"The Influence of Electronic Word of Mouth on Online Purchasing: A Bhubaneswar Perspective"

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Abstract

Electronic word of mouth (EWom) has become a crucial communication tool in the digital age. The importance of online reviews and ratings on consumers has increased recently. The study's primary goal is to determine how certain eWom characteristics, such as eWom message consistency, eWom content platform, and eWom valency, affect the popularity of a product and the level of customer participation that influences consumers' intentions to make a purchase. The study is intended to know the impact of factors of eWom on the purchase intention of online buyers in Bhubaneswar. The study was tested on 201 respondents through a cluster sampling method with a structured questionnaire. The regression analysis approach was utilized to analyze the objective and obtain the findings. It revealed that the EWom content platform and Information credibility strongly impact buyers' purchase intention. Information credibility plays a vital role in the purchase decisions of buyers.

Keywords: EWom Message Consistency, EWom Valency, EWom Content Platform, Information Credibility, Product Popularity.

1. Introduction

A review of a movie, book, product, university, professor, or even an employer may be simply and swiftly uploaded online nowadays, reaching thousands of people. In the last several decades, any consumption-related information conveyed by a consumer reached very few individuals. The use of the internet to compile, post, and get attention by sharing one's experiences with others orally and graphically is referred to as "eWom.". It occurs through online platforms such as social media, Brand communities, blogs, and consumer message boards. The term "Electronic Word of Mouth" (eWom) communication refers to the dissemination of knowledge, viewpoints, and advice among customers via online forums, social media, and other digital platforms. In the digital era, it significantly shapes customer impressions and influences buying behavior. eWom may spread quickly to a large audience and have an adverse effect on sales and brand reputation (Rani, A., & Shivaprasad, H.N. 2019). Today's marketplace is highly influenced by the internet, which has changed the consumer's purchase decision. Consumers are not confined only to marketers-generated information through advertisements or sales professionals. Instead, they look upon the reviews on sites such as Amazon, Trip Advisor, or flip kart, find more information, and check customer feedback and reviews. They view other people's recommendations and ratings about a particular product or service. The car company Mercedes utilized Instagram to launch its "Take the Wheel" campaign, letting buyers choose a new automobile's look. The campaign received 87 million Instagram impressions and significantly boosted visitors to the brand's website. A product launch "can be made or broken by EWom." The attitude, not the quantity or the content, is what counts, according to Oakland, California-based writer Matt Palmquist.

According to a survey by Amazon, it was found that the impact of online customer reviews in word-of-mouth communication through modern media known as eWom is immensely powerful. It was shown that 79% of customers trust online reviews more than personal recommendations, 85% indicate they check online reviews for local businesses, and 73% claimed that online reviews with good customer feedback increase their confidence (World stream .com, Nov 22, 2021). Marketers are now able to communicate directly through quality content that meets a consumer's expectations when they come across the company or product online by following others on the site and reading the reviews and ratings posted

there before. Nowadays people's attention has shortened due to technology saturation and consumers want genuine recommendations from friends and relatives who can give them honest opinions about products instead of fancy paid advertisements with flashy images from brands that they don't care about. EWom is an inexpensive and effective strategy that has helped marketers reach customers throughout the globe online.

1.1. EWom Message Consistency

WOM (Electronic Word of Mouth) message consistency refers to the degree to which the messages about a particular product, service, or brand are consistent across various online platforms where consumers express their opinions and experiences. In other words, when consumers share their opinions about a product or service on different online platforms such as social media, blogs, review sites, etc., the consistency of the message they convey is important. If the messages are consistent across different platforms Consumers are more likely to trust consistent messages from credible sources (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Electronic Word of Mouth (eWom) refers to the exchange of consumer opinions, recommendations, and experiences through digital platforms like social media, online reviews, blogs, and forums. eWom message consistency is the extent to which the information conveyed through eWom remains uniform and coherent across different sources and interactions. Consistency in eWom messages is crucial as it influences consumers' trust, credibility, and purchase decisions (Liu & Park, 2015).

