

DO TRUST AND BRAND IMAGE MATTERS? EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF eWOM ON PURCHASE INTENTION

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ABSTRACT

WOM (word-of-mouth) has traditionally been regarded as one of the most significant influencing forces in consumer buying choices. With the advent of broadband connectivity and the widespread adoption of electronic gadgets, consumers increasingly rely on online feedback and other individuals' online recommendation to make ultimate purchase choices. Additionally, companies highlight eWOM as a powerful advertising instrument for company's success. The present research examines the influence of (eWOM), brand image, and trust on the purchase intention of products and services from the Indian online travel market. It also attempts to identify trust and brand image as mediation links between eWOM and purchase intention. Concerning this purpose, a survey employing the techniques of purposeful and convenient sampling was developed. A total of 687 responses from the participants were ultimately chosen for the structural equation modeling assessment using a questionnaire with a standardized format. The results of this study indicate that eWOM, brand image, and trust have a substantial favorable impact on purchase intention. Despite this, in considering the inclusion of trust and brand image as mediators, the findings also revealed a significant mediation effect of trust and brand image on purchase intention. According to the empirical evidence, the present research signifies that marketers can prioritize eWOM to maximize the good's sales percentage, influencing consumer purchase intention. The findings of this investigation may assist in practical and theoretical discussion in various aspects. This investigation presents essential guidance for e-commerce businesses that must concentrate on the Indian online travel market by developing trust, brand image, and eWOM to increase the intention to purchase their offerings.

Keywords: eWOM, Brand Image, Trust, Purchase Intention

INTRODUCTION

Due to the development and expansion of the World Wide Web in the last few decades, the total number of internet-savvy consumers has grown dramatically, which has an immense effect on

multiple industries (Hew et al., 2018). Word-of-mouth has been extensively used to disseminate product-focused or service-associated details in several sectors worldwide (Abubakar and Ilkan, 2016; Buhalis et al., 2020; Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020). Through the proliferation of online platforms, an innovative type of WOM has become prominent: electronic word of mouth (eWOM). Nilashi et al. (2022) reports that currently, numerous enterprises in various sectors use online platforms as a necessary instrument to connect with their respective customers, both prospective and current. Initially, Word of mouth takes place whenever a consumers of the goods communicate their feedback with other people or describes the good or services (Kimmel and Kitchen, 2014). With the increasing popularity of the World Wide Web and social networking sites, the concept of word-of-mouth has shifted (Mahmud et al., 2020). Individuals now communicate their viewpoints owing to modern technologies, which contributed to the emergence of electronic word of mouth. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) described eWOM interactions as "any favorable or adverse remark issued by prospective, current, or past consumers regarding an item or business that becomes visible to many online consumers and organizations." Consequently, exchanging information via blogging websites, multiple social media networks or communities (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Youtube), forums, or feedback platforms can be the origin of eWOM (Jansan et al., 2009; King et al., 2014). Previous research investigations imply that reference groups are among the most influential factors in determining how customers purchase (Taylor and Baker, 1994; Park et al., 2007). In addition, the consumer undergoes multiple procedures before making a buying decision (Cohen et al., 2014; Akdim, 2021; Pop et al., 2022).

According to research studies (Cheung and Thadani, 2012; Dwivedi et al., 2021), consumers who formerly relied on making purchases based on advertisements or another non-online medium now rely on reviews posted on the internet. Consumers now rely significantly on different digital channels to acquire information before buying goods or services there by making it a key component of the

entire buying process (Yusuf et al., 2018; Shankar et al., 2020). Nevertheless, not all online opinions and evaluations are always genuine. Favorable online feedback and recommendations increase the trust and brand image of products or retailers (Moradi and Zihagh, 2022). Consequently, trust decreases the perceived risk among shoppers (Wandoko and Panggati, 2022; Zeqiri et al., 2022) which in response, increase "individuals' intention to make purchases" (Lu et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2022). Therefore, trust in electronic Word of Mouth (i.e., feedback, opinions, and website details) may convey positively to buyers' mindsets and act as a mediator for customers' purchase intention (Lu et al., 2016). Brand image is an essential asset for online business entities (Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012). As online information influences greater purchase intentions, eWOM represents an engaging and dynamic medium in this respect (Alalwan et al., 2018). Individuals' past purchasing experiences and their perceptions of the quality of service immediately influence the brand's image of the company. Customers can only assess amenities after utilizing them and rely on the interacting impacts of eWOM (Arora et al., 2019). Prior investigators, including Cheung et al. (2020) have investigated the eWOM and purchasing intention; however, just a handful of these researches included trust and brand image as a mediator. Therefore, the objective of the present research is begin by determining the effect of eWOM on shoppers' purchase intention and further investigate the influence of trust and brand image on the relationship mentioned above in the context of online travel industry. The study's findings will aid marketers in developing a more effective web-based advertisement plan for organizations to increase the sales.

