

Examining eWOM Credibility - Consumer Purchase Intention Relationship in Facebook : A Mediation Analysis

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Abstract

The objective of the current study was to examine the influence of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) credibility on consumers' purchase intention with trust in seller and brand image as mediators. The proposed model was tested in the context of brand fan pages of Amazon on Facebook. The data were obtained from 393 customers present on Facebook fan pages of Amazon. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM), which indicated a positive relationship between eWOM and purchase intentions. Both trust in seller and brand image partially mediated this relationship. While the study contributes to the theories of eWOM, trust, and consumer behaviour, its findings have significant implications for managers of e-commerce websites who may seek empirical evidence while developing new methods of disseminating product information through SNSs.

Keywords : eWOM credibility, trust in the seller, brand image, purchase intention, Facebook fan pages, consumer electronics, Amazon.com

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With increasing Internet penetration, the usage of social media in businesses has grown tremendously. Arora, Agarwal, and Kumar (2018) established that millennials prefer social networking sites for understanding different products through product reviews before purchasing a product, and the number of likes and dislikes have a large impact on their buying choices. Online retail organizations utilize social networking sites to promote their products and services while customers utilize the same to provide feedback and in this way, both of these are utilized by the prospective customers to make purchase decisions. The customers view social media as a secured source for better online transactions through disintermediation. Therefore, social media plays a vital role in decision making through peer feedback and the user-created content is frequently updated during, before, and post purchases.

The user - created content on social media platforms is called electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013) and is defined as any positive or negative statement made by a potential, actual, or former customer about a product or a company available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet (Henning - Thureau, 2004). It is considered an important source of information for the purchase of consumer electronics in e-commerce sites. Mizerski (1978) reported that consumers perceive various sources of information as accurate when they

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believe that the user-created content of the information is being caused by the product. eWOM credibility is defined as a source or message that is a receiver - based judgment which involves both objective judgments of information quality or accuracy as well as subjective perceptions of the source's trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness (Metzger, 2007). Perceived credibility is derived from the message and source of the available information on various social media platforms (Castillo, Mendoza, & Poblete, 2011). Therefore, credibility is evaluated as a summation of the level of perceived credibility of the source, expertise, and trustworthiness (Willemson, Neijens, & Bronner, 2012).

Trust is an important factor in the virtual environment because of the absence of information source identity, difficulty in assessing the previous consumption patterns, and lack in the prevention of online frauds (Breneman & Karimov, 2012). Trust is one of the focal elements among the relationships of purchasers and sellers. Trust plays a vital role in social exchange relations. Trust refers to a constructive belief about the reliability and dependability of a service provider (Everard & Galletta, 2005). Trust in a service enhances the consumer confidence in the purchase decision - making process.

Lien, Wen, Huang, and Wu (2015) argued that online eWOM communications that are posted on social media may have strong effects on brand image and purchase intentions. Brand image is considered as a signaling phenomenon because a good brand image ensures the quality of products/services which can decrease customers' uncertainty (Hazée, Van Vaerenbergh, & Armirotto, 2017). Brand image is the value of a brand in the minds of the consumers (Yuan, Liu, Luo, & Yen, 2016). A strong brand image influences consumers to pay higher prices, which in turn provides competitive advantages and market success to a company (Aranda, Gómez, & Molina, 2015). To develop a good brand image, online retailers should build up their own strategies and the image of the brand to be able to differentiate from competitors. Past studies have explored the impact of eWOM on behavioral outcomes and purchase intentions (Kim, Chung, & Lee, 2011). However, very few studies have dealt with the influence of eWOM credibility source on the behavioral intention of consumers, trust perceptions towards the brand (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalíu, 2011), and brand image (Yuan et al., 2016). Brand image has been recognized as an important antecedent directly influencing trust and online purchase intentions (Aghekyan - Simonian, Forsythe, Kwon, & Chattaraman, 2012). Therefore, this study examines the mediating effects of trust in the seller and brand image between eWOM credibility and purchase intentions.

