

Do eWOM and Brand Image Drive Purchase Intention of Online Travel Shoppers : A Case Study of Delhi - NCR

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Abstract

Purpose : The increasing trend of traveling and the widespread use of the internet have led to a growth in the market for online travel buying. The present study yielded valuable insights into the impact of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) features, both directly and indirectly, on purchase intention for online travel items through brand image. Additionally, the association between eWOM traits and purchase intention is examined, as well as the mediating effect of brand image.

Methodology : A systematic survey was created and distributed to 854 internet-savvy participants who frequently purchase vacations online. The PLS-SEM software 3.3.3 was used to carry out the statistical analysis. Additionally, importance-performance matrix analysis, or IPMA, was used to investigate the critical elements involved in determining customer intention.

Findings : The study found that eWOM characteristics influence brand perception more so than consumers' intentions to purchase online travel products. It was also demonstrated that eWOM characteristics were higher even if performance was less relevant. That being said, brand image was not as crucial as performance.

Practical Implications : Marketers and decision-makers in the online travel sector should take note of the study's conclusions since they can significantly improve a brand's reputation. The results could be used to monitor sentiments and gauge their impact.

Originality : The study emphasized the significance of eWOM attributes and brand image for purchase intentions in the context of the developing Indian online travel market. The study used the IPMA, a contemporary PLS-SEM technique, to establish the results.

Keywords : brand image, eWOM, IPMA, online travel shopping, purchase intention

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The advancement of digital technologies, including fiber optic internet and Web 3.0-enabled applications, has expeditiously increased the vast array of user-generated content. The prominence of online marketplaces and the broad adoption of social media applications resulted in the emergence of eWOM. Many numbers of individuals are turning to it for product or company information. Through the integration of extra information into their decision-making process for purchases, consumers are gradually realizing the benefits of digital platforms (Teng et al., 2014). Cyberspace allows individuals to share personal thoughts with several customers via digital portals, as earlier research has demonstrated (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). For example, 87% of consumers read online reviews in Brightlocal (2020). Around 79% of American customers think that

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recommendations from friends and family are reliable enough, despite the fact that purchasers in many countries usually base their purchasing decisions on online reviews.

Marketers consider such online user reviews to endorse a business firm or product containing buying details from a web retailer. Park and Lee (2008) noted that electronic word of mouth (eWOM) has become a popular marketing promotional tool in terms of user reviews. eWOM usually relates to passive and active consumer engagement (Thakur et al., 2022). Inactive individuals ask for guidance, read through a number of other consumers' online recommendations, and are not allowed to post their thoughts or ideas. However, active individuals exchange comments and suggestions online with numerous customers (Khammash & Griffiths, 2011). Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) stated that to grab a maximum grip on consumer reviews, almost all businesses provide digital spaces for views and comments through their official sites, enabling users to express their feedback.

A number of issues remain when taking into account past research (Prasad et al., 2017; Shin et al., 2013) that has already looked into the influence of eWOM on consumer purchasing behavior and its predecessors and potential consequences. For example, few studies have looked experimentally at how a seller's online platform's eWOM attributes affect buyers' intentions to make a purchase. Almost all existing studies emphasized independent aspects of information, for instance, eWOM quantity or eWOM quality, and addressed these dimensions individually (Cheung et al., 2008; Park & Lee, 2008). One of the main concerns in the literature is the integration of brand image. It is still important to look into how e-reviews help an online seller's brand image develop and whether they encourage buyers to make a purchase. The primary goal of this research is to develop and assess an interdisciplinary model that takes into account the direct influence of the eWOM characteristics on the intention to purchase in order to address this subject adequately. Furthermore, this conceptual framework examines the mediation effect of the website's brand image between the eWOM characteristics and the customer's purchase intention. In this study, we recommend a multidisciplinary eWOM tactic by specifying reviews of quantity, quality, and credibility as the critical characteristics of eWOM.

There are substantial additions to the existing literature from this investigation. With brand image acting as a mediator, this study examines the impact of eWOM characteristics on purchase intention and brand image in order to highlight all of their features. Our study enhances the comprehension of eWOM and brand image with purchase intention and suggests strategies for marketers to use these techniques. To the best of our knowledge, no study has looked at how the proposed variable is impacted by brand image and eWOM characteristics as a higher-order model in the context of online travel shopping. Thus, the objectives of this research are: (a) to analyze eWOM characteristics as a higher-order composite, (b) to assess the influence of eWOM characteristics on brand image and purchase intention, and (c) to analyze the mediating role of brand image between eWOM characteristics and purchase intention.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

eWOM Characteristics

The Internet provides customers with convenient preferences to expand their search choices and information exchange options before and after a web transaction. Individuals have different reasons for seeking information online or creating eWOM through their experiences (Maduretno & Junaedi, 2021). The conceptual framework of Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) is adopted in this study in order to account for the possibility of multiple senders and recipients: eWOM is an either favorable or unfavorable opinion given by potential, current, or former buyers regarding a product and business that is quickly and freely accessible to a diverse group of individuals through the Web.