The remaining part of the study is systematized in the following way. The following part explains the study's conceptual structure and hypotheses. The second part outlines the study's methodology and data gathering. Following that, we describe our empirical investigation along with the findings. Lastly, the most significant discussion, managerial implications, limitations, and future research directions, are discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of eWOM Characteristics

The Internet has expanded the range of possibilities available to customers for browsing and exchanging information prior to or afterward completing the purchase via the Internet. Individuals have several objectives while looking for information via the Internet or producing eWOM by sharing what they think and have experienced regarding the goods and services they purchase (Babic Rosario *et al.*, 2020). In addition, Verma and Yadav (2021) assert that the various characteristics of eWOM communication influence customers' assessments of the internet site, thus influencing their mindsets towards the merchant. Several researchers have pointed out eWOM quantity, quality, and credibility as crucial factors influencing customers' attitudes and behaviors. The marketing research literature has examined various characteristics of eWOM, including quantity, credibility, and quality (Matute *et al.*, 2016). On the other hand, a handful of studies have focused on all three of them at the same time. Consequently, Tein *et al.* (2019) analyzed the literature on eWOM by establishing a comprehensive structure that clarifies the influence of reviews on purchase intention. The first and most significant eWOM characteristic is information volume. The number of comments posted on an internet page is called eWOM quantity (Cheung *et al.*, 2009). According to Moldovan *et al.* (2011), the quantity of customer feedback can be linked to every customer's input to the marketplace. eWOM quality is taken as the persuasion of reasoning incorporated within an informative communication. Cheung and Thadani (2012) define eWOM quality as necessary, acceptable, thorough, comprehensive, and up-to-date reviews. As defined by Cheung *et al.* (2009), eWOM credibility indicates consumers' confidence level in opinions they receive on the web. Credibility is significant in Internet shopping, where online evaluations often remain anonymous. Therefore, if customers believe evaluations are reliable, they drive to trust sellers who possess e-marketplace and employ this data to make purchases (Bhandari and Rodgers, 2018).

eWOM Characteristics and Purchase Intention

According to Erkan and Evans (2016) and Chu and Kim (2011), eWOM is a significant equipment for disseminating information with varied digital and physical audiences simultaneously. In light of its adaptability, the diverse needs of online consumers, and eWOM's comparatively affordable prices, advertisers are continually creating and carrying out feasible eWOM tactics to maximize the worth of their businesses (Cheung and Lee, 2012; Tien *et al.*, 2019; Kennedy and Arockia, 2022; Kurniawan *et al.*, 2022). In general, once customer interaction occurs, individuals express their opinions to those around them. This tendency to express experiences has been transferred to virtual spaces. eWOM, as an internet-based reviewing means of communication, acts as a middleman that helps consumers in making their ultimate decision to purchase, as confirmed by prior research (Bataineh, 2015; Aslam *et al.*, 2019). Based on the prior research, a hypothesis that follows can be formulated:

H₁: eWOM characteristics have a significant and positive direct influence on purchase intention of online travel shoppers.

Trust as a Mediator

Trust is a value that an individual observes directly, and affects their style of interactions and the type of facts they are willing to disclose to other individuals; it is regarded to be among the most prominent influences when deciding on decisions about purchases (Lee *et al.*, 2020). Zhao *et al.* (2020) state that "Trust is essential in trade among buyers and suppliers, particularly within the internet, because there aren't any physical meetings." In addition to eWOM, trust also increases the intentions of customers to purchase (Erkan and Evans, 2016). Whenever an eWOM which is favorable, is large, the chance of positive impact on purchase intention is also high (Lin, 2011). There is a common belief that trust reduces consumers' perceived risk factors (Abubakar and Ilkan, 2016), leading to a favorable attitude toward purchasing (Chin *et al.*, 2014). Through the support of eWOM, prospective consumers obtain product details and reach purchases. Therefore, in the scenario of trust, which provides perceived risk-

related help to consumers, individuals are inclined to trust while deciding on the ultimate purchase. Consequently, a hypothesis that follows can be formulated:

H₂: Trust mediates the relationship between eWOM characteristics and purchase intention of online travel shoppers.

