

## EXAMINING THE EFFECT OF ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH (EWOM) COMMUNICATION ON PURCHASE INTENTION: A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

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### ABSTRACT

In the digital age, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication has grown to be the most powerful influence on customer behaviour. However, the growing body of evidence raises concerns about credibility and eWOM quality. Various factors related to the source, message, medium and receiver of eWOM were collected by an extensive literature review. Aiming to synthesise existing research, this study seeks to determine the factors that contribute to eWOM's success as a wholesome construct. It also operationalises eWOM's measure. The research design of this study is quantitative and uses a structured questionnaire to collect data from eWOM givers and seekers in the online environment. The scale items were gathered from previous research and tested for dimensionality using 'Factor Analysis' to validate the eWOM construct. There is evidence to show that eWOM effectiveness can be measured to determine purchase intention. E-commerce has developed rapidly, and it is time to take advantage of this growth by measuring the eWOM construct comprehensively from a customer's perspective.

**Keywords:** Electronic word of mouth; eWOM construct; exploratory factor analysis (EFA); eWOM effectiveness; confirmatory factor analysis (CFA); online consumer behaviour; online communication; eWOM Scale Items

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Scholars determined uniformly that communication of Word of mouth (WOM) has a high impact on consumer behaviour, including personal advice, recommendations and suggestions from friends, families and fellow consumers (Engel et al. 1969; Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Rani & Shivaprasad, 2018; Nam et al., 2020). In the form of online product reviews & ratings on online websites, communities and social media (Van, 2021), "interpersonally, oral communication between consumer products and products has gradually been replaced with electronic word of word communication (eWOM)." eWOM refers to remarks made via the Internet, which are available to users on the Internet, on product, brand, or organization (Hennig-Thurau, 2004). As online consumption expands, people are actively or passively

involved in eWOM conversation (Hennig-Thurau, 2004; Rani & Shivaprasad, 2021). eWOM is designed to deliver product and organizational information to web-based interpersonal connections amongst virtual people for non-commercial objectives (Litvin et al., 2008; Cheng & Zhou, 2010; Van, 2021). Neilson (2015) indicates that 92% of consumers around the world value the suggestions of other customers, especially advertising types. Therefore, eWOM changes product behaviour stimulates the intention to buy and subsequently promotes the buy of the product (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Zhao et al., 2020; Rani & Shivaprasad, 2021).

The eWOM's power and efficiency increased several times in the virtual age. Researchers demonstrated that the use of eWOM is favourable for buying decisions (Mishra, 2016;

Rani & Shivapasad, 2021; Arya et al, 2021). When the global COVID-19 epidemic indicated an increase in the eCommerce share from 14% to 17%, eWOM was the major factor in consumer decision-making (UNCTAD, 2021; Rani & Shivapasad; 2021). Research has explored the setting of consumer behaviour studies in eWOM and demonstrated a strong link between brand recognition, supplier appraisal, product preference and stakeholder public relations (Chatterjee, 2001; Cox et al., 2008; Dellaracas et al., 2007; Lee et al. 2009, Shivprasad & Rani, 2020).

Consumers worldwide rely more than any other type of communication on the recommendations of other consumers. Consequently, eWOM is one of the decisive criteria to measure the behaviour of a product and stimulates buying intent (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). However, the ability of eWOM reviews to influence consumer's purchase intention is frequently questioned due to the possibility of manipulation by sellers and fakeness. There is a lack of process to ensure the quality of eWOM. Consumers find it difficult to evaluate eWOM reviews and suggestions (Weitzl, 2016). As a result, the most fundamental interrogation in assessing the effectiveness and influence of eWOM communications is whether consumers believe the source, review message and platform of eWOM communication (Li & Chen, 2022; Rani & Shivaparad, 2021).

To determine the successful adoption of the eWOM of electronic consumer goods source related factors, message content-related factors, platform-related factors and receiver-related factors are presented in several past studies (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Rani & Shivapasad, 2018; Van, 2021). The research field of eWOM studies was built on the basic foundation of WOM communication. eWOM has developed in number, complexity, purpose and measurement in the current stage (Ismagilova et al., 2016; Weitzl, 2016). Additionally, the current eWOM measurement must revisit its construct in a newer context like emerging markets, where eWOM consumption and involvement have increased enormously over the past decade (Zhang et al, 2016; Rani & Shivapasad, 2021; Sharma & Gupta, 2021). Therefore, this study aims to respond to quantifying the elements affecting the persuasiveness of eWOM on

purchasing intention by using the fragmented items of the eWOM scale. The current study will provide a comprehensive understanding of factors which differentiate the quality of eWOM.

