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Understanding the Drivers of eWOM Review Adoption: The Impact of Informational Determinants and Mediating Role of Perceived eWOM Review Credibility

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Abstract

Informational determinants influence users to evaluate the information based on its components. This study assessed the effect of informational determinants comprising argument strength, source credibility, prior belief confirmation, and visual information on the adoption of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) review, mediated by perceived eWOM review credibility (PeWOMRC). The empirical study was conducted by employing the quantitative survey method. Five hundred online consumers whose online purchase decisions relied on online reviews were selected using a homogenous purposive technique of sampling. The study's findings revealed that source credibility and online visual information significantly affected the adoption of eWOM reviews. Prior belief confirmation and online visual information also considerably affected the PeWOMRC. The results also exhibited that PeWOMRC completely mediated the prior belief confirmation and eWOM review adoption relationship and mediated the online visual information and eWOM review adoption relationship partially. These findings offered practical insights for marketers intending to enhance eWOM effectiveness by leveraging credible sources and engaging visuals.

Keywords: Adoption of eWOM Review, Argument Strength, Confirmation with Prior Belief, Online Visual Information, Perceived eWOM Review Credibility, Source Credibility

JEL Classification: D12, M30, M31, M37, P23

1. Introduction

The internet has significantly transformed how consumers find, research, analyse, and make purchase decisions by increasing access to a vast trove of information available at their fingertips (Verhoef *et al.,* 2017; Okazaki, 2005). Consumers now enjoy unprecedented access to unlimited information about diverse products and services, which helps them make informed and wise purchasing decisions (Kaur & Singh, 2021a; Goh *et al.,* 2017). Additionally, online platforms facilitate comparative analysis of products, enabling consumers to evaluate multiple options side-by-side before making a purchase (Zhang & Bockstedt, 2020). The information the seller provides may be very generic or supplemented by feedback shared by other users post-purchases (Paredes *et al.,* 2014). The internet's rapidly evolving communication platforms have empowered consumers to share opinions and information in ever-emerging e-commerce platforms (Chawla & Kumar, 2022; Xiao *et al.,* 2022). Marketers have also acknowledged that in the complex online buyer purchase decision journey, the information disseminated by genuine online users plays a crucial and influential role (Kaur & Singh, 2021a; Senecal & Nantel, 2004).

The online consumer decision-making procedure (Klein & Sharma, 2022; Gupta & Harris, 2010; Senecal *et al.,* 2005) and their product evaluation process (Lerrthaitrakul & Panjakajornsak, 2014) are heavily

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influenced by the widely accessible range of information available online about the product accompanied by various other sources of information (Kaur & Singh, 2021b; Xiao & Li, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to investigate how users interpret and respond to the embedded information in online recommendations. The eWOM (electronic word of mouth) review information may comprise various components, such as normative and informational. In informational influence components, the individuals evaluate the information based on its components like its content and source (Hussain *et al.,* 2020). Considering these points, the present study analyses the 'informational determinants' components of online reviews and focuses on finding the answer to these questions: (1) How do informational determinants impact eWOM review adoption? (2) How do informational determinants affect the PeWOMRC? (3) How do informational determinants impact eWOM review adoption when it is mediated by the PeWOMRC?'

eWOM is a rapidly evolving phenomenon that is gaining increasing attraction among both practitioners and researchers (Bhaiswar *et al.,* 2021). It also delivers a pivotal opportunity for companies and marketers to interact with consumers and helps influence their opinions and decisions. With the proliferation of digital platforms, eWOM has emerged as an influential tool for brand-consumer interactions, enabling companies to leverage consumer-generated content to drive consumer engagement and trust (Yousaf *et al.,* 2021). In this context, the study's outcomes have crucial implications for various stakeholders and marketers by providing instructional and actionable insights. By providing empirical proof of the efficacy of measures that can increase the eWOM impact on the buying intentions of online consumers, the findings provided substantial suggestions for marketing products online. Further, it is contributing to the existing literature by filling existing gaps. Hence, the current study aims not only to explore the effect of informational determinants but also to offer a more nuanced understanding of how these elements shape the eWOM review adoption mediated by PeWOMRC.

The succeeding section addresses the theoretical basis of the relationship between the informational determinants, adoption of eWOM review, and perceived eWOM review credibility (PeWOMRC). Following the conceptual model, hypotheses are developed, data is analysed, and results and findings are stated. Finally, the discussion and conclusion section focus on the theoretical and managerial implications.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

In present-day consumer behaviour, eWOM has emerged as a key influencer, leading to many noteworthy developments in how consumers make informed decisions. The widespread growth of the internet and technology has made a considerable contribution to the emergence of eWOM (Verma & Yadav, 2021; Gupta & Harris, 2010). Ismagilova *et al.* (2017) outlined that eWOM is "the dynamic and ongoing information exchange process between potential, actual, or former consumers regarding a product, service, brand, or company which is available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet" (p.18). Using this form of communication, consumers convey their experiences widely. eWOM enables consumers to better navigate the digital landscapes and mitigate the challenges involved in making online buying decisions, providing them with valuable peer insights that help validate or guide their purchasing choices (Khoi *et al.,* 2023; Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2004).

