel 1. Research Approach and Focus during 2020 to 2021

No	Authors	Research Approaches	Research Focus
1.	(Sun, Foscht, & Eisingerich, 2021)	Quantitative Approach	Customer education by a brand can increase positive word of mouth (WOM) from customers towards the brand
2.	(Bartschat, Cziehso, & Thurau, 2022)	Quantitative Approach	Factors that influence consumers' choices in using various types of word-of-mouth (WOM) in searching for information related to product purchases.
3.	(Fatima, et al., 2023)	Quantitative Approach.	Testing the effect of rapport with chat bots on e-WOM
4.	(Kulikovskaja, Hubert, Grunert, & Zhao, 2023)	Quantitative Approach	The influence of three types of social media content on e-WOM through customer engagement
5	(Chen, Yuan, Huang, & Liu, 2023)	Quantitative Approach.	The influence of incentive type (economic VS altruistic) on customers' e-WOM sharing intentions and examining the role of personal ties between consumers and companies in moderating the relationship between incentive type and e-WOM sharing intentions
6.	(Moliner, Monferrer, Estrada, & Vidal, 2023)	Quantitative Approach	Exploring the relationship between service experience, customer satisfaction, and word-of-mouth (WOM) behavior in a tourism context.
7.	(Jaeger & H"ohler, 2021)	Mixed Methods Approach	Using word of mouth data from social media to identify asymmetric competition in the food retail sector
8.	(Chen Chen, Hsuan Chang, & Lun Hsiao, 2022)	Mixed Methods Approach	Exploring the factors that influence the adoption of mobile ticket booking applications, using a perspective from innovation resistance theory
9.	(Alzate, Urriza, & Cebollada, 2022)	Mixed Methods Approach	Develop an integrated, structured, and easy to implement procedure for analyzing online review texts (e-WOM) with the ultimate goal of studying brand image and brand position.
10.	(Salminen, Kandpal, & Kamel, 2022)	Mixed Methods Approach	Creating and detecting fake reviews using ULMFiT and GPT-2 language models based on Amazon e-commerce datasets.
11.	(Kong & Lou, 2023)	Mixed Methods Approach	Explores the role of review features in consumers' perceived helpfulness of movie reviews in e-commerce, with an emphasis on cultural differences between China and the United States.
12.	(Gerrath, Mafael, Ulqinaku, & Biraglia,	Quantitative Approach	The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumer emotions in e-WOM towards brands in the aviation industry

2023)		
13.	(Gannon, Taheri, Disegna, & Prayag, 2023)	Mixed Methods Approach Consumer handling strategies after service failure, with emphasis on rumination, anger, and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM)

Table 1 contains research approaches and research focus, where there are seven studies with a quantitative approach; while the rest is a mixed methods approach. For research focus in relation to e-WOM, it can be seen in table 1 where papers number one to number 6, e-WOM is the dependent variable which is influenced by other variables. Meanwhile, in papers seven to 13, e-WOM is also one of the data sources analyzed and can be in the form of online reviews provided by consumers.

B. Discussion

In 2020, according to the criteria in the selection process for publication, there were no papers published, but from 2001 to 2023 there was an increasing trend.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also influenced the development of increasingly sophisticated and innovative information and communication technology. Information and communication technology allows for various platforms, applications or social media that can be used to share e-WOM, both by consumers and producers or providers of products or services. Therefore, e-WOM is an interesting and relevant phenomenon to be researched from various perspectives and scientific disciplines (Rani, 2021). The topic of publications about e-WOM is growing along with the development of technology, especially with the emergence of social media. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is that many activities are carried out through electronic media.

In terms of geography, the research was carried out in eight countries, where geographically, if mapped according to continent, there were seven studies for the Asian continent and the rest from the European continent. For the Asian continent, there are four papers originating from China, Taiwan, Iran and Palestine. Meanwhile, from the European continent, they are England, Austria and Germany. In this research, publications were mostly carried out by developed countries because the use of technology is something that is commonplace compared to developing countries.

Of the thirteen papers published, there are seven papers with quantitative research approach criteria and six papers with a mixed methods approach. For the research focus criteria in the first to sixth studies, e-WOM is the dependent variable which is influenced by other variables.

For other research such as in the seventh study, e-WOM is one of the data sources analyzed using text mining methods to study brand image and brand position. This research uses text mining to extract useful and meaningful information from e-WOM texts, identifying asymmetric competition in the food retail sector such as emotions and psychological associations towards brands. Text mining is the process of extracting information from unstructured text, such as e-WOM, using techniques such as sentiment analysis, classification, clustering, or topic analysis. Text mining can help researchers understand consumer preferences, attitudes and perceptions of brands (Jaeger & H\"ohler, 2021).