1.2. EWom Content Platform

An "EWom content platform" is a platform that facilitates the creation, sharing, and distribution of user-generated content that promotes products or services through electronic word-of-mouth. Such a platform could include social media platforms like Instagram or YouTube, where users create and share content promoting products or services to their followers. It could also include review sites like Yelp or Trip Advisor, where users write and share reviews of products or services, influencing potential customers' decisions. Other examples of EWom content platforms could include influencer marketing platforms that connect brands with influencers who promote their products or services to their followers, or online communities like Reddit or Quora where users share recommendations and advice on products or services. The increasing research interest in mixed eWom and rich eWom content and market-level source credibility factors is a pioneering attempt in eWom research (Gobinda Roy, B. Datta, S. Mukherjee, A. Shrivastava,2022). Online reviews from tourism-specific websites and other electronic channels do influence tourists' decisions in all aspects (Raksmey Sann, Pei-Chun Lai, Chi-Ting Chen,2020).

1.3. EWom Valency

"EWom valency" refers to the emotional tone or sentiment expressed in electronic word-of-mouth (eWom) messages. It is an important factor that influences how eWom is received by its audience and how effective it is in driving consumer behavior. The valency of EWom can be positive, negative, or neutral, depending on the content and the emotions expressed in the message. Positive valency eWom refers to messages that express satisfaction, excitement, or enthusiasm about a product or service, while negative valency eWom expresses dissatisfaction, disappointment, or frustration. Neutral valency EWom, on the other hand, refers to messages that are objective and do not express a strong emotional tone. The price perception of an item was found to be less acceptable when eWom was inconsistent compared to when eWom was absent or was positive (Liang, W.K., & Corkindale, D. 2018). The increasing research interest in mixed eWom and rich eWom content and market-level source credibility factors is a pioneering attempt in eWom research (Roy, G., Datta, B.K., Mukherjee, S., & Shrivastava, A.K. 2022).

1.4. Product Popularity

Product popularity refers to the level of demand and interest that consumers have in a particular product. A popular product is widely known, well-liked, and frequently purchased by consumers. Popularity can be measured in several ways, including sales volume, customer reviews, social media mentions, and search engine traffic. High popularity can indicate that a product meets the needs and desires of a large segment of consumers, is perceived as valuable or desirable, and has a strong brand image. Understanding product popularity is important for businesses because it can inform product

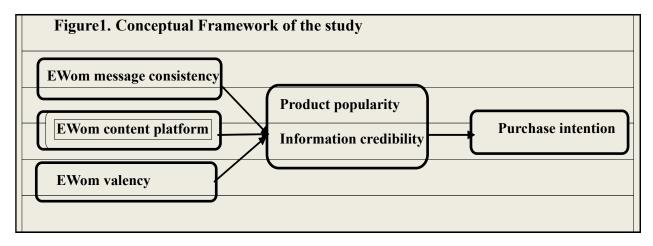
development, marketing strategies, and pricing decisions. Online consumer reviews have a causal impact on the consumer purchasing behavior of electronic products (Yayli, A., & Bayram, M.,2010). Review consensus has a positive impact on e-WOM and e-purchase satisfaction for consumer goods Cuong, P.H. 2020).

1.5. Information Credibility

Information credibility refers to the degree to which information is trustworthy, accurate, and reliable. It is important to evaluate the credibility of information before using it to make decisions or draw conclusions. The recommendations for future online credibility education and practice are provided to assist users in locating reliable information online (Metzger, M.J. 2007). Different types of credibility assessment are taken into account by online readers as a process to decide whether a trust relationship would concur between them and the source of the information based on the quality of the information and the reputation or quality of the source (Shariff, S.M. 2020). The persuasive role of information/content credibility on the information adoption behavior of social media users was reviewed (Khan, A.M., Soroya, S.H., & Mahmood, K. 2022).