Yeap et al. (2014) stated that word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations from friends and family are similar to the recent classification of communication by digital media, and some researchers believe that eWOM is just WOM expanded into a virtual environment (Mahadevan & Joshi, 2021). Still, it's critical to understand the differences between traditional and digital word-of-mouth marketing. First, as per Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004), online input is available for an extended duration. It can be accessed by an enormous, diverse group of users, consequently ensuring asynchronous interaction between the source and recipient (King et al., 2014). Second, when WOM is transmitted via an electronic medium, details and info are dispersed quickly and efficiently (King et al., 2014). Eventually, eWOM gets transmitted among anonymous sources and recipients, although the Internet's confidentiality can adversely impact the information's credibility (Luo et al., 2013). According to a number of earlier research, these diverse eWOM aspects affect consumers' perceptions of online sellers as well as their decision to buy (Bhāle & Tongare, 2018; Sharma & Sharma, 2022). From the same perspective, few studies have recognized the importance of eWOM legitimacy, eWOM quantity, and eWOM quality as crucial markers of consumer feedback.

eWOM Characteristics Modeled as a Higher-Order Composite

Prior studies have recognized various aspects of user content, like eWOM quantity, eWOM quality, and eWOM credibility (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Additionally, only limited researchers have addressed these constructs at the same time. The amount of information that eWOM provides is its primary feature. Cheung et al. (2008) stated that the quantity of eWOM is determined by the number of comments expressed on the website. Given that, the number of user evaluations can be interpreted as the involvement of every client with the company. Thus, if many individuals offer their opinions about products and services online, this will result in a significant increase in knowledge that helps a number of potential customers with their purchasing process.

The quality of eWOM was also examined from an online perspective (Teng et al., 2014). Although “quality information” was regarded as a unidimensional variable by certain authors (Nelson et al., 2005), recent studies like Matute et al. (2016) defined a broad array of eWOM quality attributes. According to Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006), the persuasiveness of the statements made in the informative text is what makes eWOM valuable. The definition was recently discussed by Cheung et al. (2008), Cheung and Thadani (2012), and Matute et al. (2016), who described it as a complex variable with four components: completeness (reviews are thorough & detailed), timeliness (reviews are updated), accuracy (data must be precise & trustworthy), and relevance (evaluations are important & adequate). We have found that, when considering purchases made online, consumers' choices may be greatly influenced by the quality of the information they find.

According to Cheung and Thadani (2012), eWOM credibility is a reflection of people's trust in online reviews. Because most reviews on e-businesses are anonymous, credibility is crucial. As a matter of practical concern, purchasers who read the ideas are accused of being more suspicious and mistrusting due to the anonymity provided by the Web (Luo et al., 2013). According to prior studies, this study also concentrates on the credibility of information generated by several other individuals rather than considering the buyers' trusting views regarding online sellers. Admittedly, eWOM's credibility depends on this empirical detail with no business motive. Customers will, therefore, be more inclined to favor vendors that operate the web portal when they think that online customer reviews are reliable, using this information to inform their purchasing decisions (Rao & Rao, 2019).

The core of the eWOM/eWOM features variable has not been thoroughly examined by several researchers (Bataineh, 2015; Matute et al., 2016). Furthermore, Matute et al. (2016) considered the eWOM/eWOM characteristics as a higher-order construct; whereas Bataineh (2015) designed it as a one-dimensional structure. According to Henseler (2017), past studies indicated multiple approaches to measuring the construct: a reflective

measurement model and a composite model. A variable's design is characteristic of its components and structure (Sarstedt et al., 2016). As previously stated, the existing research implements the three-dimensional eWOM characteristics framework introduced by Matute et al. (2016), which incorporates eWOM quantity, quality, and credibility to address all social and cognitive aspects. Furthermore, in this research, eWOM/eWOM characteristics are represented as the higher-order composite generated by its own three reflectively measured components, and each parameter illustrates a particular aspect of the eWOM characteristics.