2.2 eWOM Review Adoption (eWOMRA)

eWOMRA means the level to which consumers are inclined to rely on eWOM to develop or build their purchasing decisions, and it is a valuable measure of acceptance of other's opinions by consumers' which is communicated through eWOM (Kaur & Singh, 2021a). Rani and Shivaprasad (2019) defined ewOMRA as "the effect of eWOM on purchase decisions with influence on consumer attitude" (p.42). The reliance on eWOMRA serves as a crucial measure in understanding the acceptance of peer feedback in digital marketplaces. eWOMRA is amongst the vastly investigated variables of response in eWOM communication besides purchase behaviour, purchase intention, and attitude (Cheung & Thandani, 2012).

2.3 Perceived eWOM Review Credibility (PeWOMRC)

Fogg and Tseng (1999) defined credibility as 'believability'. Cheung *et al.* (2009) referred to the subject of assessment

of credibility as an online review or recommendation and not as any beliefs about an organisation or any person. The judgment by the receiver about the credibility of the information is a primary stage in the process of persuasion. Credibility is considered one of the measures to filter relevant information (Wathen & Burkell, 2002). Studies by Doh and Hwang (2009), Wu and Wang (2011) and Pyle *et al.* (2021) revealed that users often trust eWOM messages which possess high credibility. Previous research findings have also revealed an affirmative correlation between information credibility and its adoption (Nabi & Hendriks, 2003; Tsao & Hsieh, 2015). This underscores the importance of ensuring that online reviews are perceived as both reliable and trustworthy to drive user engagement. Therefore,

H1: PeWOMRC has a positive effect on the eWOMRA.

2.4 The Dual Process Theory

According to Deutsch and Gerard (1995) in the dual-process theory, review credibility is affected by normative and informational determinants. They defined the psychological theory named dual-process theory as a theory that postulates informational and normative influences on the influencing levels of the messages received. It determines how the two types of influences affect the persuasion strength of eWOM. The theory states that the informational and normative influence function collectively to outline the opinion of the trustworthiness of information by readers.

The present study analyses the informational components that affect the PeWOMRC by users. The primary reason for focusing solely on the informational component is that this research intends to investigate deeper into the specific components of information quality and credibility that directly influence eWOM review adoption. While normative influences are indeed important, they are more related to social pressure and conformity, which are beyond the purview of this study. Thus, the present study aims to deliver a focused examination of informational determinants, as these aspects are more directly connected to the perceived credibility of reviews, which are hypothesised to have a more substantial impact on review adoption.

2.5 Informational Components

The informational components are part of the eWOM reviews. Informational influence, according to Deutsch and Gerard (1995), is the social pressure to believe the information that is gained from others is an indication of reality. In communications literature, the three informational-based determinants that have been widely studied are the message content's quality, the source of the message, and the receivers' characteristics (Cheung *et al.,* 2007). This present study considers argument strength, source credibility, prior belief confirmation, and visual information to be the informational components. The rationale behind selecting these four informational components was their relevance in the existing literature and prominence in modern eWOM contexts. In prior research (Cheung *et al.,* 2007), argument strength and source credibility have been considered central while evaluating the trustworthiness and quality of online reviews. Prior belief confirmation was included because of its prominent role in determining consumers' cognitive biases, which impacts their determination and acceptance of new information (Tseng, 2023). Lastly, due to the rise in image-and-video-based platforms, visual information has gained increasing importance in eWOM research (Kim *et al.,* 2021). These informational components are further discussed:

2.5.1 Argument Strength (AS)

Argument Strength (AS) refers to how much the recipient of a message considers the argument to be valid or convincing in favouring its claim (Cheung *et al.,* 2009). Perceived AS is more prone to predict a persuasive outcome (Nabi & Hendriks, 2003). Zhang and Watts (2008) stated that messages with higher AS are likely to influence more information adoption than messages with lower AS. Cacioppo *et al.* (1983) revealed that the AS level directly affects the receiver's attitude. Arguments that present strong, relevant, verifiable, and objective claims tend to boost positive beliefs and are viewed as more persuasive than weak ones (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Therefore, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H2a: Argument strength significantly influences eWOM review adoption.

H3a: Argument strength has a significant positive effect on the PeWOMRC.

2.5.2 Source Credibility

Source Credibility (SC) refers to the apparent trust of the information receivers towards the source providing the information (Ohanian, 1990). It refers to the affirmative

character of the communicator affecting the receiver's attitude towards accepting information or message. The existent literature identified two key determinants to determine the credibility of information, namely source expertise and trustworthiness of the source (Steffes & Burgee, 2009; Wiener & Mowen, 1986). The study by Zhang and Yang (2021) also measured source credibility on four dimensions, namely expertness, objectivity, trustworthiness, and homophily and found that the reviewer's expertness and homophily were significantly related to users' purchase intention. Consumer review source trustworthiness is a popularly studied concept in the eWOM literature (Wu & Lin, 2016). So, it was also hypothesised that,

H2b: Source Credibility significantly influences eWOM review adoption.

