



Understanding the impact of eWOM communication through the lens of information adoption model: A meta-analytic structural equation modeling perspective

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ABSTRACT

In the last decade, eWOM has arguably become the most preferred way for consumers to seek and share consumption-related information. eWOM as a research topic also garnered huge attention from the research community, which led to the vast academic literature on eWOM. However, there is a lack of consensus on how different eWOM attributes impact consumer responses to eWOM communication. Moreover, there is also inconsistency regarding the mechanism through which eWOM messages influence consumers' behavioral intentions. To address this gap, we conduct a meta-analysis of 179 studies comprising 186 unique samples and 65,655 observations, which reveals the strength and significance of the association between eWOM attributes and eWOM response. Further, based on the Information Adoption Model, this study investigates the various mechanisms through which eWOM credibility, eWOM usefulness, and attitude towards eWOM impact purchase intention. In addition, this study discusses the moderating role of culture, product and platform type. Results of meta-analytic structural equation modeling (MASEM) support a serial mediation model of eWOM credibility and attitude towards eWOM on purchase intention through eWOM usefulness and eWOM adoption. From the research perspective, this study resolves the inconsistencies in the extant literature to provide more reliable generalizations. Managers can use this study to enhance the consumers' purchase intention through effective management of eWOM communication.

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of web 2.0 technologies has changed how people seek and share information (Chen, Yen, & Hwang, 2012; Newman et al., 2016). Now, online platforms such as social networking sites, blogs, and discussion forums are the most preferred mediums for people to share information on a wide range of topics (Cheung & Lee, 2010; Hajli, 2015; Liu et al., 2016). These platforms, along with e-commerce and online review platforms, have also altered the way consumers seek and share information about products and services (Ahani et al., 2019; Bae, Lee, Suh, & Suh, 2017; Brian Lee & Li, 2018). *Electronic word of mouth*

(eWOM) which is an online form of word of mouth, has become an important source for consumers to get product-related information (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Ismagilova, Dwivedi, Slade, & Williams, 2017). For example, 95% of consumers consider eWOM messages before making a purchase decision, and it is among the top 5 factors that impact consumers' consumption decisions (PowerReviews, 2018). Extant literature also suggests that consumers perceive eWOM messages as more valuable and trustworthy than commercial advertising (Nielson, 2015; Pihlaja et al., 2017). Due to the significant influence of eWOM on consumers' decision-making, it also impacts the firms' performance (Babić Rosario et al., 2016; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). For example,

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10% increase in hotel rating can improve hotel sales by 4.4% (Ye et al., 2009). Similarly, online reviews have helped Amazon to earn \$2.7 billion in extra revenue (Hong, Wang, & Fan, 2017). Realizing the importance of eWOM, both firms and eWOM platforms encourage consumers to share their opinion (Burtch, Hong, Bapna, & Griskevicius, 2018; Liu et al., 2016). Consumers also engage in eWOM communication for multiple reasons, including altruism, self-enhancement, and social benefits (Ismagilova et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2015). This led to the huge volume of eWOM content on online platforms. For example, TripAdvisor, a major platform for tourism-related information, has more than 859 million reviews on its website (Statista, 2019). Due to the significant influence of eWOM on consumer behavior, it also caught the attention of the academic community, which resulted in the vast literature on eWOM (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; King et al., 2014). Notably, eWOM adoption and its impact on consumers' behavioral response have attracted huge interest from the research community (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Qahri-Saremi & Montazemi, 2019). Researchers have used various theoretical perspectives such as Elaboration Likelihood Model, Information Adoption model, and Heuristic Systematic Model to explore eWOM communication and its impact (Chen et al., 2012; Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Erkan & Elwalda, 2018). However, extant literature provides fragmented and inconsistent findings for two major reasons. First, there are inconsistent and contradictory findings regarding the influence of eWOM attributes on eWOM evaluation (Hong et al., 2017; Ismagilova, Slade, Rana, & Dwivedi, 2019; Yang et al., 2018). For example, some researchers established the positive impact of recommendation-sidedness on eWOM credibility (Chakraborty, 2019; Chen et al., 2012), while other studies suggest the non-significant relationship between recommendation-sidedness and eWOM credibility (Albon, Kraft, & Rennhak, 2018; Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018). Second, extant literature failed to provide a robust mechanism that can explain the adoption and impact of eWOM communication. For example, Erkan and Evans (2016) suggest no direct impact of eWOM credibility on eWOM adoption and purchase intention. In contrast, Tien et al. (2018) established the direct relationship between eWOM credibility and eWOM adoption. Further, most of the researchers failed to include the attitude toward eWOM in the conceptual model, which also led to model specification error (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Shen et al., 2016; Tapanainen et al., 2021; Tien et al., 2018).