Majority of the past studies explored eWOM using online blogs, virtual forums, community of review websites, etc. as eWOM platforms (Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010). Research in the context of social media brand fan pages was found to be limited. Therefore, the present study selects users of consumer electronics products from Facebook fan pages of the e-commerce website (Amazon) as consumer electronics are most reviewed products among various product categories in the online environment (Chan & Ngai, 2011).

Literature Review

(1) Attribution Theory : Attribution theory studies individuals' psychological behavior on various occasions and its impact on their conduct (Heider, 2013). Attribution theory deals with how the social perceiver uses information to arrive at causal explanations for events, it examines what information is gathered, and how it is combined to form a causal judgment (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). The present study incorporates attribution theory to link the two concepts - eWOM credibility and brand image. Customers read various online reviews about a brand that makes a picture of the brand in the mind of the customer (responses of occurrences) ; consequently, it affects the brand image. According to this theory, consistency of online content enhances the trustworthiness on the brand and user - generated posts, and reviews may also give important signs of the credibility of eWOM (Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009). Attribution theory helps to understand the credibility of user - created content and recommendations. If a product gets more positive reviews, it is an indication of the brand having high credence

qualities (i.e. product quality or usefulness), and the more rational the eWOM credibility on products, the better it will be valued by consumers (Lee & Youn, 2009).

(2) Behavioral Intention Theories : Theory of reasoned action (TRA) gives a foundation for understanding the connection between consumers' perceptions, intentions, and attitudes. Later, the theory is transformed into another version that is the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985), which explains an interdependent relationship between intention and behaviour. The theories have been used in trust - related studies to examine people's beliefs and confidence, and trust is considered as a predicting variable in influencing individuals' behaviors. They adopted e-commerce perspective to study the relationship between the influence of consumer trust on attitude and purchase intention with the help of a TRA model. On the basis of these theories, a numbers of studies have been conducted to analyze purchase decisions (Cheung & To, 2016) indicating TRA and TPB as a base for predicting consumer trusting and behavioral intentions.

(3) eWOM Credibility on Purchase Intention : The credibility of online reviews determines customers' intention to purchase from online retail websites (Park, Wang, Yao, & Kang, 2011). The consumer makes the right purchase decision if the reviews have reliable information (Khammash & Griffiths, 2011). Consequently, if consumers consider that the comments, likes, posts on the sellers' fan pages are credible, they will believe them to be relevant and helpful in their purchase decisions, and as a result, will be more prone to purchase from such websites. Similarly, if a Facebook fan page gets more likes, posts, and comments, it increases the credibility of the brand and purchase intentions. Past studies, in the context of fashion products, found that online content generated by other consumers provides gratification in the form of social acceptance and ,therefore, may lead to greater purchase behaviour (Venkataraman & Raman, 2016). In fact, it was suggested that e-commerce businesses should emphasize on upgrading the online review system and enrich customer experience to maintain a positive relationship with their users (Bhāle & Tongare, 2018).

⇒ **H₁ :** eWOM credibility has a positive effect on consumer purchase intention.

(4) eWOM Credibility on Trust in Sellers : Gefen, Karahanna, and Straub (2003) focused on trust in the online sellers and defined trust as the expectation that other individuals or companies with whom one interacts will not take undue advantage of a dependence upon them. Trust has an important role in online business transactions among customers and sellers because there are no face-to-face interactions (Shin, 2013) and it is perceived as minimizing the level of risk and enhancing purchase desire (Kim, Ferrin, & Rao, 2008).