To date, researchers have employed WOM scales to quantify eWOM communication in rich nations, which is inadequate as eWOM differs from conventional WOMs in terms of creation and consumption in developing countries (Goyette, 2010; Nam et al., 2020). The study will also provide a deeper understanding to eWOM researchers and practitioners in the comprehensive operationalisation of the eWOM construct.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

EWOM can be defined as the informal communication directed at consumers through internet-enabled technology related to the usages or characteristics of particular goods and services or a particular seller. As eWOM is a key component of Industry 4.0's marketing environment, a growing number of consumers read and share information about their experiences on the Internet (Daowd et al., 2021; Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020). Perhaps, most critically, the eWOM can affect potential customer's buying decisions and, later, their profitability (O'Reilly et al., 2016; Van, 2021). So consumers need to understand what, how and why information on their product experiences has been distributed on the Internet, and ever significant is for a marketer to understand the power of eWOM. Therefore, the factors that can contribute to establishing the eWOM measurement mechanism are imperative to study at current times. Therefore, the identification of perceived dimensions to measure eWOM adoption for product purchase has been prepared and discussed further with the systematic analysis of available literature. The factors examined and identified are related to four dimensions of communication: source-related factors, message-related factors, platform/medium related factors, and receiver related factors.

### Hypothesis Development

The various researchers have considered source credibility, source homophily, message credibility, message quality, website credibility and receiver's characteristics factors under consideration while examining eWOM significance on purchase intention, and

therefore, this study will review the elements in subsequent paragraphs ( Daowd et al., 2021; Ngarmwongnoi et al., 2020; O'Reilly et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2018; Wern et al., 2016; Rani & Shivaprasad, 2018).

### **2.1 eWOM source credibility**

An eWOM sender is a contact source for eWOM messages. The perceived utility of eWOM communication as a whole is affected by the author's credibility. When there is a high degree of trust, the reader or recipient views the source as credible, erudite, and dependable (Nahed Al-Haidari, 2014; Daowd et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2022c). These include credible sources, information about the sources, degree of reliance on sources, and type of source (Menkveld, 2013; Arya et al., 2018; Ismagilova et al., 2020; Shivaprasad & Rani, 2020). It is critical for the credibility of the source of the eWOM message to be built when the eWOM message recipient is processing the message (Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009; Muda & Hamzah, 2021). The eWOM results get better when the message author has extensive experience. To assess the author's knowledge, look for his or her consistent use of product-related technical jargon. When it comes to eWOM, this trust can be the foundation that new enterprises can use to get a foothold in the market (Chaparro-Peláez, 2015). Source credibility impacts the purchase intention and brand image of products (Shivaprasad & Rani, 2020; Siddiqui et al., 2021).

**H1: Source credibility in eWOM communication has a significant relationship with purchase intention.**

### **2.2 eWOM and homophily**

Homophily is a critical indicator of Word of mouth communication effectiveness (Bruyn & Lilien, 2004; Jalees et al., 2015; Rani & Shivaprasad, 2018; Steffers, 2009). Homophily has been connected to the source of persuasive communication in eWOM research as a realistic element in creating and affecting relationships. According to research, people like identical people increase their interpersonal attractiveness and persuasion (McLaughlin, 2012; Arya et al., 2018; Rani et al., 2021). Homophily is the degree to which individuals are identical in terms of their age, gender, education, and social status (Chaung & Thadani, 2012; Ismagilova et al., 2020;

Suwandee et al., 2019). Previous literature has shown a significant relationship with purchase intention when sources exhibit similarities to receivers (Kulkarni, 2017; Muda & Hamzah, 2021). Source Homophily has an impact on the eWOM recipient's attention, persuasion, and credibility.

**H2: Source homophily in eWOM communication has a significant relationship with purchase intention.**

### **2.3 eWOM message credibility & message quality**

EWOM communications traditionally vary from WOM communication as the messages are written, viral and timeless across regional borders. Several studies examined the message characteristics, and text message analysis was performed better to understand the message's effect on eWOM adoption (Li et al., 2022). Yayli and Bayram (2012) stated that Valence, volume, presence, consistency, emotion, and ratings are eWOM message characteristics that affect its effectiveness (Arya et al. 2018; Rani & Shivaprasad, 2019; Hanaysha et al., 2021).