1.6 Conceptual Framework of Study

For the research, we have narrowed down six important factors that influence the Purchase intention of buyers online. eWom factors comprise message consistency, Content Platform, and valency which affect the two other factors they are Product popularity and information credibility which puts an impact on the Purchase intention of buyers. Against the above backdrop, it is observed that eWom not only spreads information faster but also creates a positive impact on sales and purchase intention of buyers. Most of the research has been done in the Western context and very few in the Indian context related to eWom. Therefore, the study aims to provide a comprehensive road map that identifies and explains the various factors and mechanisms through which eWom influences consumers' purchase intentions. By establishing this conceptual model, the research seeks to enhance the understanding of the complex relationship between eWom and purchase intention, shedding light on the underlying processes and offering valuable insights for businesses and marketers to effectively harness the power of eWom in influencing consumer behavior and decision-making. The whole concept under the study is depicted in the diagram shown below.



2. Literature Review

It has been evident from the previous works of literature that if the product meets the expectations of the consumers it leads to positive disconfirmation and if the product doesn't meet the expectations it leads to negative disconfirmation which generates consumer dissatisfaction (Oliver 1977). Consumers' attachment to their online community encourages them to share their experiences on online consumer opinion platforms through online reviews and feedback (Cheung & Lee, 2012). Online reviews and website reviews have helped retain consumers by giving positive and negative eWom content (Nam et al., 2020). Potential customers' buying decisions are influenced by user-generated material because they prefer traditional advertising to it since they believe it to be more honest and transparent. Negative eWom can force companies to enhance their product offers and customer support, while positive eWom can considerably increase sales and brand reputation. Online merchants may create brand loyalty, strengthen consumer connections, and gain a competitive edge in the digital

market by utilizing eWom successfully (Khwaja, M.G., & Zaman, U. 2020). However, it is unavoidable that customers evaluate the value of information quality and credibility of the person who is sharing it. As per the Elaboration likelihood model, there are two types of routes to influence a person, the Central route and the peripheral route (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In the context of EWom the consumers who are involved in the low involvement process with low-priced affordable products are said to be engaged in the peripheral route, and they focus on non-content cues such as an indication of product popularity. Whereas in the case of a high-involvement process with luxurious products, the consumers adopt the central route because the review and comments are of significant importance to them (Park & Lee, 2008). First, senders and receivers may be distinguished among the participants in this process. Senders are the people who create eWom, while receivers are the intended audience who receive and process the messages. Participants' motivation to engage in eWom creation is key. Their openness to sharing ideas and knowledge is influenced by things including personal experiences, product participation, and rewards they perceive. Its impact on recipients becomes clear as eWom spreads through numerous internet channels and social networks. Because they view eWom as more genuine and reliable than conventional advertising, prospective customers frequently depend on it to make educated selections. While bad eWom can have detrimental repercussions, positive eWom can boost brand reputation and increase sales (Yaseen, S., Mazahir, I., Veeriah, J., & Iqbal, I.2021). Hence, in the decision-making process, consumers are more influenced by arguments as they scrutinize the positive reviews and ratings of the product (P. Wang, 2014). An extension to the ELM model was subsequently introduced which projects that information usefulness and the source of information from the website affect online consumers while adopting information online (Cheung & Lee, 2007). People derive intentions towards adopting technology and people with similar intentions develop in adopting a particular idea or behavior as reflected in the Information Adoption Model. A ground-breaking initiative in eWom research is the growing emphasis on mixed eWom and rich eWom content, together with market-level source trust considerations. This innovative strategy intends to investigate how various online consumer opinions and top-notch multimedia material affect how consumers make decisions. And how the reliability and authority of eWom sources affect the dynamics of the market as a whole and customer behavior. This innovative effort promises to reveal fresh information on the difficulties of electronic word-of-mouth and its effects on the online market (Roy, G., Datta, B.K., Mukherjee, S., & Shrivastava, A.K. 2022). Consumers with similar intentions have been observed to adopt knowledge from online review communities, as they are significantly influenced by herd behavior when they follow each other (X. L. Shen et al., 2014). The quality of the information provided in content and the source of information helps the consumers to get useful information which leads to information adoption when the consumers are involved online. Further, the behavioral factors that lead the consumer to use the technology and their acceptance of the technology were developed by the TAM model (Fred Davis, 1989, Bagozzi, Davis, and Warsaw 1992). The use of keyword co-occurrence has helped researchers in the field of electronic word-of-mouth (eWom) to identify key themes. It offers insights into the evolving patterns and focus points of eWom research through time by tracking thematic progression.