Reviews on e-commerce websites play a significant role in consumer purchase decision (Park et al., 2011). These numerous reviews help and reduce uncertainty during the consumer buying decision process (Lee, Park, & Han, 2008). Among the numerous reviews, consumer-generated reviews are more credible than those generated by the firms (Yeap, Ignatius, & Ramayah, 2014) which build confidence in the purchase decision and reduce uncertainties in e-commerce (Park et al., 2011). In addition, websites facilitate visible comments, likes, and ratings to promote confidence in the purchase and build a favorable attitude toward the seller. As a consequence, eWOM credibility could form positive perceptions about the online seller (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008). eWOM source credibility may also reduce trust in sellers if the consumer perceives that the seller's website consists of incomplete or biased information, which consequently leads to negative trust towards the seller. Therefore, if a consumer perceives that other consumer recommendations are more credible, they will build more confidence in such advice and build a positive attitude toward the vendor (Park et al., 2011). In an e - commerce setting, it is difficult for the consumers to get a complete idea about the products that are offered for sale by the websites. Online reviews on these sites contain quality of information, which helps in reducing uncertainty for virtual transactions (Kim et al., 2008).

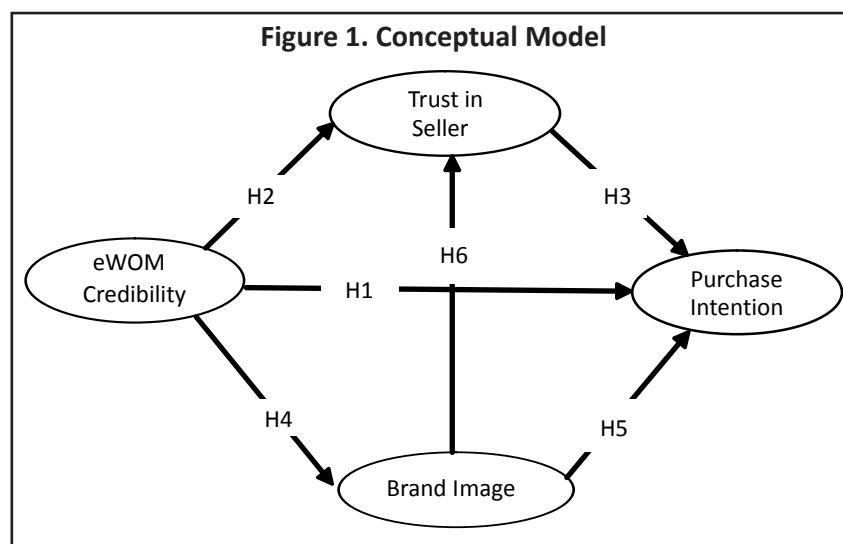
It is also expected that eWOM will not have influence over behavioral influence without trust on the seller (Shin, 2013). Hence, trust is the essential element of building a relationship among the sellers and consumers (Chiu, Hsu, Lai, & Chang, 2012). Chiu et al. (2012) suggested that trust in sellers significantly influenced consumer repeat purchase intention from the same e-commerce website again. Similarly, in social networking sites, user-generated credible reviews enhance the trust in seller and purchase intention, as such trust increases the purchase intention in an online environment. Therefore, eWOM credibility has a direct effect on trust and purchase intention as well as an indirect effect on trust in the online seller.

✎ **H₂** : eWOM credibility has a positive effect on trust in the seller.

✎ **H₃** : Trust in the seller has a positive effect on purchase intention.

(5) eWOM Credibility on Brand Image and Purchase Intention : Kotler (2009) defined brand image as a set of beliefs, ideas, and impression that a person holds regarding an object. Online reviews, blog posts, and brand experiences are more influential than oral information in building a brand image (Berger & Iyengar, 2013). Bruhn, Schoenmueller, and Schäfer (2012) suggested that the brand image of a product or service is measured by inherent benefits and characteristics. Brand image can be classified into categories as hedonic and functional brand image. Functional brand image is evaluated by the performance and utility of a product. Further, the functional brand image is measured through its consumer's feelings and emotional attitude towards the products.