**H3: eWOM message credibility has a significant relationship with purchase intention.**

An eWOM message's characteristics are determined by its quality, volume, accuracy, emotions, content, and rating (Saremi, 2014; Ismagilova et al., 2019). The evaluation of the elements of the eWOM letter, presentation, and argument promotes credibility and encourages eWOM adoption (Menkveld, 2013). The message quality of eWOM communication is often regarded as a determining factor of eWOM influence (Rani & Shivaprasad, 2021)

**H4: eWOM message quality has a significant relationship with purchase intention.**

### **2.4 eWOM platform**

A channel or medium is required for a communication process to take place. Although various platforms provide eWOM, they can be narrowly divided into two types: provider-generated and third-party generated (Saremi, 2014). Lack of specificity in terms of platform category is the main problem with many of the eWOM measurement approaches (social media vs UGC vs online reviews on e-tailing). Online reviews on e-tailing are also

known as “the exchange of information between [consumers] online via reviews of products or services on the electronic retailing website.” (Gerdt et al., 2019, p. 155) For most researchers, social media posts from friends and followers have been a unit of analysis (Huang et al., 2010; Rani & Shivaparasd, 2022; jain et al., 2021; Jhamb et al., 2021). However, there are significant distinctions between these three platforms, and, as a result, they have substantial consequences for enterprises (Agarwal et al., 2021; Agarwal & Mewafarosh, 2021). Therefore, the new measurement should take into consideration the platform characteristics in review. Existing research takes the popularity and reliability of websites where eWOM appears as a significant influence on eWOM adoption & its effectiveness (Sijoria, 2018; Rani & Shivaprasad, 2018).

**H5: eWOM platform credibility has a significant impact on purchase intention.**

### 2.5 Receiver's Characteristics

A receiver is an individual who adapts to eWOM communication. The effectiveness of eWOM information received varies depending on how a person perceives a received message. There are specific characteristics of the receiver that affect eWOM communication (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Consumers’ need for cognition, market skepticism, personal cause, and demographic characteristics all contribute to eWOM communication efficacy. The ‘need for cognition is already a well-studied subject in psychology (Cacioppo, 1996; Rani & Shivaprasad, 2022). The research demonstrates that the ‘consumer’s level of cognitive need’ determines their motivation to assess eWOM (Srivastava & Sharma, 2012; Saremi, 2014). Market skepticism, personal triggers, and demographic characteristics all affect how consumers evaluate eWOM messages.

**H6: The receiver's Characteristics have a significant impact on purchase intention.**

**Table 1: Definition of eWOM measurement scale dimensions**

Dimensions	Definition
eWOM	Any comments made by real consumers about a product or a brand that is made publicly available through the Internet

	(HennigThurau, 2004: Rani & Shivprasad, 2021).
Message Credibility	Consumer’s perception of the reliability of the content of eWOM messages (Menkveld, 2013)
Source Credibility	Consumer’s perception about the trustworthiness of the source of eWOM message (Cheung et al., 2008; Weerawit et a., 2014)
Receiver’s Characteristics	Receiver’s physiological characteristics which affect the information adoption process through eWOM (Rani & Shivprasad, 2022)
Source Homophily	The degree of similarity between the source of eWOM and the receiver of eWOM (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Neumann, 2015)
Message Quality	The strength and expression in the eWOM message (Yayli & Bayram, 2012)
Website credibility	Consumer’s perception of the trustworthiness of the website, where eWOM is posted (Almana & Mirza, 2013)
eWOM adoption	Consumers’ consideration and then acceptance of communicator opinions (Li & Zhan, 2011)
eWOM effectiveness	The degree to which consumers adopt, form an attitude and make a purchase decision after evaluating the eWOM message (Rani & Shivapasad, 2021).

### The eWOM Effectiveness

The eWOM is a valuable tool for generating a response to the product in the market. In recent years, researchers have begun to examine the impact of eWOM on consumer behaviour and business outcomes (Godes & Mayzlin, 2004). If the eWOM correspondence contains useful information, it will elicit a positive response (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Li et al., 2022). Popular eWOM communication outcomes include attitudes (positive or negative), intention to buy and purchase (King et al., 2014; Sharma et al., 2021, 2022a, 2022b).

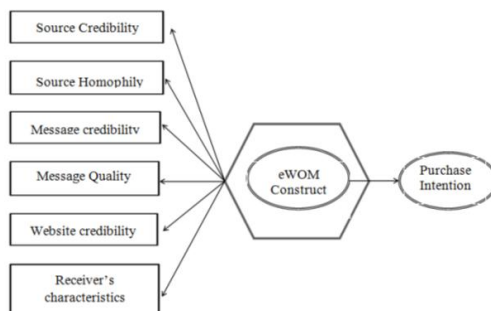
Cheung (2005) attempted to create and validate a connection between attitude, purchase intentions, and purchase. The results suggest that attitudes significantly influence purchasing intention (Sharma et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2018), while online purchase intentions positively impact purchases (Rashid et al., 2022). Additionally, the principle of reasoned action supports these relationships (Hussain et al., 2018). The adoption of eWOM

is advantageous for both online and offline product purchases (Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009; Zhao et al., 2020).