These inconsistencies and contradictions prevent the generalizability of results which creates confusion among researchers and practitioners. Lack of consensus makes it difficult to draw a meaningful conclusion and impacts future research work (King et al., 2014). Therefore, it is important to resolve these inconsistencies and provide a reliable and conclusive finding. Many researchers have attempted to resolve the inconsistency in the extant eWOM literature using the meta-analysis technique (Hong et al., 2017; Ismagilova et al., 2019; Ismagilova, Slade, Rana, & Dwivedi, 2020; Qahri-Saremi & Montazemi, 2019). However, extant meta-analytic studies suffer from two major limitations. First, most studies have used univariate meta-analysis, which separately examines the relationships between a focal construct (e.g., eWOM helpfulness, intention to buy, sales) and its determinants. Thus, most studies failed to analyze the interrelationships among constructs, which are very important from the theoretical perspective (Hamari & Keronen, 2017; Jeyaraj & Dwivedi, 2020). Second, none of the studies has investigated the mechanism through which eWOM attributes and eWOM evaluation influence the consumers' purchase intention (Table 1). Thus, there is a need for a theory-driven comprehensive model which resolves the contrasting findings and examines the mechanism through which eWOM attributes influence purchase intention. To achieve this objective. Our study goes beyond the previous meta-analyses and provides a theoretical framework that explains the eWOM adoption process and its impact on consumers' purchase intention. Further, a larger database of studies enables us to provide new empirical generalizations. Thus, our study extends the previous meta-analytic studies on eWOM.

Table 1
Meta-analytic studies on eWOM.

Study	Focal Construct	No of Studies	Application of SEM technique
Floyd, Freling, Alhoqail, Cho, and Freling (2014)	Retail Sales	26	No
Purnawirawan et al. (2015)	Review Valence	34	No
You et al. (2015)	Sales	51	No
BabićRosario, Sotgiu, De Valck, and Bijmolt (2016)	Retail Sales	96	No
Hong et al. (2017)	Review Helpfulness	42	No
Yang et al. (2018)	Hotel Performance	25	No
Wang et al. (2019)	Review Helpfulness	53	No
Qahri-Saremi & Montazemi (2019)	eWOM Adoption	87	Yes
Ismagilova et al. (2019)	Intention to Buy	69	No
Hu & Yang. (2021)	Review Helpfulness	27	No
Li et al. (2020)	Retail Sales	28	No
Ismagilova, Slade, et al. (2020)	Source Credibility	20	No
Ismagilova, Rana, Slade, and Dwivedi (2020)	eWOM providing Behavior	51	No
Albayrak & Ceylan. (2021)	Purchase Intention	21	No
Liang et al. (2021)	eWOM Adoption	68	Yes
This Study	Responses to eWOM communication (Credibility, Usefulness, Attitude, Adoption, Purchase Intention)	179	Yes

Therefore, we aim to address this research gap by rigorously synthesizing the result of previous studies on the impact of eWOM communication, using meta-analysis and meta-analytic structural equation modeling (MASEM). Integration of meta-analysis with structural equation modeling provides a more accurate and definite test of a theoretical model than any single method. Therefore, to the best of our knowledge, the present study is the most comprehensive and integrative meta-analytic study on the impact of eWOM communication, which explains the consumers' responses to the eWOM messages and their impact on consumers' purchase intention. To that end, we investigate the following research questions: (1) What eWOM attributes influence the consumers' response to eWOM communication? (2) How does the extended Information Adoption Model explain the eWOM adoption process and its impact on consumers' purchase intention? (3) How well the underline model explain the interrelationship among constructs and their influence on purchase intention? (4) What is the relative importance of the constructs towards the purchase intention? We answer the first research question by adopting the approach suggested by Cheung and Thadani (2012) and use meta-analysis as a method. We address the rest of the research questions through the theoretical lens of the Information Adoption Model (Sussman & Siegal, 2003) while using Meta Analytic Structural Equation Modeling (MASEM) as methodology.