Consumer - generated online reviews on brands about product features, performance, and prior consumer feelings creates a perception towards the products of a brand. In addition, various user-generated online reviews influence the consumer purchase decision. Aghekyan-Simonian et al. (2012) showed that positive brand image affected the purchase intentions of customers through reduction of perceived risk. Brand image is an outward sign for assessment of products or service cost and a superior brand image brings about a high perceived value for the price. Bruhn et al. (2012) established the relationship of brand images with eWOM review credibility. Therefore, previous studies confirmed that brand image affects consumer decision making process and argued that there was a positive association among the brand image and trust in the seller. In the present context, eWOM credible reviews in Facebook fan pages affect the brand image in the minds of consumers, which leads to trust in sellers and purchase intentions. Thus, the following hypotheses are formulated as :



- ⇒ **H₄**: eWOM credibility has a positive impact on brand image through the Facebook fan page.
- ⇒ **H₅**: Brand image has a positive impact on purchase intention through the Facebook fan page.
- ⇒ **H₆**: Brand image has a positive effect on consumer trust in sellers through the Facebook fan page.

The proposed conceptual model is diagrammatically represented in the Figure 1.

Methodology

The present study employed a cross - sectional research design and collected data using a self-administered structured questionnaire over a period of three months from March - May 2018. The survey was conducted among 393 online consumers of electronic products as consumer electronics are the highest reviewed products in the online environment and are frequently updated and launched products in the market. The customers were selected from the Facebook fan page of Amazon, the second largest e-commerce site in India. The demographic profile of the respondents is given in the Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Measure	Items	Frequency	%
Region	North zone	124	31.6
	South zone	136	34.6
	East zone	40	10.2
	West zone	25	6.4
	Central zone	21	5.3
	North east zone	22	5.6
	Union territory	25	6.4
Gender	Male	250	63.6
	Female	143	36.4
Age	Less than 20 years	44	9.5
	20 to 30 years	215	57.5
	30 to 40 years	54	13.8
	40 to 50 years	43	11.3
	50 years above	37	8.0
Qualification	SSC	26	6.6
	HSC(12th)	36	9.2
	Under graduate	102	26.0
	Post graduate	129	50.6
	Doctorate	13	3.3
	Other	17	4.3
Occupation	Govt. employee	44	11.2
	Private employee	58	114.8
	Businessman	42	10.7
	Unemployed	8	2.0
	Student	241	61.3
Income	Below 20K	30	7.6
	20 to 30K	134	34.1
	30 to 40 K	159	40.5

	40 to 50	52	13.2
	50 and above	18	4.6
Internet access through	Desktop P/C	43	10.9
	Laptop	148	37.7
	Smartphone	181	46.1
	Tablet	21	5.3
How often do you use Facebook ?	Every day	290	73.8
	1 to 2 times in a week	81	20.6
	Very rare	22	5.6

The constructs were measured using adapted scales modified according to the context. The total number of items used in the questionnaire were 16 (see Appendix). The eWOM credibility scale was adapted from Luo, Luo, Schatzberg, and Sia (2013) scale ; trust in seller from Gefen and Straub (2004) scale ; brand image from Davis, Golicic, and Marquardt (2009) scale ; purchase intention from Shukla (2011) scale. All the items were measured on a 5 - point Likert scale ranging from 5 = “*strongly disagree*” to 1 = “*strongly agree*”. Data analysis included descriptive statistics using SPSS-20 and SEM analysis using AMOS-21.

Analysis and Results

(1) Descriptive Statistics : The descriptive statistics results indicated a mean to be above 0.3 and standard deviation score close to 1 for all the constructs. The skewness values <3 and kurtosis values <10 reported the data to be normally distributed.

(2) Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) : An initial EFA on a sample of 100 respondents across 14 consumer electronics categories was conducted to establish the uni-dimensionality of the variables. EFA results indicate that all the variables are uni-dimensional with the Eigen value of 1 and the cumulative variances of the three variables were found to be 78.44. Internal consistency of all the four constructs was indicated through Cronbach's alpha values above the threshold value that ranged from 0.773 to 0.954. KMO value for sample adequacy was 0.816 and Bartlett's test of sphericity was also found to be significant ($p = 0.000$). The results of rotated component matrix revealed that all the four factors variables' standard loadings met the minimum threshold values of above 0.50 (Guadagnoli & Velicer, 1988) and therefore were suitable for further analysis.