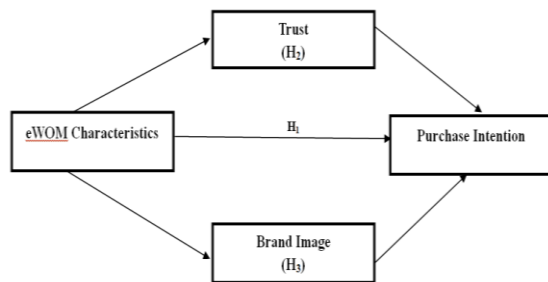


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Brand Image as a Mediator

The power of social media has opened many possibilities in the discipline of marketing, by means of reviews is easily accessible on the internet (Abubakar and Ilkan, 2016), which influences how brands are viewed by consumers. Patterson (1999) described brand image as product awareness that allows customers to recognize an item or service. It is essential to determine how eWOM influences the brand image and retention of customers for India's online travel companies. According to Torlak *et al.* (2014), "expanding social media channels have resulted in innovative customer-to-customer engagement, further, individuals are utilizing social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, chat rooms, and customer evaluation websites to exchange product opinions and facts". Compared to conventional sources that include advertisements on television, broadcasting, personal sales, and newspaper advertisements, consumers are counting on eWOM while seeking details before completing a purchase. As a result, the hypothesis that follows is proposed: eWOM can favorably affect brand image formation. Additionally, brand image can favorably affect the increase of customer purchasing intentions.

H₃: Brand Image mediates the relationship between eWOM characteristics and purchase intention of online travel shoppers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedure

This study is empirical by design and depends on the results of surveys. We conducted a quantitative survey-based investigation to assess the theoretical model and support the hypotheses. The target audience for the survey was online shoppers who had earlier purchased via the Internet. We evaluated four variables, and the statements utilized to measure them were substantiated by previous research. The statements were estimated using a "five-point Likert scale" (with five representing "strongly agree" and one denoting "strongly disagree"). The participants in this study were Indians older than 18 at the point of their response. A total of 717 survey responses were collected. Each individual who participated in the study received a single questionnaire. Thus, everyone who responded got only one questionnaire. Inadequate responses were eliminated, leaving 687 valid entries. The majority of respondents were male (54%) and postgraduate (46.9%); more than 58% of those surveyed were between the ages of 25 and 35; Unmarried responders were particularly common (38%).

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

For analyzing the data, this investigation employed the partial least squares (PLS) technique through the Smart PLS edition 4.2.8.9 program. The "measurement model validated the relationship among items and the unobserved latent variable, whereas the structural model emphasized the hypothesized relationship among latent variables". Considering the study's utilization of the higher-order reflective-reflective method, the technique known as "PLS-SEM is appropriate for assessing outcomes for the measurement and structural model". This initial step involved assessing the measurement model's first-order reflective concept using "convergent validity, reliability, and discriminant validity" and evaluating hypotheses to determine if the path relationship has any significance (Hair *et al.*, 2019).

Estimation of Measurement Model

The measurement model is crucial for determining the depth to which the variable has been defined by the study's items (Figure 2). The average variance extracted (AVE), outer loadings, composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha were employed to assess the reliability and validity of the measurement model.