According to researchers, the usefulness of information has an important influence on the development of eWOM (Cheung et al., 2005; Liu and Zhang, 2010; Sijoria, 2018). eWOM is the trace of early buyer purchases and customer experiences that affect long-term consumer behaviour. eWOM creation has ancestries in social communication systems and eWOM selection is rooted in personal preference; thus, to realise the complete outcome for eWOM effectiveness, it is desirable to take the factors associated with the source, message, medium and the receiver (Li & Hitt, 2008).

To summarise, Cheung et al. (2009), Cheung & Thadani, 2012 and Rani & Shivaprasad (2019) detailed the factors influencing eWOM. Hening-Tharou et al. (2004) examined eWOM utilizing consumer access to information on Internet platforms and attempted to understand the motivators behind Internet consumer expressions. Because people want to connect and want to be helpful to others, eWOM is almost always driven by social motives. The foundation of social cognitive theory supports the argument that human beliefs exercise measure control over their intentions and actions (Lee, Kim & Kim, 2012). In order to evaluate the credibility of eWOM, Cheung et al. (2009) evaluated information and normative determinants. Based on the above discussion about the factors contributing to eWOM adoption and its effectiveness on purchase decisions, the research provides a basic model in line with social cognitive theory. The dimension of each independent variable on the dependent variable has been examined.

**Fig. 1: Conceptual Model of eWOM effectiveness**



The conceptual model represents the network of directional relationships. The construct of eWOM adoption is reflected by six indicators driven by a detailed literature review that influence consumer’s purchase decisions. The literature has been helpful to collect the items about these factors and represented in the section below and the methodology followed during this research.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Instrument

eWOM has been studied theoretically and empirically as a noteworthy information source that has a remarkable influence on each stage of the consumer decision-making process. However, the influence of eWOM communication in marketing research has been patchy, and a complete manual to understand the effectiveness of eWOM is lacking. A superior difficulty is that measurement scales are not entirely customised to the latest electronic version of WOM communication; thus, measuring the factors which affect eWOM adoption for a purchase decision is not available (Goyette, 2010). Multiple research work highlights the measurement scale on fewer dimensions & construct, which keep the complete picture shielded.

The present study has taken a construct of eWOM with various dimensions of factors, which affect eWOM adoption for product purchase and treats all dimensions’ measurement scales as a measurement of the uni-dimensional construct to quantity the overall effectiveness of eWOM communication. The research instrument under consideration incorporates seven dimensions of eWOM effectiveness: Purchase Intention, Source credibility, source homophily, message credibility, eWOM message quality, receiver’s characteristics and website credibility. Even though these dimensions can be separated conceptually, they may be correlated with each other for the effectiveness of the eWOM communication process.

The measurement scale under investigation is the pool of items for above mentioned seven dimensions, verified in the earlier study (Wood and Swait, 2002; Awasthy & Banerjee, 2012; Yayli & Bayram, 2012; Bas Menkveld, 2013; Almana & Mirza, 2013; Yin et al., 2014;

Lee et al.,2013; Van, 2021). Initially, forty-one items have been taken after modifying them as per the context. The content validity has been verified by meeting two industry experts who manage reviews at the e-taling website. To ensure face validity, a random sample of 17 customers has been considered and (Sharma, 2021) based on their recommendation. Some statements were changed for creating better meaning. For all the dimensions, a 5-point Likert scale has been incorporated, ranging from strongly agree (5) to disagree (1) strongly and for 'Receiver's characteristics' as well as 'prior knowledge, the scale has been ranged from not at all like me (1) to like me (5) completely like me. Finally, a sample study on 50 representatives of the population, chosen conveniently, helped eliminate the undesirable items for the study.

#### ***Participants & Procedure***

The study has been narrowed in scope by considering online reviews (one form of eWOM) presented on online retail websites (a third-party platform for eWOM) to purchase electronic products in India. The universe for the study has been decided as a consumer who gives or seeks online reviews. Further, the three popular online retailer websites customer has been identified as the sampling frame. The 41-item eWOM scale to know the factors influencing eWOM adoption in purchase decisions has been administered approximately to 1700 customers selected randomly from existing customer's data set (Amazon, Flipkart and Paytm), gathered for this research purpose. Out of all prospect 1700 participants, 574 responses have been received. A total of 357 participant's responses from the data set were used for exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and 574 for Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and Structural equational modelling (SEM).

The items-sample ratio has been kept higher than 1:10 to get the measurement scale tested (Nunnally, 1978; Hair et al., 2015). Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is 0.89, representing that the sample is appropriate for conducting the initial factor analysis. To validate the measurement scale in social sciences, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is commonly used, especially when the research instrument is adopted for the first time (Isabel, Julio, & Francisco, 2014). EFA has

been executed using SPSS to check the internal consistency of the dimensions of scale. Several iterations of EFA have been conducted with Promax rotation because it was expected that the eWOM effectiveness scale's dimensions are correlated with each other (Hair, 2015; Sharma & Gupta, 2021).