(3) Measurement Model Evaluation : The measurement model is assessed through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) that tests the convergent validity and discriminant validity of the constructs under study.

The convergent validity of the constructs is established through composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) values. The CR for all the four constructs is greater than 0.7 and AVE values are also above the suggested threshold of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Also, the squared value of the parameter estimates between variables is less than their corresponding AVE estimates for each of the constructs (Table 2), thus fulfilling the Fornell - Larcker criterion of validity.

For establishing adequate discriminant validity, the square root of AVE values (diagonal elements) must be more than the inter-construct correlation (off-diagonal elements) for all the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This condition is fulfilled as indicated in Table 3, thus suggesting evidence for discriminant validity. The discriminant validity is further supported by MSV and ASV values that are less than the corresponding AVE values as shown in Table 3.

The goodness of fitness for the measurement model is estimated by using the maximum likelihood estimation

Table 2. Convergent Validity Results

Constructs	Measurements	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	C.R	AVE	MSV	ASV
eWOM Credibility	WOM1	0.826	0.762	0.77	0.53	0.40	0.31
	WOM2	0.652					
	WOM3	0.698					
Brand Image	BI1	0.775	0.804	0.86	0.50	0.30	0.24
	BI2	0.739					
	BI3	0.665					
	BI4	0.667					
Trust in Seller	TS1	0.828	0.853	0.80	0.51	0.30	0.22
	TS2	0.773					
	TS3	0.729					
	TS4	0.694					
	TS5	0.568					
	TS6	0.663					
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.778	0.767	0.77	0.53	0.39	0.30
	PI2	0.746					
	PI3	0.664					

Note. Reliability : Construct reliability (C.R) > 0.7; Convergent validity : AVE > 0.5; C.R > AVE; Discriminate validity: MSV & ASV < AVE ; Square root of AVE > Inter construct correlation

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Results

Construct	eWOM Review Credibility	Brand Image	Trust in Seller	Purchase Intention
eWOM Review Credibility	0.73			
Brand Image	0.285**	0.71		
Trust in Seller	0.296**	0.456**	0.71	
Purchase Intention	0.497**	0.368**	0.421**	0.73

Note. * = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

method. Bentler and Bonett (1980) recommended specific criteria for assessing the model fit: $\chi^2/df < 3$, GFI > 0.8, NFI > 0.90, CFI > 0.95, p Close near to 1, and RMSEA < 0.5. The model fit indices for the measurement model are within the suggested values, that is, $\chi^2/df = 1.797$, CFI = 0.967, GFI = 0.951, TLI = 0.960, and RMSEA = 0.045, indicating appropriate fit of the measurement model.

(4) Common Method Bias : Common method bias is assessed using two approaches. First, the Harmon one factor test is conducted, according to which the cumulative variance of one factor should be less than 50%. The results show that the data is normal. Second, common latent factor (CLF) method is used by introducing a common latent factor to the measurement model. The regression weights of CLF and confirmatory model factors are compared, and it is found that the differences of each factor are less than 0.2. It also denotes that the data is free from biases.

(5) Structural Model Evaluation : The proposed hypotheses are tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) and the results are presented in the Table 4. The results indicate a significantly positive relationship between

Table 4. Results of Hypotheses Testing

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Hypothesis	Standardized Coefficient (β)	Path Coefficient (t)	P	Results
eWOM Credibility	Purchase Intention	H ₁	0.464	6.675	***	Significant
eWOM Review Credibility	Trust in Seller	H ₂	0.210	3.462	***	Significant
Trust in Seller	Purchase Intention	H ₃	0.248	3.691	***	Significant
eWOM Review Credibility	Brand Image	H ₄	0.377	5.616	***	Significant
Brand Image	Purchase Intention	H ₅	0.167	2.421	** (0.015)	Significant
Brand Image	Trust in Seller	H ₆	0.471	7.296	***	Significant