This study contributes to the literature by resolving the inconsistencies present in the extant studies regarding the impact of eWOM attributes on the consumer response to eWOM communication. Using the Information Adoption Model perspective, we explain the role of several key elements in the eWOM adoption process and their impact on purchase intention. Furthermore, our investigation of different mechanisms provides much-needed clarity to the researchers regarding the role of eWOM credibility and attitude towards eWOM on purchase intention. Finally, the examination of moderator variables also sheds light on the influence of culture, product and platform type.

From the managerial perspective, this study thoroughly explains consumers' perceptions towards eWOM and its impact on their purchase

decision. This study offers several suggestions that managers can use to enhance the consumers' purchase intention using eWOM communication. Furthermore, we provide several approaches which eWOM platforms can use to increase the adoption of eWOM messages.

The remainder of the paper is as follows. We first present the theoretical foundation of our study and propose a set of hypotheses. Next, we explain the research methodology, including details of literature identification, effect size coding, meta-analysis, and MASEM procedure. Third, we present our results and discuss the same in the next section. Next, we shed light on the theoretical and managerial implications of our study. Finally, we conclude the paper by discussing the limitations and areas for future research.

2. Theory and hypothesis

2.1. Electronic word of mouth

Rapid popularization and adoption of web 2.0 led to the emergence of an online form of word of mouth, generally referred to as electronic word of mouth (eWOM) (Ismagilova et al., 2017). Massive quantity, diversity, and scalability are some dimensions that differentiate eWOM from traditional WOM (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). eWOM content can be accessed by consumers without any time and place restrictions which makes eWOM communication more accessible than traditional WOM (Ismagilova et al., 2017; King et al., 2014). Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, and Gremler (2004) offered a widespread definition, according to which eWOM is "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a company which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet." However, many researchers argued that eWOM is not limited to customers, as media personalities and social media influencers also share their consumption experience on online platforms (Daniel, Crawford Jackson, & Westerman, 2018; Thorson & Rodgers, 2006). Similarly, eWOM communication can take a neutral tone without any negative or positive intentions (Chung & Kim, 2015; Kietzmann & Canhoto, 2013). Furthermore, eWOM is a more dynamic and ongoing process than traditional WOM (Xun & Reynolds, 2010). Thus, building upon the previous definitions of eWOM, Ismagilova et al. (2017) defined eWOM as "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."

2.2. Elements of eWOM communication

The message, source, medium, and receiver are the main elements of any social communication (Berlo, 1960; Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Ismagilova et al., 2017). Many researchers suggest that eWOM is also a computer-mediated social communication in which the sender and content of the message influence the receiver's response to the communication (Cheung and Chen, 2009; Doh & Hwang, 2009; Yeh & Choi, 2011). Based on this notion, Cheung and Thadani (2012) proposed an integrative model of eWOM communication, which includes four major elements: stimulus, communicator, receiver, and response. Stimulus refers to the eWOM message, while the communicator is the person who transmits the eWOM message. Receiver is the person who receives and responds to the message. Factors associated with the stimulus (message) and communicator (source) influence the receiver's response to the eWOM communication. Also, factors related to the receiver and context act as moderators. Based on this framework and extensive literature survey, we first identified the factors associated with eWOM communication. We then conducted a meta-analysis to consolidate the inconsistent findings regarding stimulus and communicator's impact on eWOM responses. In the next section, we explore how eWOM communication impact the consumer's purchase intention through the lens of the Information Adoption Model (Sussman & Siegal, 2003).

2.3. Theoretical background and research model

In the past two decades, multiple researchers have studied eWOM communication and its impact on consumers' behavioral responses using various theoretical models (Chakraborty, 2019; Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Thomas et al., 2019; Tien et al., 2018). In this study, we use Information Adoption Model (IAM) developed by Sussman & Siegal (2003) as a theoretical model for two major reasons. First, the Information Adoption Model provides a strong explanation regarding the process and factors influencing the consumer decision to adopt information in computer-mediated communication. Electronic word of mouth is also a form of computer-mediated communication; thus, IAM can provide a robust explanation regarding the eWOM adoption process and its consequences (Leung, 2020; Tapanainen et al., 2021). Second, the IAM model has been widely used by researchers to explain the adoption of electronic word of mouth in various contexts. For example, Cheung, Lee, and Rabjohn (2008) explained the information adoption process in an online discussion forum using IAM. Similarly, other researchers also validated the IAM model in the context of online reviews (Leung, 2020; Tapanainen et al., 2021) and social media (Shu & Scott, 2014). Thus, we use IAM as a theoretical model in our study.