eWOM Characteristics, Brand Image, and Purchase Intention

A multitude of other researchers have investigated the antecedents and ramifications of eWOM traits from multiple perspectives (Bataineh, 2015; Matute et al., 2016; Maduretno & Junaedi, 2021; Shankar, 2020). As a theoretical framework, eWOM characteristics involve social and behavioral aspects and outcomes in the seller's brand image; however, from a behavioral point of view, eWOM characteristics are demonstrated by the customers' purchasing intention toward the seller's goods or services, resulting in their willingness to purchase or visit the seller's website (Lien et al., 2015; Prasad & Sen, 2018). The brand image describes its characteristics and advantages, distinguishing the online seller's deal from its rivals (Farzin & Fattahi, 2018). The motive of the businesses is to generate a favorable connection with the brand and the expectation of the customers, the consequence of which would be a favorable picture of the brand (Khalisa & Kesuma, 2018; Tanwar et al., 2021). In tune with earlier studies, the brand image reflects significant and favorable online consumer reviews of both the brand and seller's website; similarly, when it comes to a psychological point of view, the eWOM characteristics have a positive impact on the brand image (Alrwashdeh et al., 2019).

The buyer's willingness to purchase a specific item, facility, or brand is signaled as purchase intention. It is thought that purchase intent is a very accurate predictor of future purchasing behavior (Zeithaml, 1988). In addition, purchase intention depicts the eagerness of consumers to purchase from the seller's website or online portal constantly (Farzin & Fattahi, 2018). eWOM characteristics reflect a decisive engagement and link to the brand image that can boost customer thoughts and actions (Lien et al., 2015). Alrwashdeh et al. (2019) suggested a positive correlation between brand image and purchasing intention. An active customer with a favorable image for a brand has a higher tendency to purchase goods and services (Lien et al., 2015). As a result, the below-mentioned influences have been hypothesized:

✦ **H1** : eWOM characteristics have a positive and direct impact on brand image.

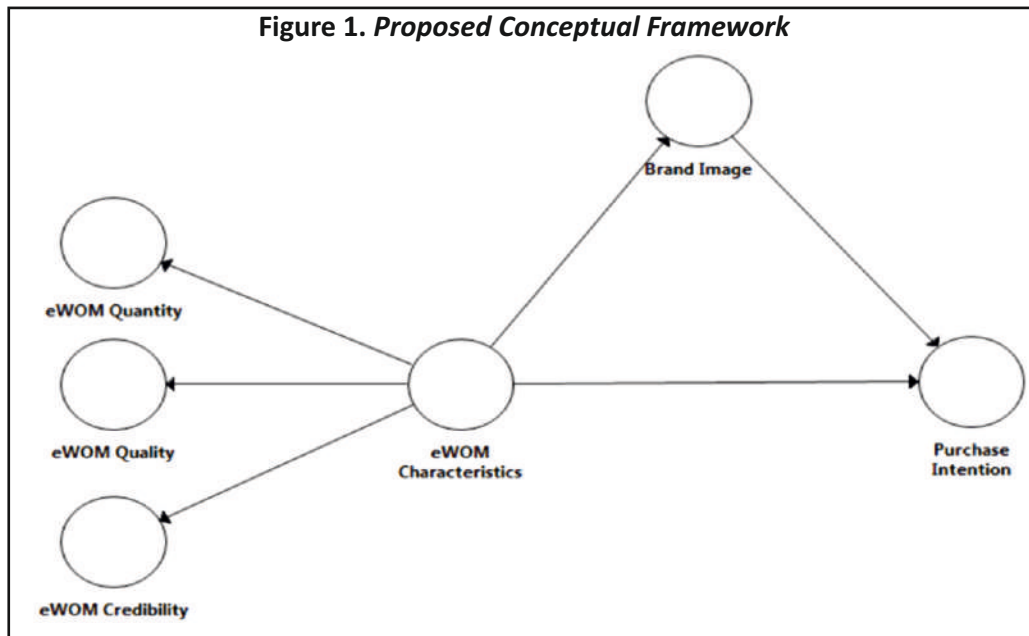
✦ **H2** : eWOM characteristics have a positive and direct impact on purchase intention.

In the travel industry context, some investigators have studied the significant influence of brand image on purchase decisions (Farzin & Fattahi, 2018). According to earlier research, buyers are more likely to purchase from a seller's website or online portal if they are persuaded by reviews and recommendations (Srivastava & Fernandes, 2022). According to Tomar et al. (2020), devoted consumers are devoted to the brand, swiftly spread positive word-of-mouth, provide positive feedback, and recommend websites to a wide range of people. Additionally, brand image is being analyzed as a mediating variable of marketing outcomes, like eWOM and purchase intentions (Lien et al., 2015). Thus, the mentioned influences have been hypothesized:

✦ **H3** : Brand image has a positive and direct impact on purchase intention.