Table 1: Estimation of as Measurement Model

Construct	Item	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	rhoA	Average Variance Extracted
QN			0.858	0.904	0.864	0.702
	QN1	0.798				
	QN2	0.890				
	QN3	0.838				
QL	QN4	0.823				
			0.871	0.907	0.873	0.661
	QL1	0.852				
	QL2	0.823				
	QL3	0.836				
CR	QL4	0.810				
	QL5	0.738				
			0.878	0.911	0.879	0.673
	CR1	0.820				
	CR2	0.854				
	CR3	0.794				
Purchase Intention	CR4	0.854				
	CR5	0.775				
			0.924	0.939	0.924	0.687
	PI1	0.771				
	PI2	0.826				
	PI3	0.849				
	PI4	0.803				
	PI5	0.857				
Trust	PI6	0.845				
	PI7	0.844				
			0.905	0.922	0.907	0.568
	T1	0.742				
	T2	0.749				
	T3	0.753				
	T4	0.712				
	T5	0.807				
	T6	0.747				
	T7	0.730				
Brand Image	T8	0.786				
	T9	0.751				
			0.896	0.920	0.901	0.659
	BI1	0.847				
	BI2	0.822				
	BI3	0.822				
	BI4	0.797				
BI5	0.755					
BI6	0.824					

Source: Author's computations

Note: QN = eWOM Quantity; QL= eWOM Quality; CR= eWOM Credibility.

Table 2: Findings of the Higher-Order Reflective Measurement

Construct	Item	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	rhoA	AVE
eWOM Characteristics			0.850	0.909	0.851	0.769
	QN	0.877				
	QL	0.877				
	CR	0.876				

Source: Author's computations

Note: QN = eWOM Quantity ;QL= eWOM Quality ;CR= eWOM Credibility.

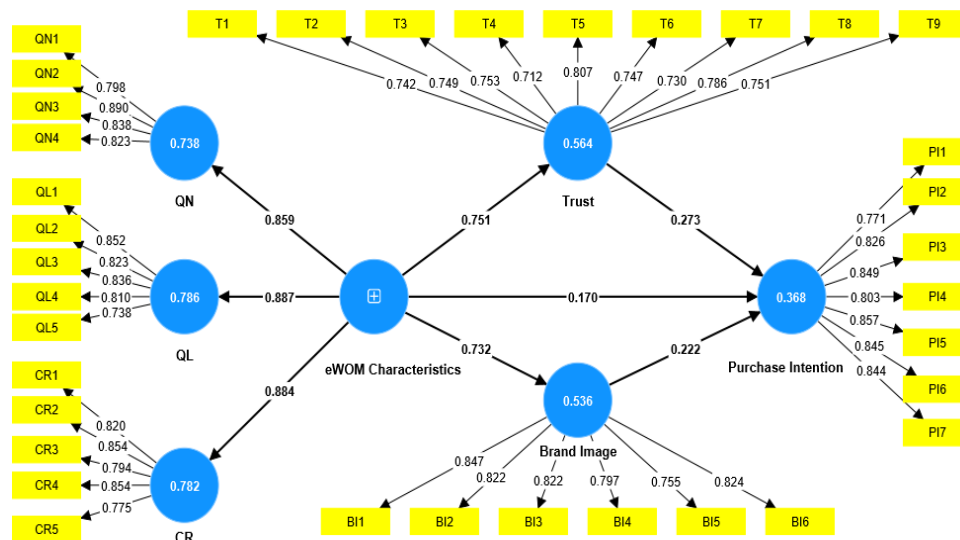


Figure 2: Measurement Model

Note: QN=eWOM Quantity; QL=eWOM Quality; CR= eWOM Credibility.

Fornell and Larcker criteria and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) were computed to test discriminant validity. Tables 1 and 2 display the evaluation of outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, CR and AVE for the specified variable, demonstrating their “reliability and internal consistency”. As suggested by Hair *et al.* (2011), the factor loadings of every item are beyond 0.5, as shown in Tables 1 and 2. Composite reliability signifies the internal consistency of the latent variable that Bacon *et al.* (1995) determined.

The CR value must exceed the recommended cutoff 0.7 (Raykov, 1997). In addition, the AVE ranges across 0.568 and 0.769 for every single variable, exceeding the threshold of 0.5 suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Cronbach's alpha scores also appear adequate, as shown in Tables 1 and 2.

The Fornell and Larcker criterion and HTMT have verified the discriminant validity for measurement models. Table 3 depicts the measurement of discriminant validity using the Fornell and Larcker criterion proposed by Hair *et al.* (2012). As per Fornell and Larcker specifications, the square root of the AVE for every variable must be greater than its correlation compared to other variables to validate its discriminant validity. As indicated in Table 3, the measurement model's outcomes establish discriminant validity.