H3b: Source Credibility has a significant positive effect on the PeWOMRC.

2.5.3 Confirmation with Prior Belief (CPB)

When readers recognise the information as constant with their previous knowledge, they tend to trust the information received and utilise it to make purchase decisions. (Alloy & Tabachnik, 1984; Zeithaml, 1988). Confirmation or disconfirmation with prior beliefs has been shown in previous studies to have a noteworthy impression on the received information's credibility (Tseng, 2023; Fogg, 2003). If the current online recommendation confirms the prevailing beliefs of the reader, then they will be more prone to consider that the information is credible, whereas, otherwise, the reader will not accept the recommendation as they may consider it less credible (Fogg *et al.,* 2001). Therefore, it was postulated that:

H2c: Confirmation with prior belief significantly influences eWOM review adoption.

H3c: Confirmation with prior belief has a significant and positive effect on the PeWOMRC.

2.5.4 Visual Information

Recently, with the development and advancements in technology sciences in digital communications, it has become convenient for users to post images, pictures, or video shorts on various internet forums, platforms, or consumer blogs to share relevant information about product features and their consumption experiences (Kaur & Singh, 2019; Lin *et al.,* 2012). Visual Information (VI) embedded in eWOM influences consumers' buying decisions and perceptions (Kokila & Sampathlakshmi, 2022; Liu & Du, 2019). Visual information in the form of performance visual heuristics depicts the users' expression of satisfaction levels about the online product or services (Filieri *et al.,* 2021). Using more varied types of visual information encourages positive responses from its users (Kim *et al.,* 2021). Thus, it was hypothesised that:

H2d: Visual information significantly influences eWOM review adoption.

H3d: Visual information has a significant positive effect on the PeWOMRC.

2.5.5 Perceived eWOM Review Credibility as Mediator

In eWOM, if the product recommendation or review is credible, users are more prone to find some relevant

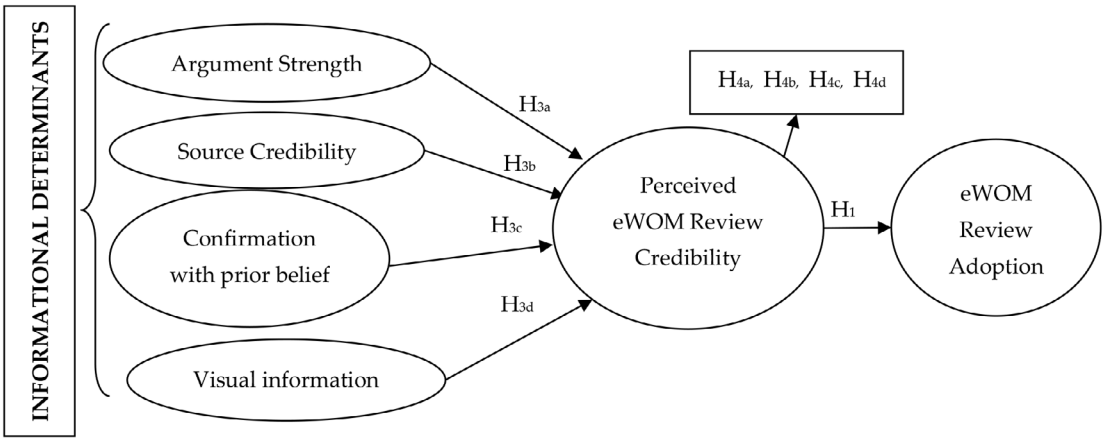


Figure 1. The conceptual model.

information from it and utilise it for purchase decision-making (Pooja & Upadhyaya, 2024; Kaur & Singh, 2019). Alternatively, if the recommendation or review is considered less credible, the users are not likely to adopt it for their decision-making (Shukla & Mishra, 2023; Doh & Hwang, 2009). Thus, PeWOMRC can be said to mediate the relationship concerning the informational factors and the adoption of eWOM review.

H4a: PeWOMRC mediates the argument strength and eWOM reviews the adoption relationship.

H4b: PeWOMRC mediates source credibility and eWOM reviews the adoption relationship.

H4c: PeWOMRC mediates the confirmation with prior belief and eWOM reviews the adoption relationship.

H4d: PeWOMRC mediates visual information and eWOM reviews the adoption relationship.

Below is the conceptual model for analysing the effect of informational determinants on eWOMRA mediated by PeWOMRC.

3. Methodology

To study the consequence of informational determinants on the adoption of eWOM mediated by the perceived credibility of online reviews, a quantitative research approach was used for which methodology is outlined as follows:

3.1 Target Populace and Sampling

The target populace for the review was comprised of customers who shop for products or services online, either from e-tailing sites or online travel sites, after reading the reviews. The five hundred respondents were chosen utilising purposive sampling. The sample size sufficiently addressed the populace of interest and was fitting as the model to be tested had more than six constructs (Hair *et al.,* 2014a). Table 1 displays the five hundred respondents' segment and webographic profiles.