According to IAM, due to information overload, consumers focus only on useful and relevant messages, which can help them in their decision-making (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Tapanainen et al., 2021). IAM suggests that argument quality and source credibility are two attributes of online information that help consumers identify useful information (Cheung et al., 2008; Sussman & Siegal, 2003). Argument quality indicates the extent to which information is supported by facts and logic, while source credibility is defined by the source's ability to provide credible information (Cheung and Chen, 2009; Lis, 2013). Thus, source credibility and argument quality are strong predictors of information usefulness that, in turn, influence information adoption (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Sussman & Siegal, 2003). However, many empirical studies argue that information adoption in eWOM communication depends on many factors apart from the eWOM usefulness (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Ismagilova et al., 2017; Tien et al., 2018). For example, eWOM credibility is an important factor that impacts eWOM adoption (Cheung et al., 2009; Luo et al., 2013; Tien et al., 2018). Thus, eWOM credibility and eWOM usefulness mediate the relationship between eWOM antecedents and eWOM adoption (Chong, Khong, Ma, McCabe, & Wang, 2018; Tien et al., 2018). Further, many researchers suggest that attitude towards eWOM is a key predictor of eWOM usefulness (Erkan & Elwalda, 2018; Park, 2020). However, attitude towards information has been neglected in the information adoption model (Arora & Lata, 2020; Gvili & Levy, 2016). Further, many empirical studies in the context of eWOM argued that the Information Adoption Model has limited explanatory power as it failed to illustrate the impact of information adoption on consumers' behavioral responses (Erkan & Elwalda, 2018; Tapanainen et al., 2021; Tien et al., 2018). For example, Erkan and Evans (2016) proposed the extended Information Adoption Model by integrating the eWOM adoption with purchase intention. Further, extant literature suggests that many contextual factors also influence the eWOM adoption process (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Hong et al., 2017). For example, information processing is strongly influenced by the consumers' culture (Knoll, 2016; Luo et al., 2014). Similarly, in the context of eWOM, the moderating role of platform type and platform type has been established by various researchers (Babić Rosario et al., 2016; Tsao & Hsieh, 2015). However, very few studies have integrated the moderating factors into the IAM model. Thus, building upon the previous studies, we propose our conceptual model, depicted in Fig. 1. Similar to previous meta-SEM studies, the inclusion of a construct in our model is guided by the availability of required effect sizes in the extant literature. We discuss the causal relationship between various constructs in the next section.