This method gives a thorough knowledge of how various themes and ideas have acquired popularity, assisting academics and industry professionals in their investigation of eWom-related occurrences. By highlighting important areas of interest and potential gaps in the current body of knowledge, co-occurrence pattern analysis supports ongoing development in this dynamic subject (Bhaiswar, R., Meenakshi, N., & Chawla, D. 2021). When the consumer is involved in making a purchase online on social media, they emphasize WOM information quality, credibility, and usefulness. Therefore, the content about the product and services on social media websites helps the consumer to buy the product which leads to customer satisfaction and loyalty. This in turn affects the eWom during purchase (Rouibah et al., 2021). Social media, online reviews, and user-generated content all have the potential to greatly improve an organization's capacity for consumer interaction in the travel sector. Businesses can communicate with their target audience more effectively, forge deeper connections, and cultivate a feeling of authenticity and trust that promotes favorable brand perceptions and consumer loyalty by utilizing these digital channels. Additionally, the viral nature of electronic word-of-mouth may help tourist organizations reach a bigger audience and be more visible, which will eventually enhance consumer engagement and satisfaction levels (Wang, P. 2017).

In the above context, it may be noted that online reviews and ratings play a vital role in guiding customers in their buying choices. Buyers usually go through online reviews and ratings when they are involved online before deciding on a purchase (Khalid et al., 2020). This study would help to attain a greater knowledge about customer involvement in online purchase

which is affected by product expectations that leads them to give positive or negative feedback through an online form known as eWom.

3. Research Objectives and Methodology

Based on the factors identified above as well as the gaps from the above pieces of literature review, the objective of the study are stated below:

- To find the impact of eWom on consumers' intention to make a purchase.
- To identify the major factors influencing the online purchase intention of buyers.

Research Methodology

This section highlights the data collection method and questionnaire development to collect the responses followed by the hypothesis testing proposed in the model. Data was collected online using a structured questionnaire. The research population is defined as all online customers in Bhubaneswar. Customers who are familiar with online shopping sites and social networking sites. Descriptive analysis has been used in data collection. The sample size was 201. The questionnaire was distributed through a Google form. The questionnaire used a five-rating scale of Likert. It had five rating scales from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree where the customers have given their rating as per their choice the items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale with (1) Indicating 'Strongly agree' to (5) 'Strongly disagree'.

4. Research Hypothesis

As a result, the study suggests the following: hypothesis:

- H1: There is a significant impact of EWom message consistency on Product Popularity.
- H2: There is a significant impact of EWom message consistency on Information Credibility.
- *H3*: There is a significant impact of the EWom content platform on Product Popularity.
- H4: There is a significant impact of the EWom content platform on information credibility.
- **H5:** There is a significant impact of EWom valency on Product Popularity.
- **H6:** There is a significant impact of EWom valency on Information Credibility
- *H7*: There is a significant impact of Product Popularity on Purchase Intention.
- *H8:* There is a significant impact of Information credibility on Purchase Intention.

5. Analysis and Discussion

To test this theoretical model, regression analysis is used for both analyzing the data and hypothesis testing.

The results of the linear regression model are shown in Table 1, where R square=0.088 and 0.000 indicates significance. The outcome of the scrutiny shows that eWom message consistency has a considerable and advantageous effect on Product popularity. As a result, the overall conclusions and outcomes accept adopting H1. It demonstrates that the independent variable accounts for 8.8% of the variation in product popularity. Findings related to eWom message consistency show that the perceived EWom messages are consistent (beta = 0.296, significant at 0.000).