4. Analysis of Data and Findings

In the present study, the Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method which is the most prevalently used technique implemented for path model analysis (Gefen *et al.*, 2005; Ringle *et al.,* 2015) is employed using the SmartPLS software. Given the emphasis of this study on the relationship between informational determinants, PeWOMRC, and eWOMRA, PLS-SEM allows for better exploration of complex relationships between latent constructs, even when the model includes multiple indicators and mediator variables (Hair *et al.,* 2019). This technique is appropriate for highly complicated predictive models (Barclay *et al.,* 1995; Chin, 1988; Lohmöller, 1989). SmartPLS is the most prevalent software implemented for path model analysis (Garson, 2016). Henseler and Sarstedt (2013) recommended using PLS path modelling in the early stages of theoretical formulation by testing and validating exploratory models. Albers (2009) explained PLS as the preferred approach to analysing accomplishment factors in marketing research. Also, PLS-SEM excels in handling formative constructions, common in models involving customer perceptions and behaviours like those examined in our study. The structural model measures' validity and reliability were first assessed, followed by an investigation of the proposed hypothesised relationship (Cheung & Lee, 2012).

The following section analyses the effect of the informational determinants on PeWOMRC and eWOMRA, followed by the testing of the mediating role of the PeWOMRC.

4.1 Informational Determinants Measurement Model

The informational determinants model (Figure 2) consists of a total of 26 construct items comprising AS (4), SC (6), CPB (3), VI (5), PeWOMRC (3), and eWOMRA (5) indices. Most of the measures of various constructions used in the conceptual model for measuring informational determinants are amended from the previous research studies, for which details are given in Table 2.

4.2 Measurement Scales Analysis

Figure 2 represents the factor loadings of constructs' items with values higher than ±.50, depicting significant values (Hair *et al.,* 2014b) and indicating that items of the construct define greater than 25 per cent of the construct's variance. The bootstrapping results also reveal that all the factor loadings have a p-value of less than 0.05 and thus are significant.

To assess the reliability and validity of the measurement model, both convergent validity and discriminant validity of the measures are evaluated.

Table 1. Webograhic profile of the respondents.

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Experience of online shopping (years)	Under 1 year	83	16.6
	1-2 year	108	21.6
	2-4 year	197	39.4
	4-6 year	72	14.4
	Above 6 years	40	8.0
Online shopping monthly frequency	Rarely	88	17.6
	Sometimes	178	35.6
	Often	133	26.6
	Very Often	76	15.2
	Always	25	5.0
Preference for online shopping	e-tailing products/services	188	37.6
	Online travel services	18	3.6
	Both	294	58.8
Online reviews usage	Rarely	54	10.8
	Sometimes	100	20.0
	Often	131	26.2
	Very Often	155	31.0
	Always	60	12.0
Number of online reviews used for making online purchase decisions	Less than 5	114	22.8
	5-10	126	25.2
	10-15	97	19.4
	More than 15	102	20.4
	No idea	61	12.2
Have ever shared online reviews	Never	148	29.6
	Rarely	79	15.8
	Sometimes	149	29.8
	Often	93	18.6
	Always	31	6.2
Frequency of online reviews shared in a month (N=352)	Less than 5	202	57.39
	5-10	91	25.85
	10-15	52	14.77
	More than 15	7	1.99

4.3 Convergent Validity

The value of rho_A and composite reliability is 0.7, an acceptable value (Henseler *et al.,* 2012). The construct's Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values also are more than 0.5, implying an adequate convergent and discriminant validity of the measurements of the model (Garson, 2016; Kaur *et al.,* 2021). For the self-made visual information scale, the composite reliability value is 0.795, the rho_A value is 0.825, and the AVE values are more than 0.5, which shows that there is adequate convergent and discriminant validity in the model.

4.4 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity assesses the level to which a measurement is distinctive from the measures of another construct (Henseler *et al.,* 2015). Table 3 displays the

Table 2. Measures of various constructs used in the conceptual model for measuring informational determinants.