The iteration of EFA has been conducted to confirm the multi-dimensionality of scale using an eigenvalue of more than one and suppressing factors loading less than 0.30. In the outcome, six-factor loading was generated, explaining 59.87 % of the variance extracted from the total variance. However, five-factor loading was low, and two factors showed cross-loadings in multiple dimensions, leading to dropping these items from the scale in consideration, leaving retained item as 33. All the retained items of seven dimensions with their reliability analysis are represented in Table 2.

#### **4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

The EFA has been conducted using principal axis factoring with Promax rotation to obtain the results. The main goal here has been set to know the common variance shared by correlated variables. The 33-item scale has been retained after scale refinement and used to confirm the findings. The iteration of EFA has been conducted by using an eigenvalue of more than one and suppressing factors loading less than 0.30. To observe the pattern matrix, seven-factor loading generated has been kept, which explains 59.07 % of variance extracted from the total variance. However, one item with cross-loading has been excepted by considering solid theoretical support. There are seven factors in response. Factors "Source credibility" and "source homophily" is related to the author characteristics of the eWOM message. Similarly, "Message credibility" and "Message quality" represented the desirable characteristics of eWOM messages.

On the other hand, eWOM receiver is also embodied by "Receiver's prior knowledge" and "Receiver's characteristics". The last factor is related to medium, which represents eWOM message, named "website credibility". These factors individually work as the latent variable for the individual items and contribute to eWOM effectiveness illustrated in Fig. 1.

**Table 2: Measurement Scale of eWOM effectiveness, Descriptive Results, Internal consistency & Reliability of Scale**

Author	Dimension	Item Name	Item	Scale	Mean	SD	AVE (Avg. variance Extracted)	Composite Reliability	Alpha Value
Bas Menkveld (2013)	Source Credibility	SC 1	I feel that the reviewer is honest in providing accurate information about the product.	5 point Likert Scale	3.4	0.98	0.515	0.88	0.90
		SC 2	I trust reviews that appear with the real name and e-mail id of the author than a nickname.						
		SC 3	I trust reviews that appear with an accurate profile pic of the author.						
		SC 4	I trust a review if the author is knowledgeable about the product I want to purchase.						
		SC 5	I feel the reviewer is Knowledgeable if he/she uses technical jargon and terminology in language about the product which I want to purchase.						
		SC 6	I feel the reviewer is Knowledgeable if he/she uses the example of the functional key area of the electronic product I want to purchase.						
		SC 7	I trust a review if the author is a professional user of the product I want to purchase.						
Almana & Mirza (2013)	Source Homophily	SH 1	I believe in online review only if it is given by the person I know.	5 point Likert Scale	3	1.03	0.607	0.85	0.86
		SH 2	I can trust more on the product review if the author's age is similar to mine. (The reviewer's age affects my purchase decision.)						
		SH 3	I can trust more on the product review more if the author's geographic residence is similar to mine. (The reviewer's residence geography affects my purchase decision.)						
		SH 4	I can trust more on the product review if the author's gender is the same as mine. (The reviewer's gender affects my purchase decision.)						
Yayli & Bayram (2012)	Message Credibility	MC 1	The impact of positive reviews online has a greater effect on my purchasing decision.	5 point Likert Scale	3.36	0.94	0.598	0.87	0.88

		MC 2	The impact of negative reviews online has a greater effect on my purchasing decision.						
		MC 3	The online review, which consists of information about both positive and negative aspects of the product, affects my purchase decision.						
		MC 4	The number of product reviews affects my purchase decision.						
		MC 5	Recent product reviews posted on the website affect my purchase decision.						
		MC 6	The overall rating of a product affects my purchase decision.						
		MC 7	If the product rating is high (4 and above out of 5), I don't read reviews.						
		MC 8	Consistency of all reviews posted on the website affects my purchase decision.						
Yin et al. (2014), Bas Menkveld (2013)	Message Quality	MQ 1	Emotional expression in the reviews affects my emotions about the product for the purchase decision.	5 point Likert Scale	3.08	0.97	0.59	0.86	0.79
		MQ 2	An argument, which is valid in supporting its valance (Negative or positive) affect my purchase decision.						
		MQ 3	The spelling errors and poor grammar of the online review affect my purchase decision.						
Wood and Swait (2002), Lee, Jinhee (2013)	Receiver's Characteristics	RC 1	I try to anticipate and avoid situations in which there is a likely chance whenever I have to think in-depth about something.	5 point Likert Scale	3.2	0.98	0.581	0.86	0.86
		RC 2	I'd rather do something that takes little consideration than something that would undoubtedly test my cognitive abilities.						
		RC 3	I read only those online reviews which contain information that is relevant to me.						
		RC 4	I read all the consumer reviews and then decide what is relevant to me.						
		RC 5	I don't trust people quickly because people are not as honest as they pretend.						
		RC 6	I think People pretend to care more about one another than they do.						
Almana	Website	WC 1	The reliability of the site	5	3.38	0.91	0.515	0.70	0.73