Note. *** Significant at $p < 0.001$ level. ** Significant at $p < 0.05$

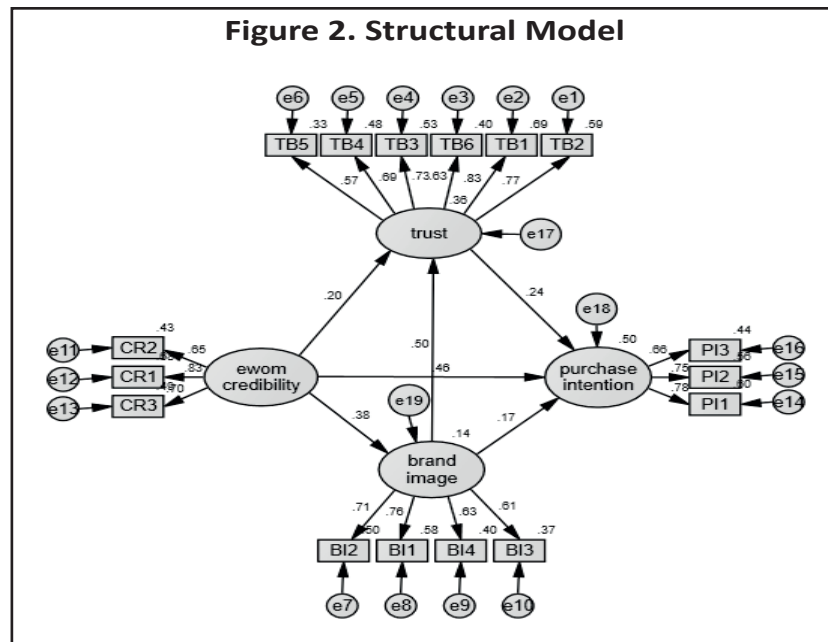


Table 5. Fit Indices (Structural Model Evaluation)

Fit indices	Results	Threshold value
CMIN/DF	1.797	<3 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010)
CFI	0.967	≥ 0.95 (Hair et al., 2010)
GFI	0.951	≥ 0.95 (Hair et al., 2010)
AGFI	0.932	≥ 0.80 (Hair et al., 2010)
TLI	0.960	≥ 0.95 (Hair et al., 2010)
RMSE	0.045	≤ 0.05 (Hair et al., 2010)

Note. Results indicate proposed model deemed to be fit.

eWOM credibility and purchase intention (H₁) ($\beta = 0.464$, $t = 6.675$, $p < .001$). The relationship between eWOM credibility and trust in sellers (H₂) is significant ($\beta = 0.210$, $t = 3.462$, $p < .001$); trust in sellers on purchase intention (H₃) is found to be significant ($\beta = 0.248$, $t = 3.691$, $p < .001$); eWOM credibility on brand image (H₄) is significant ($\beta = 0.377$, $t = 5.616$, $p < .001$). Brand image on purchase intention (H₅) is significant

Table 6. Multiple Correlation (R- Square value)

Path	R-square
Brand Image	.142
Trust in Brand	.340
Purchase Intention	.498

($\beta = 0.167$, $t = 2.421$, $p < .05$) ; brand image on trust in sellers (H_6) is found to be significant ($\beta = 0.471$, $t = 7.246$, $p < .001$). All six hypotheses are accepted in the proposed model (see Table 4 and Figure 2).

The goodness - of - fit indices of the structural model indicate that the model has a good fit with the following indices values : $\chi^2/df = 1.797$, CFI = 0.967, GFI = 0.951, TLI = 0.960, and RMSEA = 0.045 (Table 5). The squared multiple correlations (R^2) for each proposed hypothesis is also determined by the structural model. The R^2 values indicate the extent of variance in the endogenous variable manifested by the exogenous variable. In this case, eWOM credibility explains 50% variance in purchase intentions ($R^2 = 0.50$), 34% variance in trust in the seller ($R^2 = 0.34$), and 14% variance in brand image ($R^2 = 0.14$) as given in Table 6.