Name of the construct	Author(s)	Construct items	Basis
Argument Strength (AS)	Kempf and Palan (2006)	Arguments given in the reviews are informative (AS1)	Adapted
		Arguments given in the reviews are strong (AS2)	
		Arguments given in the reviews are persuasive (AS3)	
Source Credibility (SC)	Ohanian, (1990); Cheung *et al.,* (2009)	The reviewer is regarded as reputable based on their rating (SCR1)	Compiled
		The reviewer is highly regarded by other site participants based on their rating (SCR2)	
		The reviewer is considered good based on their rating (SCR3)	
		The reviewer is considered trustworthy based on their rating (SCR4)	
		The reviewer is considered reliable based on their rating (SCR5)	
		The reviewer is considered knowledgeable based on their rating (SCR6)	
Conformation with Prior Belief (CPB)	Cheung *et al.* (2009)	Information in the review aligned with what I already knew before reading it (CPB1)	Adapted
		The review sustained my existing impression of the product/ service being discussed (CPB2)	
		Review reinforced information I was already familiar with about the product/service (CPB3)	
Visual Information (VI)	Self-made	Online reviews usually have images (VI1)	Self-made
		Good-quality pictures are used in online reviews (VI2)	
		There are enough images used in online reviews (VI3)	
		Distinctive dimensions of products are shown in images in online reviews (VI4)	
Perceived eWOM Review Credibility (PeWOMRC)	Smith and Vogt (1995)	I believe reviews are factual (PeWOMRC1)	Adapted
		I believe reviews are accurate (PeWOMRC2)	
		I believe reviews are credible (PeWOMRC3)	
eWOM review adoption (eWOMRA)	Cheung *et al.* (2009)	To what extent do you think you agree with the review? (eWOMRA1)	Adapted
		Information from the review helped me gain knowledge about the product/service being discussed (eWOMRA2)	
		It becomes easier for me to make purchase decisions because of reviews (eWOMRA3)	
		My effectiveness in making purchase decisions has enhanced because of reviews (eWOMRA4)	
		I am motivated to make a purchase action because of reviews (eWOMRA5)	

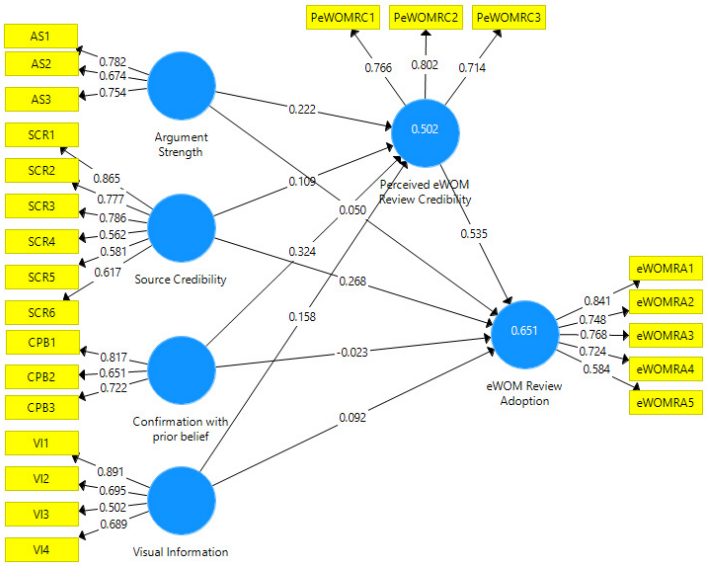


Figure 2. Informational determinant model.

Table 3. Cross-factor loadings to examine the discriminant validity.

Construct items	Argument Strength	Prior belief confirmation	PeWOMRC	Source Credibility	Visual Information	eWOMRA
AS1	**0.782**	0.624	0.472	0.610	0.378	0.524
AS2	**0.674**	0.556	0.436	0.616	0.339	0.424
AS3	**0.754**	0.552	0.510	0.555	0.368	0.454
CPB1	0.580	**0.817**	0.552	0.524	0.445	0.493
CPB2	0.584	**0.651**	0.441	0.567	0.378	0.392
CPB3	0.565	**0.722**	0.457	0.548	0.330	0.466
PeWOMRC1	0.493	0.493	**0.766**	0.465	0.364	0.592
PeWOMRC2	0.513	0.543	**0.802**	0.490	0.376	0.612
PeWOMRC3	0.457	0.474	**0.714**	0.442	0.396	0.532
SCR1	0.664	0.627	0.525	**0.865**	0.424	0.582
SCR2	0.624	0.577	0.473	**0.777**	0.387	0.522
SCR3	0.608	0.582	0.474	**0.786**	0.375	0.531
SCR4	0.481	0.414	0.322	**0.562**	0.393	0.395
SCR5	0.478	0.426	0.393	**0.581**	0.339	0.356
SCR6	0.527	0.475	0.382	**0.617**	0.372	0.408
VI1	0.461	0.455	0.433	0.463	**0.891**	0.465
VI2	0.327	0.405	0.347	0.331	**0.695**	0.355
VI3	0.211	0.227	0.256	0.321	**0.502**	0.251
VI4	0.348	0.368	0.346	0.391	**0.689**	0.350
eWOMRA1	0.530	0.551	0.655	0.496	0.511	**0.841**
eWOMRA2	0.424	0.462	0.577	0.526	0.339	**0.748**
eWOMRA3	0.492	0.461	0.588	0.526	0.357	**0.768**
eWOMRA4	0.458	0.467	0.543	0.501	0.352	**0.724**
eWOMRA5	0.439	0.304	0.420	0.412	0.316	**0.584**

Note: The crosswise values, shown in bold represent the AVE square root values.