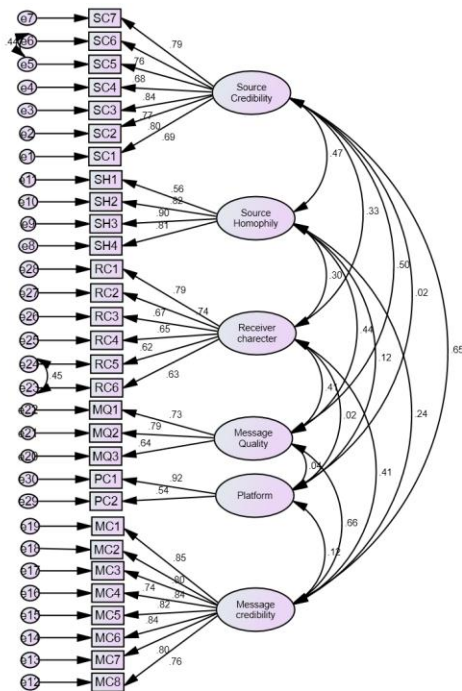


& Mirza (2013)	credibility	WC2	that provides the reviews affects my purchase decision. The dependability of the site that provides the reviews affects my purchase decision.	point Likert Scale					
		WC3	The popularity of the website that displays the reviews affect my purchase decision						

**Results of CFA and SEM**

After completing the dimension reduction process, the measurement scale has been taken to the validation phase. The formative construct comprises six dimensions -Source Credibility, Source Homophily, Message Credibility, Message Quality, Receiver's Characteristic and Website Credibility as determinants of eWOM effectiveness. All the variables represent a first-order formative construct for further analysis.

To validate the construct, CFA using AMOS has been used. The results are shown in Figure 2. The loadings of the items are generally found to be high. In the few cases, they may be low, but they have been kept for further consideration because the previous literature suggested these items may influence eWOM effectiveness.



**Figure 2: The Model with loadings using AMOS.**

The model fit parameters have been achieved and presented in Table 3. The CFA meets the requirements of model fit, the scale stands validated, and the scale in consideration can measure the desired concept of eWOM effectiveness. The Chi-square divided by degrees of freedom values is expected to be less than 3 for a good model fit, which is realised in the presented model results. Whereas the other values like root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), normed fit index (NFI), Tucker-Lewis coefficient index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), the goodness of fit index (GFI) and adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) are at acceptable (Hair et al. 2010). The values are within the acceptable level for acceptance of this model.

**Table 3: Model fit indices**

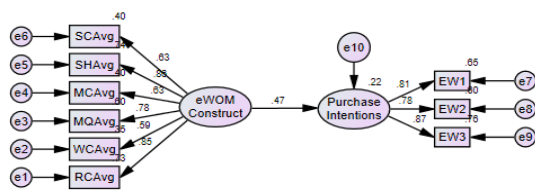
Statistics	Suggested Values (Gefen et al.	Value achieved.
Chi-square	< 5.0	2.930
RMSEA	<= 0.06	0.070
NFI	> 0.90	0.879
TLI	>= 0.95	0.912
CFI	>= 0.95	0.870
GFI	> 0.80	0.847
AGFI	> 0.80	0.810

The chi-square difference test has been done to compare the model fitness of the considered model with constrained models (Gefen et al., 2000). The RMSEA value of the constrained model was higher than this model, which implies that the original model is simple yet better to be perused in future.

Further, the path analysis was done using SPSS AMOS, and regression values are obtained for all the independent variables to purchase intention as the dependent variable.

The Chi-square divided by degrees of freedom values is 3.01, which is as expected for a good model fit. Whereas the other values like root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is 0.061, normed fit index (NFI) is 0.971, Tucker-Lewis coefficient index (TLI) is 0.969, comparative fit index (CFI) is 0.974, the goodness of fit index (GFI) is 0.968 and adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) is 0.942, and all are at the indication of good fit (Hair et al. 2010). The values are within the acceptable level for acceptance of this model.

Figure 3: The SEM Model



Additionally, the regression estimates are presented in table 4, and all the paths are significant in the model proposed to conceptualise the eWOM construct in predicting purchase intention.