✦ **H4** : Brand image mediates the relationship between eWOM characteristics and purchase intention.

Figure 1 presents the theoretical basis for the current investigation.



Research Methodology

Research Population and Data Collection

The present study identified well-educated, web-savvy individuals who preferred online travel shopping as the research population. The sample was drawn from respondents who were above 18 years of age. Northern India, which includes Delhi-NCR, is used as a research sample area due to its heterogeneity and population magnitude. A non-probability sampling technique using judgmental and convenient sampling has been applied to collect the data. The investigation was carried out between February 2022 and November 2022. The size of the sample was decided to be 1,000 respondents. The sample size depends on the statements of the variables embedded in the questionnaire for which valid data analysis is needed for each item. In this empirical study, the variables and items of the questionnaire were obtained through an earlier exploration of the literature. The questionnaire included 27 items. Four statements from Matute et al. (2016) were used to assess eWOM quantity; five items from Matute et al. (2016) were used to assess eWOM quality; five statements from Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006) were used to assess eWOM credibility; six items from Abubakar et al. (2016) were used to assess brand image; and seven statements from Bataineh (2015) were used to assess purchase intention. All items were determined using a 5-point Likert measure ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). All the sample respondents were approached directly to have first-hand information from the respondents.

To dispense the questionnaires, the traditional channel was used. A total of 1,000 questionnaires were distributed, and 931 were returned. Among them, 77 questionnaires were disqualified as they had inherent flaws like incomplete sections or inadequate responses. Finally, 854 questionnaires were utilized for empirical analysis. A total of 854 valid questionnaires were retrieved and utilized in SmartPLS interface 3.3.3 for the outcome by applying PLS-SEM. PLS-SEM is applied in the current framework as a recommended technique because the developed framework integrates higher-order constructs evaluated through reflective model measurement. The PLS-SEM method provides greater versatility in complicated frameworks and is generally adopted as a multivariate analysis technique (Hair Jr. et al., 2020; Rigdon, 2016).

Common Method Variance

Harman's single-factor test evaluation has been applied to evaluate whether the analysis has common method biases. This procedure loaded each statement into one factor, and then the analysis indicated that an overall variation of 34.649% was detected. This is beneath the cutoff of 50% variability and does not imply any common method biases in the analysis (Podsakoff et al., 2003), and beyond analysis can be carried out.

Analysis and Results

Descriptive Analysis

We also pursued currently implied rules and standards on using partial least square-path modeling to estimate the path model (measurement and structural) in quantitative and descriptive studies (Müller et al., 2018). The framework had to be examined over multitudinous phases (van Riel et al., 2017) as its structural model comprises eWOM characteristics that are formed there as a hierarchical component model composed of its three dimensions — quantity, quality, and credibility (Bataineh, 2015; Matute et al., 2016). We measured brand image, buy intention, and eWOM characteristics in the first phase, all of which were generated as reflecting variables. In phase two, the higher-order component model and the framework's goodness of fit are evaluated. We evaluated the structural model in the third phase.

Estimation of the Measurement Model

The study's variables are classified as reflective constructs. The reflective constructs are assessed by evaluating internal consistency, reliability, and validity (convergent and discriminant) (Henseler et al., 2018). The most widely utilized internal reliability is assessed using Cronbach's alpha, Dijkstra & Henseler's RhoA, and composite reliability (CR). It needs always to surpass the suggested 0.7 value (Sarstedt et al., 2016). To determine the convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) for every construct must be beyond 0.5 (Hair Jr. et al., 2020). Table 1 illustrates the loadings of every indicator, and each construct's value is more significant than the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Hair, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2019). The loading for the brand image indicator (BI5) came less than the 0.70 cutoff limit. However, interestingly, the result of AVE was substantially higher than the 0.50 threshold to determine the construct reliability (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019).

Table 1. Findings of the Estimation of Reflective Measurement and Composite Model