Table 4. **Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio.**

Constructs	Argument Strength	Prior belief confirmation	PeWOMRC	Source Credibility	Visual Information	eWOMRA
Argument Strength						
Prior Belief Confirmation	0.788					
PeWOMRC	0.641	0.661				
Source Credibility	0.799	0.737	0.605			
Visual Information	0.477	0.514	0.492	0.537		
eWOMRA	0.636	0.609	0.757	0.659	0.501	

Table 5. **Summary of model fit.**

Indices	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.050	0.050
d_ULS	0.757	0.757
d_G	0.362	0.362
NFI	0.840	0.840
Chi-Square	976.358	976.358

analysis of cross-loadings of the latent variables and reveals that no construct items have a higher correlation with other constructions than with their construction. But, due to the dearth of empirical evidence and theoretical arguments on the cross-loading approach to establish the discriminant validity of the structural model, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio following Henseler *et al.* (2015) was also utilised, to assess the discriminant validity. The analysis of HTMT ratio values (Table 4) reveals that the values for almost all the measures are less than 0.85, satisfying the discriminator validity criteria (Clark & Watson, 1995; Kleinbaum *et al.*, 1988).

4.5 Collinearity Assessment

The study's structural model was tested for the presence of potential collinearity issues using its constructs' reliability and validity. As stated by Hair *et al.* (2014a), collinearity may be present if the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value is more than 5. Allen (1997) indicated that "multicollinearity exists whenever an independent variable is highly correlated with one or more of the other independent variables and it is a problem because it undermines the statistical significance of an independent variable" (p.176). Both inner and outer VIF values in the present model revealed no multicollinearity issues among the construct indicators, as all VIF values were less than 5 (Kleinbaum *et al.*, 1988).

4.6 Estimation of Model Fit

The estimation of model fit was done by analysing the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and bootstrap-based statistical interference (Hu *et al.*, 2014). Table 5 represents the estimates of model fit output values.

The SRMR is 0.050 (< 0.08), and the Squared Euclidean distance (d_ULS) and Geodesic distance (d_G) values are greater than the bootstrapped upper bound 95 per cent of d_ULS and d_G values. This indicates a good model fit of the data (Henseler *et al.*, 2013; Kumar *et al.*, 2019). According to Bentler and Bonett (1980), the Normed Fit Index (NFI) is an incremental fit measurement index that compares the Chi-square values of the model with the applicable standard. Its values near to 1 represent an appropriate model fit (Kumari & Kaur, 2023; Lohmöller, 1989).

4.7 Informational Determinants Structural Model

To analyse the structural model, the R square (R^2), Beta coefficients (β), effect size (f^2), and the corresponding t values are examined following Hair *et al.* (2017). Table 6 gives the outcomes of the coefficient of determination (R^2) values which shows that the informational constructs jointly explained 65.1 per cent of the eWOMRA endogenous construct's variance and 50.2 per cent of the PeWOMRC endogenous construct's variance. Thus, the overall R^2 was vital for the structural model.

Furthermore, Table 6 also summarises the effect size (f^2) values of the informational determinant's construct's relationships with the endogenous constructs. Based on Cohen's (1988) benchmark values for f^2: 0.02 (small

effects), 0.15 (medium effects), and 0.35 (large size effects), the results indicate that the informational constructs exert small to medium size effects (f^2) on the endogenous variables.

Further, hypotheses were tested, and the results have been shown under direct effects in Table 7. The first hypothesis, H1 ($\beta = 0.535$, $t = 6.090$, $p<0.01$, $f^2 = 0.407$) is not rejected and shows that PeWOMRC positively influences eWOMRA.

To analyse the hypotheses H2a, H2b, H2c, and H2d, the structural model itemised 21 dimensions of argument strength (3), source credibility (6), prior belief confirmation (3), and visual information (4) as the exogenous construct; and eWOMRA (5) as an endogenous construct. H2b ($\beta = 0.268$, $t = 2.896$, $p<0.01$, $f^2 = 0.002$) and H2d ($\beta = 0.092$, $t = 1.697$, $p<0.10$ $f^2=0.016$) are not rejected. H2a and H2c ($p>0.05$) failed to reject the null hypothesis and thus were not accepted. The analysis of the adjusted R^2 value showed that PeWOMRC and informational determinants explained 64.7 per cent of the variance in eWOMRA.

The hypotheses H3a, H3b, H3c, and H3d were also examined. The argument strength, source credibility, prior belief confirmation, and visual information variables were specified as the exogenous construct, and PeWOMRC was specified as the endogenous construction. H3c ($\beta = 0.324$, $t = 2.569$, $p<0.05$, $f^2 = 0.072$) and H3d ($\beta = 0.158$, $t = 2.080$, $p<0.05$, $f^2=0.034$) were not rejected. H3a and H3b ($p>0.05$) failed to reject the null hypothesis and thus were not accepted. The analysis of the adjusted R^2 value showed that the informational determinants positively influenced and explained 49.8 per cent of the variance in PeWOMRC.