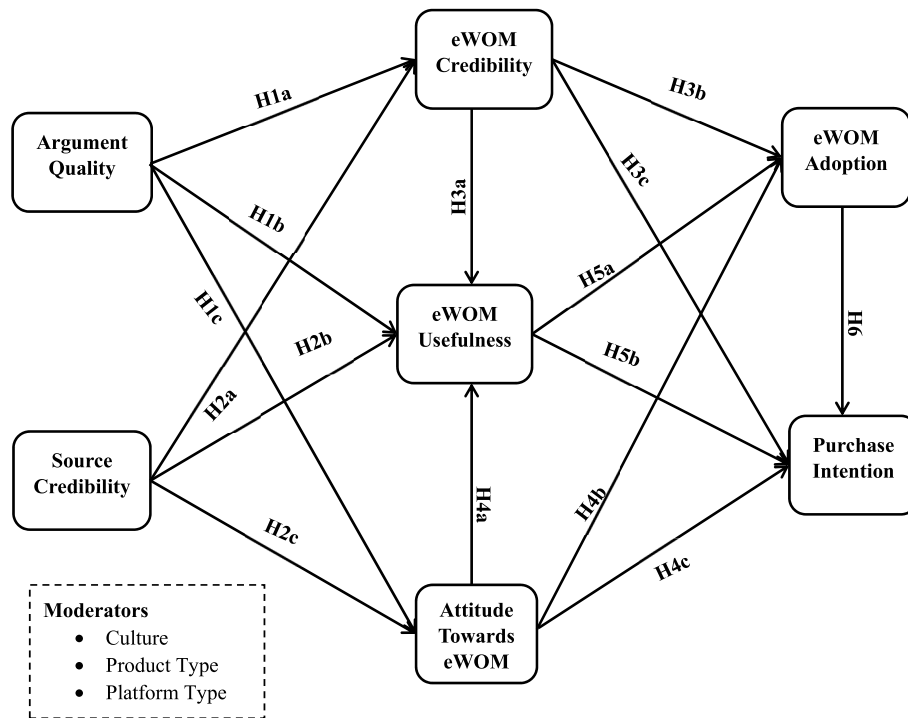


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

2.4. Hypotheses development

2.4.1. Argument quality

Argument quality is defined by the extent to which consumers perceive the eWOM message as valid and convincing to support its position (Chakraborty, 2019). Argument quality of the eWOM message indicates the comprehensiveness and reliability of the information (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Rabjohn et al., 2008). High-quality eWOM messages are supported with facts and logic, while eWOM messages with lower argument quality lack comprehensiveness and accuracy (Cheung et al., 2009; Tsao & Hsieh, 2015). Reliability and accuracy of the information enhance the content's believability, which increases the eWOM credibility (Cheung et al., 2009; Fang, 2014). According to Elaboration Likelihood Model, when consumers process the eWOM message through the central route, argument quality is the significant predictor of eWOM credibility (Chen et al., 2012; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). For example, Cheung et al. (2009) established the positive impact of argument quality on eWOM credibility.

eWOM messages supported with solid arguments also satisfy the needs and requirements of the customers, which helps them in their purchase decision (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Luo et al., 2018a). Thus, argument quality also enhances the perceived usefulness of the eWOM message. (Erkan & Elwalda, 2018; Rabjohn et al., 2008). Extant literature also suggests that solid arguments enhance consumers' attitudes toward eWOM messages (Erkan & Elwalda, 2018). Thus, argument quality is also the significant determinant of the attitude toward eWOM (Khoi & Le, 2018; Park, 2020). Many researchers also empirically validated the positive relationship between argument quality and eWOM usefulness (Chung, Han, & Koo, 2015; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Ismagilova et al., 2017). Based on the above discussion, we propose that.

H1. Argument quality has a positive impact on (a) eWOM credibility, (b) eWOM usefulness, (c) attitude towards eWOM.

2.4.2. Source credibility

Source credibility is defined as the receiver's perception of the credibility of the eWOM message source (Luo et al., 2015). In eWOM communication, the use of virtual identity and lack of familiarity with

the communicator leads to higher uncertainty regarding the eWOM message (Cheung et al., 2009; Kusumasondjaja et al., 2012). Fake and sponsored reviews also lower the consumers' trust in the eWOM message (Filiery, Alguezaui, & McLeay, 2015; Kim et al., 2019). Therefore, according to the Information Adoption Model, source credibility act as a cue that impacts the persuasiveness of eWOM communication (Chen et al., 2012; Ismagilova, Slade, et al., 2020). The source credibility model also suggests that consumers perceive high credible sources as more competent and trustworthy than sources with low credibility (Cheung et al., 2008; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Lis, 2013). Thus, eWOM messages shared by them are more persuasive and convincing, which leads to a greater attitude towards eWOM (Khoi & Le, 2018). Consumers believe that opinions provided by credible sources are free from any personal bias and gains (Luo et al., 2014). Thus, source credibility enhances consumer confidence in the eWOM message, positively influencing the eWOM credibility (Cheung et al., 2009; Ismagilova, Slade, et al., 2020). Information Adoption Model also points out that eWOM messages from credible sources have a substantial impact on consumer decision-making as they provide objective and accurate information (Luo et al., 2018b; Rabjohn et al., 2008; Sussman & Siegal, 2003). Thus, consumers perceive eWOM messages from credible sources as more useful than anonymous sources (Aye, 2015; Ismagilova, Slade, et al., 2020). For example, Chen et al. (2012) established the positive impact of source credibility on eWOM credibility. Similarly, Luo et al. (2018) established that source credibility significantly influences the eWOM usefulness. Therefore, we propose that.

H2. Source credibility has a positive impact on (a) eWOM credibility, (b) eWOM usefulness, (c) attitude towards eWOM.