Construct	Indicators	Type	Loadings	CR	Cronbach's alpha	RhoA	AVE
eWOM Quantity		Reflective		0.905	0.861	0.866	0.705
	QN1		0.812				
	QN2		0.823				
	QN3		0.872				
	QN4		0.852				
eWOM Quality		Reflective		0.885	0.838	0.845	0.606
	QL1		0.788				
	QL2		0.826				
	QL3		0.758				
	QL4		0.779				

eWOM Credibility	<i>QL5</i>		0.738				
		Reflective		0.909	0.877	0.897	0.667
	<i>CR1</i>		0.851				
	<i>CR2</i>		0.734				
	<i>CR3</i>		0.839				
	<i>CR4</i>		0.815				
Brand Image	<i>CR5</i>		0.838				
		Reflective		0.891	0.855	0.874	0.578
	<i>BR1</i>		0.794				
	<i>BR2</i>		0.798				
	<i>BR3</i>		0.743				
	<i>BR4</i>		0.799				
Purchase Intention	<i>BR5</i>		0.666				
	<i>BR6</i>		0.751				
		Reflective		0.934	0.917	0.929	0.67
	<i>PR1</i>		0.774				
	<i>PR2</i>		0.735				
	<i>PR3</i>		0.859				
eWOM Characteristics	<i>PR4</i>		0.724				
	<i>PR5</i>		0.881				
	<i>PR6</i>		0.867				
	<i>PR7</i>		0.874				
		Composite					
	<i>eWOM</i>	0.488					
eWOM	<i>Quantity</i>						
	<i>eWOM</i>	0.362					
	<i>Quality</i>						
Characteristics	<i>eWOM</i>	0.272					
	<i>Credibility</i>						

The research further determines the discriminant validity using the Fornell–Larcker criterion analysis and the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio analysis (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015). Based on the current Fornell–Larcker criterion standard, AVE must be significantly higher than the squared correlations from all the remaining constructs to build discriminating validity. The values of HTMT must be significantly lower than 1.

On the other hand, the suggested limits on the strict note 0.85 or 0.9 were determined to ensure adequate substantiation of discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). The findings of the discriminant validity are shown in Tables 2 and 3. Furthermore, all HTMT ratio values came substantially lower than 0.85 with the bootstrap confidence intervals of 95% percentile. Consequently, we concluded that the discrimination validity is verified.

Also, in the second phase, according to van Riel et al. (2017), the goodness-of-fit of the higher-order composite model was tested except for its zero-order constructs. Moreover, the goodness-of-fit for the entire model was not rejected ($dULS = 0.1713$, $p > .01$), and the SRMR value (0.0354) was lower than the maximum critical limit of 0.08, denoting that the model fit was satisfactory (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Estimations (Fornell–Larcker Criterion)

Construct	eWOM Quantity	eWOM Quality	eWOM Credibility	Brand Image	Purchase Intention
eWOM Quantity	0.840				
eWOM Quality	0.689	0.778			
eWOM Credibility	0.665	0.693	0.817		
Brand Image	0.662	0.588	0.564	0.760	
Purchase Intention	0.483	0.483	0.459	0.488	0.819

Note. Off-diagonal variables display squared correlation; the average variance extracted is presented diagonally in bold.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Estimations (HTMT)

Construct	eWOM Quantity	eWOM Quality	eWOM Credibility	Brand Image	Purchase Intention
eWOM Quantity					
eWOM Quality	0.810				
eWOM Credibility	0.755	0.797			
Brand Image	0.698	0.667	0.613		
Purchase Intention	0.537	0.542	0.469	0.525	

To further acquire empirical evidence for the higher-order constructs, eWOM characteristics were evaluated as a higher-order composite construct, which included latent variable (LV) values. The loadings that were ultimately utilized to generate a higher-order construct are shown in Table 1 results. Our findings supported the eWOM literature at the time and indicated that a composite model of the higher-order construct was appropriate. At the 1% level of significance, every loading had a significant difference from 0.

Estimation of the Structural Model

To estimate the structural model, generally, it is essential to take into account the multi-collinearity check, R^2 (determination of coefficients) of the dependent variables, the relevance and significance of the path coefficients, (f^2) effect size (Hair Jr. et al., 2020), and predictive relevance Q^2 (Stone, 1974). An R^2 value of 0.2 has been seen in consumer science as relatively high (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). Furthermore, path coefficient measurements must be scientifically relevant and dependent on the percentile bootstrap's confidence interval (Hair et al., 2012). The (f^2) effect size beyond 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 implies a low, medium, or high effect size for substantial path coefficients (Cohen, 1988). For Q^2 , a value exceeding 0.02 may be used to infer that later values can have satisfactory predictive relevance (Richter et al., 2016).

Each set of predictor variables is initially evaluated individually in the inner structural model. To this aim, the variance inflation factor (VIF) limit observed to be less than 3.33 has been determined (Diamantopoulos, 2008). Inner VIFs have been identified to be less than the cutoff limit for brand image (1.815), and eWOM characteristics (1.815) on purchase intention to disclose no collinearity issues (Hair et al., 2012) were associated in this research. Figure 2 shows that R^2 values for brand image and purchase intention are 0.449 and 0.317. Such values have been viewed as strong and permissible.