4.8 Mediating Role of PeWOMRC

To analyse the mediating role of PeWOMRC, hypotheses H4a, H4b, H4c, and H4d were tested, and the results are shown in Table 7. The indirect effect is found to be statistically significant for H4c ($\beta = 0.173$, $t = 2.236$, $p<0.05$) excluding zero (0.045-0.355) at 97.7 per cent confidence interval and H4d ($\beta = 0.085$, $t = 1.788$, $p<0.10$) excluding zero (0.002-0.184) at 97.7 per cent confidence interval. For hypotheses H4b and H4d, the direct effect is found to be statistically significant at $\beta = 0.268$, $t = 2.896$, $p<0.01$; and $\beta = 0.092$, $t = 1.697$, $p<0.10$ respectively. The analysis shows that hypothesis H4c, which has significant indirect and insignificant direct effects, implies indirect-only (full) mediation. Hypothesis H4d, which has direct and indirect positive significant effects, signifies complementary (partial) mediation. The indirect effects for H4a and H4b are not found to be statistically significant. However, the direct effect of the H4b hypothesis is statistically significant. This signified the direct-only mediation relationship between the variables. No effect no mediation was found for statistically insignificant direct and indirect effects for the H4a hypothesis. Hence, the bootstrapping result analysis shows that PeWOMRC has an indirect-only (full) mediation effect about prior belief confirmation and eWOMRA and a partial mediation effect about eWOMRA and visual information. It does not mediate the relationship between argument strength and eWOMRA, nor does it affect source credibility and eWOMRA.

4.9 Mediation Magnitude

Methods based on indirect effects must be preferred to measure the mediation magnitude (Kaur *et al.,* 2022;

Table 6. Results of Effect Size (f^2) and Coefficient of Determination (R^2).

Paths	f^2	R square (R^2)	Adjusted R square (R^2)
PeWOMRC -> eWOMRA	0.407	0.651	0.647
Argument Strength -> eWOMRA	0.002		
Source Credibility -> eWOMRA	0.063		
Prior belief confirmation -> eWOMRA	0.000		
Visual Information -> eWOMRA	0.016		
Argument Strength -> PeWOMRC	0.027	0.502	0.498
Source Credibility -> PeWOMRC	0.007		
Prior belief confirmation -> PeWOMRC	0.072		
Visual Information -> PeWOMRC	0.034		

Table 7. Showing path coefficients and hypothesis testing results.

Paths	Standard Coefficients (β)	Standard Deviation or Standard Error	t values	p values	Statistically Significant
Direct Effects (i)					
H1: PeWOMRC -> eWOMRA	0.535	0.088***	6.090	0.000	Yes
H2a Argument Strength -> eWOMRA	0.050	0.127	0.396	0.692	No
H2b: Source Credibility -> eWOMRA	0.268	0.093***	2.896	0.004	Yes
H2c: Prior belief confirmation -> eWOMRA	-0.023	0.110	0.210	0.833	No
H2d: Visual Information -> eWOMRA	0.092	0.054*	1.697	0.090	Yes
H3a: Argument Strength -> PeWOMRC	0.222	0.160	1.386	0.166	No
H3b: Source Credibility -> PeWOMRC	0.109	0.124	0.879	0.379	No
H3c: Prior belief confirmation -> PeWOMRC	0.324	0.126**	2.569	0.010	Yes
H3d: Visual Information -> PeWOMRC	0.158	0.076**	2.080	0.038	Yes
Indirect Effects (ii)					
H4a: Argument Strength -> PeWOMRC -> eWOMRA	0.119	0.088	1.345	0.179	No
H4b: Source Credibility -> PeWOMRC -> eWOMRA	0.058	0.071	0.820	0.412	No
H4c: Prior belief confirmation -> PeWOMRC -> eWOMRA	0.173	0.077**	2.236	0.025	Yes
H4d Visual Information -> PeWOMRC -> eWOMRA	0.085	0.047*	1.788	0.074	Yes
Total Effects (i+ii)					
PeWOMRC -> eWOMRA	0.535	0.088***	6.090	0.000	Yes
Argument Strength -> eWOMRA	0.169	0.122	1.380	0.168	No
Source Credibility -> eWOMRA	0.327	0.092***	3.562	0.000	Yes
Prior belief confirmation -> eWOMRA	0.150	0.110	1.366	0.172	No
Visual Information -> eWOMRA	0.176	0.066***	2.681	0.007	Yes
Argument Strength -> PeWOMRC	0.222	0.160	1.386	0.166	No
Source Credibility -> PeWOMRC	0.109	0.124	0.879	0.379	No
Prior belief confirmation -> PeWOMRC	0.324	0.126**	2.569	0.010	Yes
Visual Information -> PeWOMRC	0.158	0.076**	2.080	0.038	Yes

Note: ***, **, * indicate significant at 1 per cent, 5 per cent and 10 per cent level of significance respectively.