(6) Mediation Analysis : To test the mediation effects of brand image and trust on the relation between eWOM credibility (independent variable) and purchase intentions (dependent variable), the mediated regression analysis procedure of Baron and Kenny (1986) is employed. The analysis is performed using AMOS bootstrapping technique. The method involves four conditional steps. The mediation analysis results are summarized in the Table 7.

The first step involves testing the association between the independent variable eWOM credibility and the mediating variable brand image, which is found to be significant ($\beta = 0.378$). The second step tests the influence of mediating variable brand image on the dependent variable purchase intention, which is found to be significant as well ($\beta = 0.284$). Further, the direct effect of the independent variable eWOM credibility on the dependent variable is found to be significant ($\beta = 0.516$). Finally, the direct effect of eWOM on purchase intentions in the constrained model is found to be less significant ($\beta = 0.516$) than the mediation model ($\beta = 0.623$), indicating partial mediation by brand image. The indirect effect of eWOM credibility on purchase intentions through brand image is 0.107 ($\beta * \beta = 0.378 * 0.284$), which is less than the direct effect value ($\beta = 0.516$), thus indicating partial mediation.

Table 7. Results of Mediation Analysis

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Standardized Total Effect	Standardized Direct Effect	Standardized Indirect Effect	Results
eWOM Review Credibility	Purchase Intention	0.625***	0.498***	0.127***	Partial Mediation
eWOM Credibility	Trust in Seller	0.388***	0.388***	0.000	
Trust in Seller	Purchase Intention	0.327***	0.327***	0.000	
eWOM Credibility	Purchase Intention	0.623***	0.516***	0.107***	Partial Mediation
eWOM Credibility	Brand Image	0.378***	0.378***	0.000	
Brand Image	Purchase Intention	0.284***	0.287***	0.000	

Note. ** = Significant at $p < 0.05$; *** = Significant at $p < 0.001$

Similarly, the mediated regression analysis procedure is followed to test the mediating effect of trust. The direct paths between eWOM credibility \rightarrow trust, trust \rightarrow purchase intention, and eWOM \rightarrow purchase intention are found to be significant with b values of 0.388, 0.327, and 0.498, respectively. But the direct effect of eWOM credibility on PI in the constrained model is found to be more significant ($\beta = 0.625$) than the indirect effect of eWOM on purchase intention in the mediation model, $\beta = 0.127$ ($\beta * \beta = 0.317 * 0.179$) where trust is found to partially mediate the relationship. Therefore, hypotheses H_6 and H_7 find partial support.

Discussion

The findings of the study reveal that eWOM credibility has a positive effect on consumer purchase intentions of consumer electronics on Facebook fan pages of e-commerce sites (H_1). This is congruent to the existing literature wherein studies found positive association between eWOM and purchase intentions of consumers in the context of SNSs (Farzin & Fattahi, 2018). Apart from retail products, such relationship was also found in case of financial products (Prasad & Sen, 2018). This repeatedly found evidence may be explained by the tendency of the customers to perceive user-generated information on social media as credible and trustworthy and constantly seeking product-related information to increase familiarity with the product before the actual purchase. This indicates that social media fan page credible content influences the consumer purchase decision. In the context of social media, the credibility of eWOM reviews is very crucial for predicting consumer purchase behaviour because of non-availability of information. If the customer perceives that the available information on the fan page of online retail sites is credible, it facilitates confident purchase decisions. This relationship is consistent with earlier studies conducted by Matute, Polo - Redondo, and Utrillas (2016).

eWOM credibility also has a significant effect on trust in sellers (H_2). Results of previous studies indicated that credible content on fan pages has a significant influence on consumer trust in online retailers as established by past researchers (Matute et al., 2016; Ramli, Bakar, Ismail, & Aziz, 2017). Further, trust in sellers is positively associated with the purchase intention (H_3). The outcome of this strongly supports the results of earlier research done by Lien et al. (2015), wherein the researchers found that credible reviews in the online environment enhanced trust in sellers, which eventually increased the purchase intention. This is a logical finding as trust is a critical element in an online environment (Shin, Chung, Oh, & Lee, 2013). Further, while marketers provide relevant brand-related information on official brand fan pages, customers visiting them tend to have greater trust on consumer reviews than marketer information (Yeap et al., 2014). When official fan pages retain the user-generated reviews, it reduces risk of uncertainty as well as increases customers' confidence in the seller, thus leading to positive trust beliefs in the firm, which eventually encourages them to make purchase decisions based on the existing eWOM information (Park et al., 2011).