In addition, to examine the significance and validity of its path coefficients that could differ from -1 to $+1$ in the

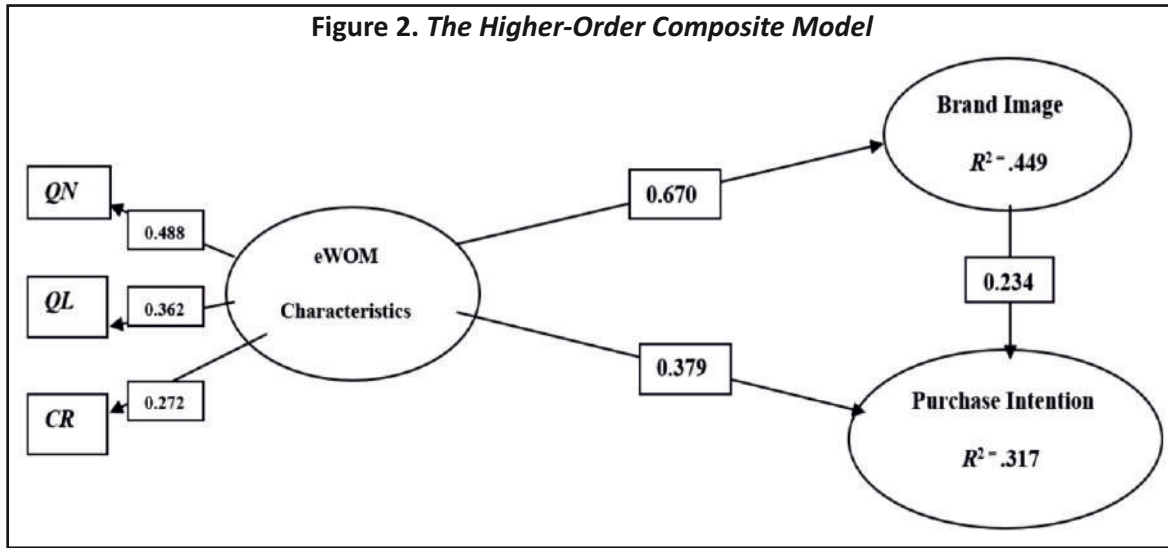


Table 4. The Findings of the Structural Model

Hypotheses	Structural Path	Direct/Indirect Effects	t-Value	Confidence Interval (Percentile Bootstrap)	Effect Size (F^2)	Status
H1	$EC \rightarrow BI$	0.670	31.435	[0.634, 0.704]	0.815	Accepted
H2	$EC \rightarrow PI$	0.379	10.176	[0.319, 0.441]	0.116	Accepted
H3	$BI \rightarrow PI$	0.234	5.939	[0.168, 0.297]	0.044	Accepted
H4	$EC \rightarrow BI \rightarrow PI$	0.157	5.939	[0.113, 0.2]	NA	Accepted

bootstrapping method with 5,000 subtests of the PLS algorithm, Table 4 displays the outcomes of the structural model's supported hypotheses (H1–H4). The outcomes demonstrate a significant and favorable impact of eWOM characteristics on the brand image ($f^2 = .815$ and $f^2 = .116$) and purchase intention. However, the brand image reveals a small but positive effect size on purchase intention ($f^2 = .044$).

At last, the structural model's predictive relevance with the higher-order composite of eWOM characteristics, brand image, and purchase intention was examined by Stone-Geisser's Q^2 as it was reported to be 0.206 for purchase intention with a medium predictive significance (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974). The brand image predictive relevance Q^2 from Stone-Geisser was also noted to be 0.245, which clarifies how both independent variables are valuable in the current research and that the outcomes can be generalizable in the long term in diverse aspects.

Importance – Performance Map Analysis

Our approach to accelerating the results of the current investigation was to apply importance-performance matrix analysis (IMPA), which is also known as impact-performance map analysis (Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). The main goal of using IMPA in this study is to identify the construct—e.g., brand image or eWOM characteristics—that have the greatest influence on the target construct of purchase intention (Martilla & James, 1977). This method determines the total effects in the direction of purchase intention with the comparatively significant construct in the research. IMPA is appropriately implemented whenever there are mediation effects (Direct effects + indirect

Table 5. Importance – Performance Matrix

Constructs	Importance	Performance
eWOM Characteristics	0.495	70.018
Brand Image	0.325	73.504
Mean Value	0.41	71.761