Table 3: Assessment of Discriminant Validity (Fornell–Larcker criterion)

Construct	QN	QL	CR	T	BI	PI
QN	0.838					
QL	0.660	0.813				
CR	0.639	0.663	0.820			
T	0.662	0.607	0.706	0.758		
BI	0.676	0.619	0.635	0.754	0.812	
PI	0.485	0.487	0.450	0.568	0.553	0.829

Source: Author's computations

Note: QN = eWOM Quantity; QL= eWOM Quality; CR= eWOM Credibility; T= trust; BI= brand image; PI= purchase intention.

Table 4: Estimation of Discriminant Validity (HTMT Criterion)

Construct	QN	QL	CR	T	BI	PI
QN						
QL	0.762					
CR	0.729	0.755				
T	0.742	0.680	0.788			
BI	0.761	0.695	0.713	0.837		
PI	0.542	0.532	0.500	0.616	0.605	

Source: Author's computations

Note: QN= eWOM Quantity; QL= eWOM Quality CR= eWOM Credibility; T= trust; BI=brand image; PI= purchase intention.

In addition, Table 4 displays the outcomes of determining discriminant validity according to the HTMT criteria, supported by Henseler *et al.* (2015), where the actual relationship among the constructs is carefully defined, and the suggested HTMT limit of 0.90 has been imposed. The Value above the criterion limit of (0.90) indicates an absence of discriminant validity in the framework. The discriminant validity of the framework is ensured by the HTMT parameters shown in Table 4.

Estimation of Structural Model

In the aftermath of validating the measurement model, the next stage consisted of evaluating the structural model to determine the statistical relevance of the path model. The “coefficient of determination (R²), predictive relevance (Q²), and effect size (F²)” have been used to estimate the structural model.

Moreover, the rule of thumb regarding the R² values for endogenous constructs are designated to be “0.25, 0.50, and 0.75, respectively, as weak, moderate, and substantial” (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Table 5 displays R² scores of 0.565, 0.539, and 0.368 for trust, brand image, and purchase intention, which are regarded as satisfactory.

Table 5: Coefficient of Determination (R² value), Adjusted R² and Predictive Relevance(Q²)

Construct	Coefficient of Determination (R ² value)	Adjusted R ²	Predictive Relevance (Q ²)	F ² (Effect Size)
Trust	0.565	0.564	0.564	0.298
Brand Image	0.539	0.538	0.539	0.169
Purchase Intention	0.368	0.366	0.285	0.017

Source: Author’s computations

The predictive relevance of the structural model is evaluated using the Q²-Stone-Geisser method. Q²'s value has been determined using the PLS predict algorithm. The accepted Q² values for “large, medium, and small predictive significance for particular endogenous variables are accordingly 0.35, 0.15, and 0.02” (Shmueli *et al.*, 2016). Table 5 demonstrates that the Q² values for trust, brand image, and purchase intention are 0.564, 0.539, and 0.285, accordingly exhibiting excellent predictive significance.

Moreover, F² is utilized to assess independent constructs' effect size on the endogenous variable. The suggested threshold of F² for “small, medium, and large effect sizes is 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, respectively” (Cohen, 1992). Table 5 reveals that the F² values for trust, brand image, and purchase intention are 0.298, 0.169, and 0.017, correspondingly indicating significant effect sizes, except eWOM for purchase intention, where low effect was found. The standardized root mean square (SRMR) specified by Shi *et al.* (2020) was successfully applied to assess model fitness. The SRMR criterion for the model's fitness in CB-SEM is 0.08 (Tanaka and Huba, 1985; Malewar *et al.*, 2022). According to the findings, the SRMR estimate is 0.065, which indicates a satisfactory fit.

Bootstrapping

The bootstrap method was used by employing a 5,000-resample approach in the following phase to examine the statistical value of the hypothesis (Hair *et al.*, 2011).

Table 6: Structural Model Estimation

Hypothesis	Structural Path	Direct/Indirect Effects	t-Value	P-value	Decision
H1	E→PI	0.169	3.179	0.001	Accepted
	E→T	0.752	35.292	0.000	Accepted
	E→BI	0.734	30.839	0.000	Accepted
	T→PI	0.274	4.564	0.000	Accepted
H2	BI→PI	0.221	4.633	0.000	Accepted
	E→T→PI	0.206	4.425	0.000	Accepted
H3	E→BI→PI	0.162	4.567	0.000	Accepted

Source: Author’s computations

Note :E= eWOM characteristics; T= trust; BI= brand image; PI= purchase intention.