2.4.3. eWOM credibility

eWOM credibility is defined as the extent to which consumers perceive the online reviews as believable, true, or factual (Cheung et al., 2009). Manipulation of product ratings through paid and fake reviews has increased the consumers' skepticism toward the eWOM message (Ballantine & Au Yeung, 2015; Kim et al., 2019). Therefore, information credibility plays an important role in enhancing trust in the eWOM message (Cheung et al., 2009; Luo et al., 2013). Based on the

Stimulus-Organism-Response paradigm, many researchers suggest that eWOM credibility can be viewed as a cognitive-based organism leading to eWOM adoption and purchase intention as focal responses (Chakraborty, 2019; Fang, 2014; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Credible eWOM messages reduce the purchase-related risks, which positively influence the consumers' purchase intention (Chih, Wang, Hsu, & Huang, 2013; Thomas et al., 2019). For example, Chakraborty (2019) established that eWOM credibility significantly influences the consumers' hotel booking intention. eWOM credibility also significantly influences the consumers' decision to learn and adopt the eWOM messages (Cheung et al., 2009; Lis, 2013). Therefore, consumers are more likely to adopt and use credible eWOM messages in their decision-making (Ismagilova et al., 2017; Tien et al., 2018). For instance, Cheung et al. (2009) established the positive impact of eWOM credibility on eWOM adoption.

eWOM credibility also reduces the uncertainty associated with the eWOM message, which results in higher persuasive effects (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Ismagilova et al., 2017). Thus, the higher credibility of the eWOM message enhances consumer confidence in the eWOM message, which increases eWOM usefulness (Erkan & Elwalda, 2018; Erkan & Evans, 2016). For instance, Chong et al. (2018) established the positive impact of eWOM credibility on eWOM usefulness. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses.

H3. eWOM credibility has a positive impact on (a) eWOM usefulness, (b) eWOM adoption, (c) purchase intention.

2.4.4. Attitude towards eWOM

Attitude toward eWOM is defined by the individual's disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably towards eWOM (Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977). Attitude is a key construct that explains the individual decision to engage in a particular behavior. For example, according to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), a positive attitude leads to positive behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977). Similarly, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) argues that attitude toward technology is the key determinant of intention to use technology (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalfú, 2011; Davis, 1989). Further, the relationship between attitude and behavioral intention is well established in the extant literature (Ayeh et al., 2013; Cheung & Thadani, 2012). Due to information abundance, consumers have range of information sources that they can use in their decision-making (Furner & Zinko, 2017; Park et al., 2006). However, consumers focus only on those information sources which are relevant to their attitudes (Celsi & Olson, 1988; Holbrook, Berent, Krosnick, Visser, & Boninger, 2005). In this situation, attitude toward eWOM becomes a crucial factor that influences the consumers' behavioral response (Ismagilova et al., 2017). A favorable attitude toward eWOM shows consumers' confidence in the given recommendation, which positively influences the eWOM usefulness (Arora & Lata, 2020; Erkan & Elwalda, 2018). Furthermore, Consumers' attitude toward eWOM also determines the perceived utility of the information, influencing the perceived eWOM usefulness (Erkan & Evans, 2016). A positive attitude results in higher persuasiveness of the eWOM message, which positively influences the consumers' purchase intention (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Erkan & Evans, 2016). Thus, a favorable attitude toward eWOM positively impacts the consumers' decision to adopt and use the eWOM message in their purchase decision (Erkan & Elwalda, 2018; Ismagilova et al., 2019). Many researchers also established that attitude towards eWOM is a significant predictor of consumers' intention to follow eWOM (Ayeh et al., 2013). For example, Erkan and Evans (2016) has established the positive impact of attitude toward eWOM on purchase intention. Similarly, Zainal et al. (2017) suggest that attitude toward eWOM significantly influences eWOM adoption. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses.

H4. Attitude towards eWOM has a positive impact on (a) eWOM usefulness, (b) eWOM adoption, (c) purchase intention.