The eighth paper by (Chen Chen, Hsuan Chang, & Lun Hsiao, 2022) e-WOM is an independent variable that influences consumer characteristics and influences the adoption of mobile ticket booking applications. E-WOM is measured based on the level of informative, namely how useful and relevant the information conveyed by consumers through e-WOM is. And informative e-WOM can reduce usage barriers and value barriers, and increase intention to use mobile ticket applications.

Meanwhile, for the ninth study using e-WOM in the form of online film reviews provided by consumers from China, how review features, such as length, timeliness, title sentiment, and emotional expression, influence the perception of the review's usefulness for other consumers. The authors also explore the role of culture, such as high vs. low context orientation, low level and uncertainty avoidance orientation, as moderators in the relationship between review features and perceived review helpfulness. E-WOM is also an independent variable or a variable that influences other variables (Kong & Lou, 2023).

In the tenth study (Alzate, Urriza, & Cebollada, 2022) with the research focus described in table 1, the authors used e-WOM in the form of online reviews provided by consumers about various brands. The author

uses text mining to extract useful and meaningful information from e-WOM texts. E-WOM is also an independent variable or a variable that influences other variables. The dependent variable or variable that is influenced is brand image and brand position,

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumer emotions in e-WOM towards brands in the aviation industry is the eleventh research focus. The use of e-WOM took the form of tweets aimed at airline brands during the first 12 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as data from the pre-pandemic period. E-WOM is also an independent variable or a variable that influences other variables and the dependent variable that is influenced is consumer emotions in tweets (Gerrath, Mafael, Ulqinaku, & Biraglia, 2023)

In the twelfth paper, (Gannon, Taheri, Disegna, & Prayag, 2023) focuses on research on consumer handling strategies after service failure, with emphasis on rumination, anger, and e-WOM. The author uses e-WOM in the form of online reviews provided by consumers who experienced service failures in the Iranian hotel industry. The author examines how coping strategies, such as active, expressive, and denial, influence rumination behavior, namely the process of thinking repeatedly about service failure and the emotions it causes. The author also examines how rumination behavior influences the type of e-WOM generated by consumers, such as positive, negative, or neutral. In this paper, e-WOM is also a dependent variable or a variable that is influenced by other variables. The independent variables or variables that influence e-WOM are coping strategies and rumination behavior.

In accordance with the research focus in the last paper (Salminen, Kandpal, & Kamel, 2022) e-WOM is a form of false information created using language models to deceive consumers. In the thirteenth paper, using e-WOM in the form of fake product reviews generated by two language models, namely ULMFiT and GPT-2, based on the Amazon e-commerce dataset. The authors examine how language models can create fake reviews that are difficult to distinguish from genuine reviews, and how classification models can detect fake reviews with high accuracy.

From the grouping results according to the scope of the author recommends research on e-WOM in Indonesia using a mixed methods method published in the publication title in the Journal of Business Research and Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services with a focus on e-WOM research from social media to identify asymmetric competition in various sectors for example the food retail, transportation and entertainment sectors.

IV. CONCLUSION

Publications of research on e-WOM in the Journal of Business Research and Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services in 2020 – 2023 show an increasing trend. Publications about e-WOM have increased after the Covid-19 pandemic, possibly because during the Covid-19 pandemic consumer behavior changed in shopping, traveling and using online services so that one source of important and influential information in decision making is e-WOM. Judging from geography, the country with the most publications in the Journal of Business Research and Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services in 2020 – 2023 is China with four publications, followed by Germany and Spain with two papers each. Meanwhile, there is only one paper left, namely England, Austria, Taiwan, Iran and Palestine. Publications are mostly carried out by developed countries compared to developing countries, namely Iran and Palestine.

The growth pattern of publications in the Journal of Business Research and Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services in various countries is increasing from year to year. The number of publications about e-WOM has increased from year to year as time goes by after the Covid-19 pandemic. China has published the most research in the 2020-2023 period with four publications, followed by Germany and Spain with two publications each. And the countries of England, Austria, Taiwan, Iran and Palestine each have one publication. Of the thirteen papers based on table 1, there are seven papers with a quantitative approach and six papers with a mixed methods approach with a research focus for the first paper to the sixth paper, e-WOM is the dependent variable while the other papers classify e-WOM as a source of information both positive and negative.

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