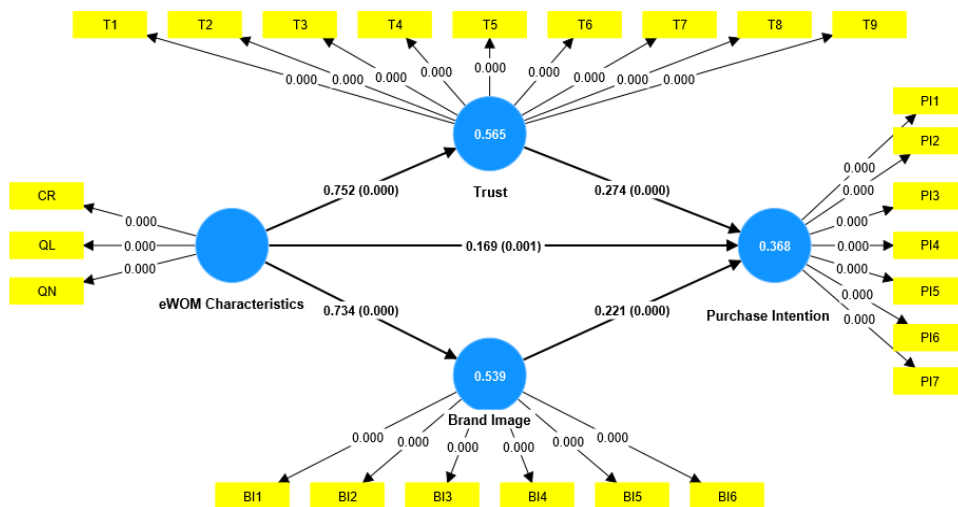


Figure 3: Structural Model

Figure 3 illustrates the assessment of hypotheses incorporating eWOM characteristics as the independent construct and trust, brand image, and purchase intention as the dependent constructs. According to Table 6, the findings of the structural model incorporate favorable and significant values which validate the suggested hypotheses.

The relationship among eWOM characteristics and purchase Intention is favourable and statistically substantial, with $b = 0.169$, $p = 0.001$ and, $t = 3.179$. Therefore, H_1 is accepted. The structural path, supported by the values $b = 0.752$, $p = 0.000$, and $t = 35.292$, indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship between eWOM characteristics and trust. The relationship between eWOM characteristics and brand image is statistically significant and favourable, with $b = 0.734$, $p = 0.000$, and t -value = 30.839. Also, there is a significant relationship among trust and purchase intention ($b=0.274$, $t=4.564$, $p=0.000$). Likewise, there is a significant relationship among brand image and purchase intention ($b=0.221$, $t=4.633$, $p=0.000$).

Mediation Analysis

The bootstrapping method with 5,000 resample was used to study the mediated influence of trust and brand image or the indirect impact on purchase intention. Table 6 summarizes the outcomes of the mediation. According to Baron and Kenney (1986), indirect and direct impacts are considered to assess the mediation influence in the framework. The direct impact of eWOM characteristics on purchase Intention is $b = 0.540$, $p = 0.001$, and $t = 13.525$. Further by adding trust and brand image as a mediating variable into the framework, the results are $b = 0.169$, $p = 0.001$, and t -value = 3.179, implying that the impact of eWOM characteristics on purchase intention lessens. Following Hair *et al.* (2014), “the variance accounted for (VAF)” was computed to ascertain the extent of the indirect effect. Eventually, determining “VAF (total indirect effect/total effect)” for the study we conducted, the resulting value for trust is $0.206/0.375 = 0.549$ and for brand Image is $0.162/0.331=0.489$. According to Hair *et al.* (2011), this outcome indicates partial mediation since the value of 0.489 and 0.549 falls

within a spectrum of 0.20 to 0.80. Therefore, H_2 and H_3 are also supported.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the effect of eWOM characteristics, trust, and brand image on purchase intention in India's online travel industry. eWOM is a significant aspect of successful marketing since it influences purchasing decisions. Research findings reveal a favourable association among eWOM characteristics and purchase intention, as stated by previous results (Cheung and Thadani, 2012; Thomas *et al.*, 2019). The research study demonstrates the influence of trust between eWOM and the purchase intention of travel shopping from the online travel retailers. eWOM can enhance a company's brand image, increase customer trust in online travel retailers, and ultimately lead to increased purchases.