2.4.5. eWOM usefulness

eWOM usefulness is defined by the extent to which consumers perceive the eWOM message as being useful (Erkan & Evans, 2016). A high volume of eWOM content makes eWOM processing difficult for consumers due to information overload (Furner, Zinko, & Zhu, 2016; Hu & Krishen, 2019). According to the Information Adoption Model, consumers use various heuristics to evaluate the eWOM message and use only those that satisfy their needs and requirements (Rabjohn et al., 2008; Sussman & Siegal, 2003; Tien et al., 2018). In this process, consumers filter out the irrelevant eWOM messages and consider only useful eWOM messages for decision-making (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Hajli, 2015). Thus, eWOM usefulness becomes an important factor that impacts the consumer decision to adopt the eWOM message (Arora & Lata, 2020; Park, 2020). For example, Chong et al. (2018) established that eWOM usefulness positively influences eWOM adoption. Information from useful eWOM messages also impacts the consumers' purchase decisions, as it modifies their attitude towards the product (Purnawirawan et al., 2012). Useful eWOM message helps consumers to discover more relevant and personalized information, which is difficult to get from other information sources such as product description and commercial advertising (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Ismagilova et al., 2017). Thus, eWOM usefulness enhances eWOM utility, positively impacting the consumers' purchase intention (Erkan & Elwalda, 2018; Ismagilova et al., 2019). For instance, Tien et al. (2018) established that in social networking sites, eWOM usefulness positively influences purchase intention. Overall eWOM usefulness significantly influences eWOM adoption and purchase intention (Chong et al., 2018; Ismagilova et al., 2019; Tien et al., 2018). Therefore, the subsequent hypotheses are.

H5. eWOM usefulness has a positive impact on (a) eWOM adoption, (b) purchase intention.

2.4.6. eWOM adoption

eWOM adoption is defined by the consumers' acceptance and use of eWOM messages (Tien et al., 2018). The rapid growth of e-commerce and the increasing number of consumption choices in the marketplace make eWOM an integral part of consumer decision-making (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Ismagilova et al., 2017). Consumers consider eWOM messages more useful and trustworthy than commercial advertising (King et al., 2014; Nielson, 2015). Thus, based on the eWOM messages, consumers form opinions about the products, which significantly impact their purchase decision (Bae et al., 2017; Tien et al., 2018). Moreover, if the eWOM message contains positive statements about the product, consumers are more likely to buy that product (Ismagilova et al., 2019). In contrast, negative statements in eWOM messages reduce the consumers' willingness to purchase (Purnawirawan et al., 2012). Information Acceptance Model (IACM) also suggests that information adopted by eWOM messages helps consumers in reducing their purchase-related risks, which impact their purchase intention (Erkan & Evans, 2016). For instance, based on the Information Adoption Model (Sussman & Siegal, 2003) and Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977), Erkan and Elwalda (2018) established the positive relationship between eWOM adoption and purchase intention. In summary, consumers' decision to adopt the eWOM message significantly influences their purchase decision (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Tien et al., 2018). Therefore, we propose that.

H6. eWOM adoption has a positive impact on purchase intention.

2.4.7. Culture

National culture refers to "a system of values and norms that are shared among a group of people and that when taken together constitute a design for living" (Doney, Cannon, & Mullen, 1998). According to Hofstede (1980), consumers from different cultures differ in several dimensions, influencing information processing and decision making. For example, consumers from western cultures (e.g., USA, Germany) are more individualistic, while consumers from eastern cultures (e.g.,

China, India) are more inclined toward collectivism (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). People from highly individualistic cultures are more independent and use their cognition for information processing. In contrast, people from collectivistic cultures are more likely to follow others' opinions (Sarkar et al., 2020; Shen et al., 2014). Since consumers from individualistic cultures are more rational and independent in their decision-making, they are more likely to use the argument quality to assess the credibility and usefulness of online reviews (LeFebvre & Franke, 2013). Thus, argument quality may exert a stronger impact on review credibility and review usefulness in western culture than in eastern culture (Luo et al., 2014b). In contrast, consumers from collectivistic cultures may be more willing to accept the opinion of others (de la Hoz-Correa & Munoz-Leiva, 2019). Thus, consumers from collectivistic cultures are more willing to utilize source-related attributes to judge the credibility of online reviews (Luo et al., 2014). For example, Asian people are more likely to use the advice of online reviewers as compared to North American people (Obal & Kunz, 2016).

National culture also influences the impact of eWOM on consumers' decisions. For instance, people from collectivistic cultures are more likely to seek and share online reviews due to a higher level of trust among people (Chu & Choi, 2011; Y. Hong, Huang, Burtch, & Li, 2016). Furthermore, consumers from collectivistic cultures find others' opinions more useful as they are more susceptible to social influence (Hofstede & Bond, 1984; W. Shen et al., 2014). Thus, consumers from collectivistic cultures consider online reviews more useful as information from other consumers helps them in a purchase decision (Chu & Choi, 2011). Thus, reviews with highly relevant and helpful content will strongly influence consumers' decisions in a collectivistic culture. Park & Lee (2009) also suggest that review usefulness exert a stronger influence on purchase intention in collectivistic culture than in individualistic culture. Therefore, we explore the moderating role of national culture.