The study also observes a positive association of eWOM credibility with brand image (H_4). It is important to say that credible online reviews play a significant role in building a favorable brand image of consumer electronics and online retailers in India. Furthermore, positive brand image enhances favorable consumers' perceptions of the products on e-commerce sites. Prior studies highlighted the effect of eWOM on brand image across various industries (Torlak, Ozkara, Tiltay, Cengiz, & Dulger, 2014). Brand image is an important factor which positively influences purchase intentions (H_5, H_6) and this relationship is supported empirically by past studies (Aghekyan - Smonian et al., 2012; Lien et al., 2015; Lu, Fan, & Zhou, 2016).

Implications

The present study has significant implications for the e-commerce industry. Results emphasize that online retail companies should acknowledge and leverage online reviews on SNSs because they play a vital role in determining

consumer purchase decisions. Further, major retail brands including Amazon are well-known brands and consumers have confidence in their retail website information. This confidence can be acquired only through continuous enhancement of consumers' trust in the e-commerce sites by providing relevant and updated product information. Online retailers should devote efforts towards maintaining and improving brand image as well-managed brand associations including the improvement of functional, symbolic, and experiential benefits will generate a favorable brand image.

Limitations of the Study and Future Research Directions

Scant research is available on fan pages of e-commerce sites as a platform for generating eWOM credible information. Since this study is focused on online retail companies of Facebook fan pages to validate the proposed model in the Indian context, future researchers may explore other social networking sites, that is, Google communities, Instagram, and Pinterest, etc. The present study is limited to firms' hosted fan page of online retailer site - Amazon. Further studies can explore firm as well as fan created fan pages in SNSs. The study has considered only consumer electronic products from the online retail sites ; future researchers should look into some other category of products.

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Appendix. Measurement Scales

eWOM Review Credibility :

- ↗ **eWOM Cred1** : I think that consumers' recommendations about consumer electronics/brands on the Amazon Facebook fan page are credible.
- ↗ **eWOM Cred2**: I think that consumers' recommendations about consumer electronics/brands on Amazon Facebook fan page are believable.
- ↗ **eWOM Cred3**: I think that review information about consumer electronics/brands on the Amazon Facebook fan page is trustworthy.

Brand Image :

- ↗ **Brand Image 1**: In comparison to other e-commerce sites in India, Amazon sells high quality consumer electronic products/brands.
- ↗ **Brand Image 2** : Amazon brand has a rich history.
- ↗ **Brand Image 3** : Customers (we) can reliably predict how Amazon selling products/brands will perform in the future.
- ↗ **Brand Image 4** : Referred consumer electronics/brands on Amazon are reliable.

Trust in Sellers :

- ↗ **Trust1** : I believe that Amazon is competent in its field.
- ↗ **Trust2** : I believe that Amazon is knowledgeable concerning its products.
- ↗ **Trust3** : Promises made by Amazon are reliable.
- ↗ **Trust4** : I believe that Amazon does not make false claims.
- ↗ **Trust5** : I believe that Amazon is open in dealing with its customers.
- ↗ **Trust6** : I believe that Amazon will be ready and willing to assist and support its customers.

Purchase Intention :

- ↗ **Purchase1** : I would buy consumer electronics on Amazon website rather than any other e-commerce sites available.
- ↗ **Purchase2** : I am willing to recommend others to buy consumer electronics from Amazon.
- ↗ **Purchase3** : I intend to purchase consumer electronics from Amazon in the future.

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