Moreover, this research demonstrates that eWOM significantly impacts the enhancement of a company's brand image among Indian consumers. The eWOM can influence the brand image, trust, and purchase intention of Online travel shoppers. In general, eWOM is an informal marketing method for internet-based companies. Practical and valuable eWOM can influence consumers' intentions to purchase and enhance their trust and brand image of online travel companies. With the growing popularity of e-commerce travel businesses in India, efficient utilization of eWOM may encourage the growth of such businesses. Therefore, it is recommended that marketers must organize eWOM to boost the company's competence in the good or service, ultimately influencing shoppers' travel relate purchase intention.

The findings demonstrate the favorable influence of eWOM characteristics on brand image and trust. The outcomes are consistent with former research findings (Chang *et al.*, 2013; Filieri *et al.*, 2015), which suggested that eWOM impacts the trust and brand image of Online travel websites among consumers. Furthermore, the results confirmed that the relationship between eWOM characteristics and purchase intention is mediated by trust and brand image. This indicated that eWOM characteristics foster consumer trust and brand image of travel

websites, ultimately contributing to purchase intention.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The present study discovered that trust, brand image, and eWOM significantly enhance the marketing environment. The purchasing power has shifted to consumers, who can affect other consumers' buying intentions by providing significant reviews. The influence of eWOM on consumer purchasing intention is significant. Businesses with an efficient digital presence must focus on consumers while building brand image and trust for the company. The swiftly growing popularity of internet channels could lead to an incredibly influential factor in marketing and advertising in the years ahead, thereby enabling and enhancing the practices of businesses that convince potential buyers. It can additionally unite businesses with prospective buyers and assist buyers in controlling and influencing the trust and Image of their brands. In the modern era, brand image and trust may serve an essential function in enhancing the effectiveness of digital advertising. Consequently, brand image and trust may support consumers to progress the capacity to communicate and affect their purchase intent on an online platform. Since shoppers make buying choices in globalized surroundings, businesses must recognize the significance of internet-based opinions. This study presents marketers with a comprehensive supply of information on consumers' purchasing intentions, and the findings have substantial practical applications that can be applied at the corporate level. Firstly, businesses must listen and conscious to electronic assessments of goods and services; to enable, they must provide customers with virtualized space to post remarks, critiques, and recommendations with ease. In this context, businesses can stay several steps beyond their customers by creating their personal cyberspace and smartphone apps, thus boosting the accessibility of these online communities and offering precise, current data about customers. Furthermore, vendors might offer specific details about the reviewer, including their current age or marital status, so that other customers can relate to their online suggestions. Because customer feedback conveys firsthand details that enable businesses to identify possible shortcomings or

improve their offerings, outlets must offer outstanding client service concerning grievances and recommendations and encourage online forums where shoppers can voice their thoughts and articulate concerns. Thus, businesses must gain insight from individuals' feedback and showcase a proactive approach by interacting with shoppers while attempting to comply with their requirements and advice. Lastly, businesses must consider customer feedback and build promotional techniques and advertising initiatives tailored to consumer feedback.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study has several areas for improvement that must be answered in subsequent studies. This research investigation only focuses on only a few eWOM characteristics. While there is not a consensus in the discipline of marketing regarding a definitive list of measures, future studies should strive to expand the array of eWOM characteristics addressed. Based on the methodology perspective, this investigation utilized a small convenience-based sample size. The population being studied consisted of Indians, so conducting the research in different nations may be beneficial. This study did not incorporate the moderating factor that could either enhance or undermine relationship among eWOM characteristics and purchase intention. Consumers perceive eWOM differently based on their characteristics, demographic information, etc. These factors can serve as moderators in further studies. Further research may be strengthened by incorporating additional measurement aspects that might be helpful in the building of prospective models, for example, the socioeconomic characteristics of consumers or the implications of technology adoption. It suggests a further field of study in which future scholars could evaluate the influence of societal pressure to utilize digital platforms on the future purchases of consumers.

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