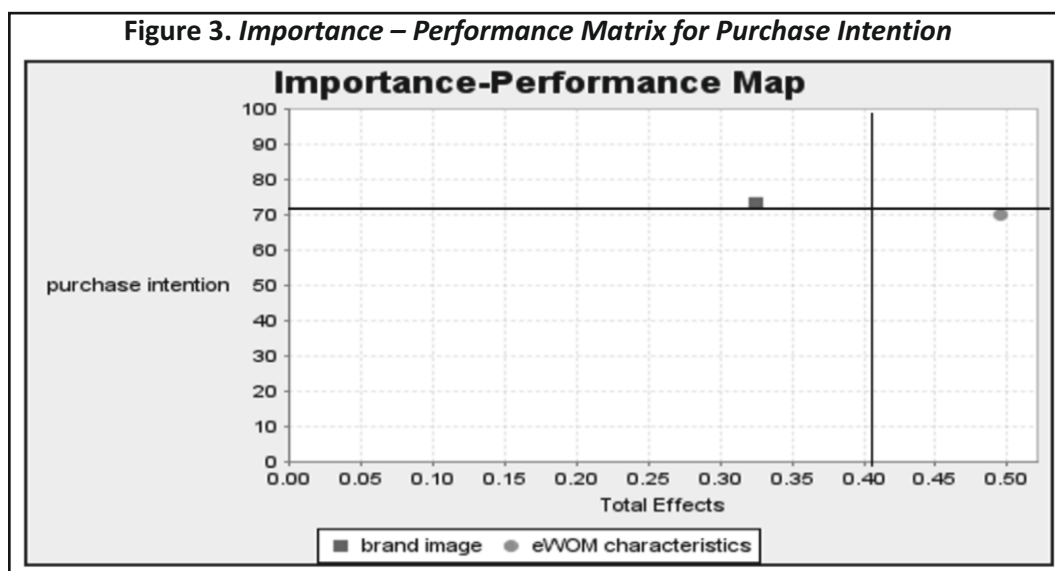
Table 6. Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects

Constructs	Direct effects on purchase intention	Indirect effects on purchase intention	Total effects on purchase intention	Significance of total effects?
eWOM Characteristics	0.379	0.157	0.536	YES
Brand Image	0.234	–	0.234	YES

effects = Total effects) in the study, and in particular, complex mediation effects come into existence through the variance accounted for (VAF) technique (Shiva et al., 2020).

Table 5 examines the effects of eWOM characteristics and brand image on purchase intention for predestined unstandardized effects to assist the representation of *ceteris paribus* for the effects of antecedent constructs ; 71.441 is measured as the performance of purchase intention. To indicate the IMPA outcomes, VAF is measured by examining the mediation effects and estimating the indirect, direct, and total effects of predecessor constructs on purchase intention. Table 6 summarizes the outcomes of IMPA, including direct effects, indirect effects, and total effects. The essential requirement is that each indicator is positive and has significant loadings to run IMPA. The quadrants are appropriately constructed following the mean values of the importance–performance matrix for purchase intention.

Referring to Figure 3, an increase of one value in eWOM characteristics's performance from 70.018 to 71.018 is meant to improve buy intention performance from 71.441 to 71.997 through the overall effect, which is 0.536. Furthermore, an increase in brand image performance from 73.504 to 74.504 is meant to improve buy intention performance from 71.441 to 71.675.



The significance of the purchase intention outcomes is influenced by the eWOM elements, which are more prominent and noteworthy than in the previous purchase intention designs. Moreover, eWOM features are found to be more significant despite the lesser performance. However, these days, brand image is less important than performance.

Since eWOM features are extremely important (above average) but perform comparably poorly, improving their performance is the first step marketers should take to enhance the performance of buy intention. Aspects related to brand image ought to be given emphasis next.

Discussion and Conclusion

Previous studies have investigated the impact of conventional WOM on customers' buying intention; marketing experts have to quickly acknowledge and investigate how eWOM can affect customers' intentions to acquire such goods through comprehensive advances in eWOM. This research examines the eWOM characteristics quantified as a higher-order composite construct with three reflective dimensions: eWOM quantity, eWOM quality, and eWOM credibility, from psychology and behavioral aspects. This research also studies the influence of eWOM characteristics on brand image and purchase intention and the mediating effect of the brand image between the eWOM characteristics and purchase intention. This study adopts the latest standards for evaluating and measuring a current framework comprising a construct designed as a composite or higher-order composite constructed from common factors within a PLS-path modeling context (Rasoolimanesh & Ali, 2018). Previous studies have already established the characteristics of eWOM as a multidimensional construct within the framework of psychological and behavioral perspectives (Bataineh, 2015; Matute et al., 2016; Maduretno & Junaedi, 2021; Zangeneh et al., 2014).