Table 1: Regression model summary of H1

Hypothesis	Regression weights	Beta coefficient	R ²	F	P value	Hypothesis significant
\mathbf{H}_1	EMC PP	.296	.088	19.132	.000	Yes

Note:(p<0.05, EMC=EWom message consistency=Product Popularity)

The outcomes of the linear regression model are presented in Table 2 (R square=0.046), which is significant at 0.000. The results of the regression analysis show that eWom message consistency has a substantial and advantageous effect on Information Credibility. As a result, the overall conclusions and outcomes support the acceptance of H2. It demonstrates that the independent variable eWom message consistency, which has a beta value of 0.224 and is significant at 0.000, explains 4.6% of the variation in Information Credibility.

Table 2: Regression model summary of H2

Hypothesis	Regression weights	Beta coefficient	R ²	F	P value	Hypothesis significant
H_2	EMC IC	.224	.046	10.554	.000	Yes

Note:(p<0.05, EMC=EWom message consistency, IC=Information Credibility)

The outcomes of the linear regression model are presented in Table 3 (R square=0.391), which is significant at 0.000. The results of the regression analysis show that the EWom content platform significantly and favorably affects Product popularity. As a result, the overall conclusions and outcomes justify the acceptance of H3. It demonstrates self-determining variable says 39.1% of the variation in Product Popularity. Findings from the eWom Content platform show that this platform is evaluated positively (beta = 0.625, significant at 0.000).

Table 3: Regression model summary of H3

Hypothesis	Regression weights	Beta coefficient	R ²	F	P value	Hypothesis significant
H_3	ECP PP	.625	.391	127.500	.000	Yes

Note:(p<0.05, ECP=EWom content Platform=Product Popularity)

The outcomes of the linear regression model are presented in Table 4 (R square=0.087), which is significant at 0.000. According to the regression results, the EWom content platform significantly and favorably affects Information Credibility. As a result, the overall conclusions and outcomes support the acceptance of H4. It reveals that the independent variable accounts for 8.7% of the variation in information credibility. Findings from the EWom content platform show that it is seen to be thus (beta = 0.294, significant at 0.000).

Table 4: Regression model summary of H4

Hypothesis	Regression weights	Beta coefficient	R ²	F	P value	Hypothesis significant
H_4	ECP IC	.294	.087	18.893	.000	Yes

Note:(p<0.05, ECP=EWom content IC=Information credibility)

The outcomes of the linear regression model are presented in Table 5 (R square=0.226), which is significant at 0.000. The results of the regression show that EWom valency significantly and favorably affects Product Popularity. As a result, the overall conclusions and outcomes justify the acceptance of H5. It demonstrates that the independent variable explains 22.6% of the variation in Product Popularity. The perceived EWom valency is shown by the EWom valency findings (beta is 0.476, significant at 0.000).

Table 5: Regression model summary of H5

Hypothesis	Regression weights	Beta coefficient	R ²	F	P value	Hypothesis significant
H_5	EWV PP	.476	.226	58.247	.000	Yes

Note: (p<0.05, EWV=EWom Valency, PP=Product Popularity)

The outcomes of the linear regression model are presented in Table 6 (R square=0.172), which is significant at 0.000. The results of the regression show that EWom valency significantly and favorably affects the trustworthiness of information. Therefore, the overall conclusions and findings offer evidence in Favor of adopting H6. It demonstrates that the independent variable accounts for 17.2% of the variation in the believability of the information. The perceived EWom valency is shown by the EWom valency findings (beta is 0.414, significant at 0.000).

Table 6: Regression model summary of H6

Hypothesis	Regression weights	Beta coefficient	R ²	F	P value	Hypothesis significant
H_6	EWV IC	.414	.172	41.206	.000	Yes

Note: n(p<0.05, EWV=EWom Valency, IC=Information credibility)

The outcomes of the linear regression model are presented in Table 7 (R square=0.247), which is significant at 0.000. The results of the regression show that Product Popularity significantly and favorably influences Purchase Intention. As a consequence, the overall conclusions and findings offer evidence in Favor of adopting H7. It demonstrates that the independent variable product popularity explains 24.7% of the variation in purchase intention. The results show that the product's perceived popularity is high (beta is 0.497, significant at 0.000).