Composite Reliability (CR), and Cronbach's Alpha values for all items under one dimension are shown in Table 2.

The convergent validity, represented by AVE, is also greater than 0.5 for all the dimensions, which is needed statistically to know the measurement scale's convergent validity for further model making. The composite reliability, which is more than 0.7 for all the dimensions, shows good reliability of the measures under consideration. Further, the paper explains the meaning of research.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

The eWOM is a significant phenomenon on the Internet, and it has amazing marketing and economic consequences (Shu-Chuan & Yoojung, 2015). Particularly, in the time of COVID-19 pandemics, it has created a greater impact on consumer behaviour. Although there is a great quantity of study on WOM and eWOM, there are still considerable research gaps in this field. One of the key research gaps in eWOM comprehensive understanding to identify the eWOM effectiveness on purchase intention. There is a lack of getting validated measurement scales items through research

Table 4: Standard Regression weightage and Path Significance

Path Indication		Std. Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Purchase Intentions	<--- eWOM_Construct	.482	.054	9.581	***
RC_A	<--- eWOM_Construct	.807	.053	10.843	***
WC_A	<--- eWOM_Construct	.612	.050	13.927	***
MQ_A	<--- eWOM_Construct	.804	.059	18.092	***
MC_A	<--- eWOM_Construct	.606	.050	13.742	***
SH_A	<--- eWOM_Construct	.816	.044	25.232	***
SC_A	<--- eWOM_Construct	.604	.051	13.691	***
EW1	<--- Purchase Intentions	.808	.049	13.742	***
EW3	<--- Purchase Intentions	.868	.054	20.339	***
EW2	<--- Purchase Intentions	.775	.044	18.898	***

The descriptive results, internal consistency & reliability of the measurement scale is a significant parameters to show while performing EFA (Isabel, Julio, & Francisco, 2014). The factor loading is shown in the above table, all dimensions are more than 0.5, which is good. Further, MS Excel has been used to calculate the mean, Standard deviation (SD), average variance extracted (AVE),

papers (Goyette, 2010). So this study has intended to quantifying the elements affecting the persuasiveness of eWOM on purchasing intention by using the fragmented items of the eWOM scale in context of emerging markets. The current study found six variable and its dimensions to examine eWOM effectiveness and elaborated on the items behind the latent variable's (Purchase intention) assessment.

Overall, the source credibility, source homophily, message credibility, message quality, website credibility and receiver characteristics has significant relationship in determining purchase intention in context of Indian online retailers. This advancement in eWOM understanding has various theoretical and practical ramifications.

### ***Theoretical contribution***

This research aims to evaluate whether existing eWOM constructs are sustainable or not in the present communication environment in predicting purchase intention, given considerable changes in electronic communication situation (Litvin et al. 2018). The findings highlight several deficiencies in the current eWOM outlook (Daoud et al., 2021; Arya et al., 2018). Many prior researches, were imitated to source and message credibility whereas, this study included website credibility as an influential factor in determining effectiveness eWOM communication. Receiver's characteristics were often ignored in credibility formation. This study has taken four different receiver's characteristics as a valid sub-construct and analyse the significant outcomes. First, Source credibility has been found to be direct association with purchase intention. Many previous research, such as Daoud et al., 2021; Menkveld, 2013; Arya et al., 2018; Ismagilova et al., 2020; Shivprasad & Rani, 2020. Source homophily is also revealed to be a key antecedent of the purchase intention which is consistent with previous research (McLaughlin, 2012; Rani et al., 2021).

The next dimension of our construct is message characteristics and message quality. The results of SEM analysis has proved that there is a significant impact of message characteristics and message quality on purchase intention. In other words, Message Valence, Message Volume, Message Rating, and Consistency in the message will influence the purchase intention positively. Additionally, message Argument Quality and Emotions expressed in the message has significant relationship with purchase intention. These findings are similar with the research evidence of Hanaysha & Momani, 2021 in developed economics.

Besides, the other variable of study is website credibility. The dimension of website credibility is measured from three observed

variables named as website popularity, website reliability and website attractiveness. The results of SEM analysis has proved that there is a significant impact of website credibility on purchase intention in context of online retail websites. The effectiveness of eWOM communication is also dependent on receiver's own characteristics. The factors like 'Need for cognition' 'lack of consumer scepticism' and 'relevance' influences the consumer's purchase intention towards product (Srivastava & Sharma, 2012; Saremi, 2014). More the receiver is sceptical about general things in life, less they will rely on eWOM communication. This study has contributed to theory by empirically testing model of eWOM communication which was developed by systematically executed literature review.