Furthermore, earlier research has reported that eWOM characteristics include psychological and social influences on potential buyers (Bataineh, 2015; Seo & Park, 2018). All such factors are seen together as eWOM characteristics so that eWOM characteristics can be adequately exhibited as a composite construct (Matute et al., 2016; Zangeneh et al., 2014). Also, this particular research's outcomes are compatible with the results of prior studies.

Many preceding studies have reported influential and positive effects of eWOM characteristics on brand image and purchase intention (Bataineh, 2015; Farzin & Fattahi, 2018). We have also determined that the direct impact of eWOM characteristics on the brand image ($\beta = 0.670$) is significantly greater than the direct influence of eWOM's characteristics on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.379$). In addition, behavioral and psychological characteristics are part of eWOM; behavioral attributes impact a potential buyer's intention to purchase online, while psychological attributes support the brand image of the websites offering online travel (Abubakar et al., 2016; Bataineh, 2015; Seo & Park, 2018). The significantly more considerable direct influence of the eWOM characteristics on brand image in contrast to the purchase intention demonstrates the more significant influence of psychological aspects in contrast to behavioral aspects. Furthermore, our study finds that eWOM attributes significantly and indirectly influence purchase intention (0.157).

Managerial Implications

This study provides many practical contributions to travel and hospitality companies, marketers, and industry experts. The study's results indicate that customer presence on online platforms significantly impacts brand image and purchase intention. In conformity with the IMPA findings of the study, travel companies should carefully analyze the eWOM characteristics, which would influence the minds of customers who make purchasing decisions for travel shopping. People may read reviews and leave comments for goods and services they are

interested in, which influences their purchasing decisions, thanks to the internet and mobile technologies. Consequently, marketing teams can host events enabling customers to experience travel-related products or services or collaborate with certain businesses that provide travel trips as marketing incentives. Inspiring others to share their stories online can also have a profound effect. Internet users would immediately share positive reviews and suggestions from other shoppers. Travel agencies and affiliated businesses gain a place in the hearts of customers thanks to online reviews. When it comes to brand management tactics that improve a brand's perception, eWOM is a helpful tool. The findings show that eWOM significantly and strongly affects the travel company's brand image. According to the findings, marketing teams must track, monitor, and exert control over user-generated eWOM to build favorable customer relationships. As a result, this will benefit the travel company's financial prospects.

A number of social media users, like Facebook users, who may post about first-hand brand experiences has skyrocketed (Farzin & Fattahi, 2018). To spread eWOM to their audience, marketers should cultivate connections with bloggers and influencers. The travel company's marketing team can motivate people to share sincere endorsements on social media platforms like Pinterest and Instagram. In order to engage customers more and enhance the company's reputation, marketers might respond to their concerns. It only takes a few seconds to post, gather, and search for travel-related information. The feedback process needs to be quick and easy for businesses to identify the needs of potential customers and offer services that fulfill those demands. The study's findings show that eWOM has a direct and substantial impact on online travelers' purchase intentions. The importance of these indicators should be recognized by marketing professionals who want to use them to influence online customer purchase intention. Thus, they may generate significant WOM and earn a competitive edge in the industry.

Limitations of the Study and Future Trends of the Research

Certain unavoidable limitations apply to this study project. Initially, the Delhi-NCR region served as the research study's location. Time limits prevented us from including potential clients from other parts of India, as in such a case, they can differ substantially from one another. For more consistent results and generalizations, further research can be carried out over the entire country. Secondly, the survey that we performed yielded the study's results. In order to gain a more comprehensive grasp of the topics covered in this study, a subjective method might be used. This would be useful for research projects in the future. Third, the current study used a cross-sectional research approach. Researchers can use a longitudinal scale to gather data for more precise and improved findings.

Moreover, convenience sampling was employed to collect the data for this research. Despite that, future studies may prefer to adopt another sampling approach compared to that used in this study. The study also has some limitations on accounts of perceived benefits, which significantly contribute to online travel shopping. Since the proposed framework does not aim to link eWOM attributes and brand image to the desire to purchase when traveling, other constructs could be added to the existing model. Furthermore, the framework described in this research could be explored outside of the travel industry because the predictive usefulness of the current model is high enough. Therefore, the outcomes could vary.

Authors' Contribution

Ashwerya Gupta and Ubba Savita planned to analyze the brand image and eWOM from the perspective of online travel consumers in order to compile high-quality research, arrange it by topic, and create a study framework. Ashwerya Gupta presented the results following the application of suitable analytical methods to achieve the objectives. Ubba Savita validated the theoretical framework and statistics.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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