Nitzl *et al.,* 2016). After ascertaining the indirect effect's significance, the intensity of the mediating effect can be assessed using the total effect (direct effect+ indirect effect) and VAF values (Wong, 2016). Nitzl *et al.* (2016) have also stated that "VAF determines the extent to which the mediation process explains the dependent variable's variance" (p. 1858). The results show that the magnitude of the complementary (partial) mediating effect of PeWOMRC is measured for the relationship between visual information and eWOMRA (H4d). In H4d, the total effect was 0.176 (0.092+0.085), and VAF was 0.085/0.176=0.4829. This reveals that the VAF value (48.30 per cent) was above 20 per cent and less than 80 per cent, which characterises it as partial mediation (Hair *et al.,* 2014b), stating that 48.30 per cent of visual information's effect on eWOMRA is explained via PeWOMRC as a mediator.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study has established relevant findings into the relationship between informational determinants,

PeWOMRC, and eWOM review adoption in online platforms. The findings highlight the critical role played by PeWOMRC as a mediator in driving online review adoption. Among the informational determinants, source credibility and visual information significantly influence eWOMRA. This suggests that when reviews align with consumers' pre-existing beliefs or when they are supported by compelling visual information, the perceived credibility of the review increases, thus making it more likely that the review will be adopted. Furthermore, the mediation analysis revealed that PeWOMRC had a crucial mediating role in the association between prior belief confirmation, visual information, and eWOMRA. Ultimately, these results underscore the importance of credibility as a bridge between informational determinants and consumer purchasing behaviour, strengthening the role of PeWOMRC in shaping the way online reviews are received and acted upon by consumers.

Overall, the findings of the study help gain a richer insight into how informational components such as SC, CPB, and VI influence the credibility of eWOM reviews influencing eWOMRA. These findings have various theoretical and managerial implications for marketers over online platforms aiming to enhance the effectiveness of online reviews. By emphasising factors that elevate the perceived credibility of reviews, businesses can foster stronger consumer confidence and engagement. The implications are particularly valuable for enhancing consumer interactions and boosting the credibility of online reviews.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The present study makes a substantial theoretical contribution by applying the dual process theory concepts in eWOM research, extending previous studies findings. By incorporating this framework, this study sheds light on how informational determinants influence PeWOMRC and eWOMRA. The effect of visual information on eWOMRA and review credibility is also aligned with the outcomes of a prior study undertaken by Filieri *et al.* (2021), which postulated that eWOM in the form of visual format affects online consumers' purchase decisions and intentions. Thus, it reinforces the significance of visual information in affecting consumer behaviour on digital platforms, supporting the growing literature concentrating on the role of visual cues in consumers' decision-making.

The study further contributes to eWOM theory by emphasising the mediating role of perceived credibility, showing how credibility bridges the gap between informational determinants and the final decision to adopt reviews. This mediating effect deepens the theoretical understanding of how different elements of eWOM interact to influence consumer behaviour, offering a more nuanced view of the mechanisms driving eWOM adoption. Moreover, the study's findings encourage further theoretical exploration and empirical validation of the role of informational determinants in eWOM, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of eWOM communication on online platforms.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The present study also offers relevant managerial and practical implications by providing direction to online market retailers and sellers for effectively using practical eWOM communication components. With the advancements in assistance techniques for making online choices like recommendation agents and collaborative filtering, which increases the strength of eWOM, firms must recognise the worth of eWOM for consumers. According to the present study's findings, marketers should also identify their knowledgeable and innovative customers whose reviews are highly valuable and can substantially influence the users' online purchase decisions. Marketers can use data analytical tools to identify these customers and track review quality and customer engagement levels. Monitoring social media engagement can also help marketers identify highly influential customers who generate high engagement and interactions by evoking users to like, share, and comment. Marketers can also utilise customer segmentation techniques to classify customers based on their online activities, product knowledge, and purchase history. Once the marketers can identify these valuable customers, they can offer incentives and implement loyalty programs to encourage deeper engagement. Establishing influence partnerships with these customers will also amplify their positive impact on the brand due to review credibility. This will lead to brand loyalty and enable long-term customer advocacy, significantly benefiting the brand in highly competitive online marketplaces. Overall, this will not only improve the eWOM review quality but also have a long-lasting impact on consumer trust and online purchase intentions.

The companies that employ eWOM as a marketing technique should implement different strategies for different groups of consumers at various stages of online shopping. Managers should seek to reduce complications of the procedures, increase consumers' trust in their information, and enhance their confidence in using their products and services. They should aim to deliver satisfactory quality products and services to encourage users to share positive eWOM reviews, improving their sales and profits. Online retailers and marketers should enable consumers to share relevant visual information and other prevailing usages of eWOM formats, such as videos, textual reviews, and ratings, to increase users' adoption of eWOM.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

The survey-based research was done on consumers who were engaged in online shopping. Thus, the research findings cannot be generalised to customers of offline shopping platforms which is a shortcoming of the present study. A causal-experimental research design study for this topic can be done on a larger sample size for future studies. Other related informational determinant factors can also be identified, and their impact on eWOMRA can also be analysed. The qualitative aspects of eWOM, such as online review quality, can also be examined. Therefore, further research may investigate the effect of the informational determinant- online visual information on users' judgments and perceptions in different modes of eWOM communication. Research in the future may also be encouraged to analyse the effect of other variables like disclosing the user's identity, reviewer's sentiments, or other similar variables on eWOM review adoption. Researchers can also study the trust relationship between users and artificial intelligence in eWOM (Cheng *et al.*, 2023).

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