The revalidation and construction of an adequate measuring scale is also an outcome of the result. The study identifies the structure of the efficiency of eWOM in its six separate elements. The SEM shows how "source credibility" is perceived with seven important items, "source homophily" with four important items, "message credibility" with eight significant items, "message trust" with three key items, "receiver featuring six key items and "web site trust" with two important items after dimensions. The CFA and SEM findings are good and result in conceptual model validation (Goyette, 2010; Lee, Kim & Kim, 2012).

In the study of Goyette (2010), the variables 'Message Valence,' 'eWOM Intensity' and 'Content' were used to assess efficiency in eWOMs and Shivaprasad & Rani, 2020; Lopez & Sicilia, 2014, has used 'Source Credibility.' In similar cases, the efficiency of eWOM was examined by 'Website type' variables 'Message volume' (Lopez & Sicilia, 2014), 'Trust' (Trust), 'Homophily' (Hansen & Lee, 2013), 'Perceived value' (Hidayanto et al., 2017) and 'Usefulness of eWOM' (Chuang et al., 2008; Sharma & Gupta, 2021). However, the present study has combined and measured a lot of factors using a suitable statistical process for measuring eWOM inclusively on one scale. Furthermore, operationalisation of eWOM concept might be much better in terms of theory and practice.

### ***Managerial Implications***

Furthermore, the study moved beyond the simple systemic analysis of eWOM

communication and examined in detail emergent aspects to provide future guidance for research. Marketers should encourage the development of eWOM strategies pertaining to factors. The study recommends the marketers to design and manage a consumer review system. This consumer review system will strengthen the visibility of eWOM communication in more systematically manner and help in identifying the ineffective processes and unsatisfied consumer. The research confirms the role of 'eWOM Source and eWOM message credibility' that is why a personalized template can be provided along with reviewers detail purchase information and some personal attributes (By protecting stealing of personal data) to write a review of their experiences. online retailing sites could provide a review format and guidelines with appropriate product/service dimensions that allow reviewers to express both positive and negative feedbacks. Besides, this study offers a new measurement scale to capture the strength of eWOM communication on an online retail website. This research will help practitioners establish future strategies to measure the capacity of eWOM communication and to raise the number of eWOM givers on diverse online platforms. The eWOM measurements model will capture consumer purchase intention and assist brand managers to analyse enormous amounts of information to better leverage the benefits. In addition, this study offers insights into the huge potential of eWOM for brand building professionals.

#### ***Research limitations and future research directions***

The SEM performed in the study shows good internal consistency, reliability and sample adequacy. All the sub-construct in the model exhibits a good correlation with the main construct which is eWOM effectiveness. However, CFA & SEM is just the beginning to operationalise a measurement through extracted variables; further discriminant validity & nomological validity can be performed with SEM results. In nomological validity, the researcher can compare at least two constructs for any possible linkage. Although the research has satisfactory statistical results, they may be limited by this study's sample choice and common method biases. The second-order formative construct can be measured in future studies to assure

better outcomes. One significant limitation of the study can be a common data source since the data for all the variables are collected by the consumer who seeks or gives eWOM via the Internet. The study, therefore, recommends that data be collected from different sources for the receiver's characteristics and the receiver's prior knowledge.

eWOM has been assumed as a unbiased and truthful content in research studies. However, by knowing the persuasiveness potential, a lot of undesirable content in name of eWOM has been spread. These manipulated eWOM messages are created with the intention of generating undue influence to the receiver's. eWOM messages on Internet have not been clearly differentiated which will lower down the credibility in whole eWOM communication. This opens a stimulating area of eWOM research on the diffusion of false information and its impact on consumer attitude. Besides, the eWOM construct operationalisation is too general. It does not consider the types of source, types of platform, types of receivers and their influence on the motive and engagement of eWOM communication. The author suspects that with the future growth of eWOM communication, the research needs to be very deep on specific factors. Therefore, future scholars can take such studies that can compare and evaluate various sources of eWOM and various platforms of eWOM on eWOM effectiveness construct.

#### **CONCLUSION**

This research provides an in-depth analysis of the current state of knowledge on the subject of eWOM communication studies. Different research indicates that eWOM mass investigations are an extension of prior WOM studies. Consumers are clearly dependent on eWOM to make their purchasing decisions, either directly or indirectly. The consumer suggestions for new companies are particularly important and allow them to achieve a sufficient basis for their customers. Another reason why this research is a pressing necessity in the context of Indian eCommerce is the rising online consumer base. The conceptual framework in the research explains the independent, dependent variable for the measurement of eWOM efficiency. This research investigates eWOM's perspective on

the source, message, medium and receiver to provide a whole picture of eWOM communication during the COVID-19 epidemic. Studying eWOM will make informed decisions and work for marketers and customers to achieve global well-being. The creation of good eWOM communication will enable new online enterprises to build up their market.

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