Table 7: Regression model summary of H7

Hypothesis	Regres weigh		Beta coefficient	R ²	F		Hypothesis significant
H_7	PP	IC	.497	.247	65.327	.000	Yes

Note: (p<0.05, PP=Product Popularity, PI=Purchase Intention)

The outcomes of the linear regression model are presented in Table 8 (R square=0.434), which is significant at 0.000. The regression results show that information Credibility significantly and favorably affects purchase intention. As a result, the overall conclusions and findings offer evidence in Favor of adopting H8. It demonstrates that the independent variable information credibility accounts for 43.4% of the variation in purchase intention. The results show that the perceived believability of the information is high (beta is 0.659, significant at 0.000).

Table 8: Regression model summary of H8

Hypothesis	Regression weights		Beta coefficient	R ²	F	P value	Hypothesis significant
H ₈	IC	ΡΙ	.659	.434	152.485	.000	Yes

Note: (p<0.05, IC=Information Credibility, PI=Purchase Intention)

The results of the current study, which looked at the effect of eWom message consistency on product popularity, showed a substantial and favorable correlation between the two variables. Consequently, spreading consistent EWom messaging across many platforms and channels can increase product popularity. It also highlights the importance of monitoring and managing eWom messages to ensure they are consistent with the brand's image and values. It emphasizes the need for businesses to actively engage with customers and respond to their feedback and comments to promote positive eWom. The impact of eWom message consistency on information credibility, and this outcome shows a certain and positive association among these two variables. Therefore, it suggests that eWom message consistency can enhance the perceived credibility of information among consumers.

When EWom messages are consistent, they provide a coherent and cohesive message about the product or brand, which can increase the credibility of the information being shared. This is particularly important in the context of online reviews and recommendations, where consumers rely heavily on the credibility of the information provided by other consumers. It suggests that consumers perceive the EWom content platform as a credible source of information. This is consistent with the idea that online platforms have become increasingly important in shaping consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward products and services. The results of this study imply that companies can leverage EWom content platforms to improve their credibility and reputation in the eyes of consumers.

Overall, the findings suggest that businesses ought to compensate concentration for electronic word-of-mouth (EWom) valence when considering ways to promote their products. Positive EWom valence can significantly influence a product's popularity, leading to increased sales and revenue. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of identifying, the role of social media and online platforms in shaping consumer manners and perceptions. The study aimed to test the hypothesis that there is a significant impact of electronic word-of-mouth. The results of the investigation have important implications for businesses that rely on online platforms to market their products or services. Information credibility is crucial in influencing consumers' purchase decisions, and businesses need to focus on providing accurate and reliable information to their customers. By doing so, they can increase their customers' trust and confidence in their brand and products.

6. Conclusion

The findings of study provide the support for the idea that the EWom content platform can have a significant impact on information credibility. Overall, these findings suggest that businesses and organizations should be aware of the impact of EWom valency on information credibility, and should aim to encourage positive word-of-mouth communication about their products or services. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of monitoring and managing online reviews and comments, as they can significantly impact the perceived credibility of information about a brand or product.

Overall, the findings suggest that marketers should consider emphasizing the popularity of their products to increase consumers' purchase intention. However, it is important to note that other factors, such as product quality, price, and brand reputation, can also influence consumers' purchase decisions. In conclusion, the results of this study suggest that Information credibility is a key determinant of Purchase intention. Consumers are more likely to purchase products or services from businesses that provide credible information. Therefore, businesses should focus on building their credibility and providing accurate and reliable information to their customers to increase their chances of success.

7. Implication and Further Scope

These findings have important implications for business organizations that rely on digital marketing strategies to promote their products and it will be helpful to increase product popularity and sales. Investigating platform-specific strategies can help businesses optimize their efforts on different eWom platforms.

As online reviews and ratings have no geographical boundaries, the study has been limited to Odisha, India, but there is a scope for expanding the research across different states of India. Further research is needed to fully understand the complex relationship between online platforms and consumer perceptions of credibility and time to investigate the interplay between eWom message consistency and other factors to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing product popularity.

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