2.4.8. Platform type

Platform type refers to the online platform where eWOM message is posted by the reviewers (Ismagilova et al., 2017). According to Cheung and Thadani (2012), eWOM platforms can be divided into five major categories: E-commerce websites, Social Networking Sites, Online Review Sites, Online Discussion Forums, and Blogs. Each platform provides a different set of features and benefits to the consumers, which influence the eWOM evaluation and its impact (Levy & Gvili, 2015). For example, online discussion forums provide more detailed information about a specific topic/product than other eWOM platforms (Chih et al., 2013). Furthermore, as online discussion forums are generally free from any commercial motives, eWOM messages posted on these forums are considered more trustworthy (Cao, Yan, & Li, 2018). Similarly, social networking websites provide multiple features (e.g., share, comment, and like) through which consumers can interact with their friends and family (Gvili & Levy, 2016). In contrast, e-commerce platforms generally focus on product attributes; thus, they provide limited information about the reviewers (Benlian, Titah, & Hess, 2012). Therefore, the interaction between consumers on e-commerce platforms is very low; thus, consumers don't develop a strong relationships with other users (Yan et al., 2018). Therefore, eWOM messages posted on social networking sites and online discussion forums are more believable and trustworthy than online retailers (Cao et al., 2018; Tsao & Hsieh, 2015). In conclusion, platform type strongly influences the consumers' attitude towards review and reviewer, influencing the consumers' decision. For example, Yan et al. (2018) established that type of eWOM platform (E-commerce vs. Social networking sites) significantly influence the perceived eWOM credibility. Similarly, based on the meta-analytic review, Hong et al. (2017) revealed that the relationship between eWOM helpfulness and its antecedents is moderated by the platform type. Other meta-analytic studies on eWOM also established the moderating role of platform type (Babić Rosario et al., 2016; Floyd et al., 2014). Therefore, we explore the moderating role of platform type.

2.4.9. Product type

Product and services can be categorized into two main categories: Search and Experience. (Lin et al., 2012). Researchers suggest that information about quality and attributes of search goods can be evaluated before purchase, while attributes of experience goods are difficult to determine before purchase (Darby & Karni, 1973; Hong et al., 2017; Nelson, 1970). Examples of search goods include smartphones and cameras, while movies and hotels are considered to experience goods (Chen, 2016). Due to this difference, experience goods involve more purchase risks than search goods (Pan & Chiou, 2011). Further, the evaluation of experience goods is more subjective and requires additional information, whereas search goods can be evaluated objectively using the seller information only (Baek, Ahn, & Choi, 2012). Thus, consumers need more information to reduce the uncertainty associated with the experience goods (Lin et al., 2012). Researchers have established the differential effect on eWOM based on the product type (Hong et al., 2017; Tan & Lee, 2019). For example, two-sided reviews written by the expert reviewer are more helpful for search goods as compared to experience goods. (Chen, 2016). Extant studies also suggest that the impact of eWOM attributes on purchase intention is moderate by product type. For example, Lee & Shin (2014) established that product type moderates the indirect impact of review quality on consumers' purchase intention. Similarly, Tsao & Hsieh (2015) established the moderating role of product type on the relationship between positive eWOM and purchase intention. Therefore, we explore the moderating role of product type.

3. Methodology

3.1. Review procedure

We used PRISMA protocol for the selection of studies (Moher et al., 2010). The researchers have extensively used PRISMA protocol for systematic reviews and meta-analysis (Qahri-Saremi & Montazemi, 2019; Snyder, 2019). It includes four stages: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. In the next section, we explain the following steps.

3.1.1. Identification

In the identification stage, we undertook a comprehensive search to identify the relevant articles using the all the major electronic databases: Web of Science, Wiley, Science direct, SAGE, Taylor and Francis, and Emerald. These databases are the most comprehensive electronic databases, and they are extensively used in previous meta-analytic studies and systematic literature reviews (Hong et al., 2017; Ismagilova et al., 2019). We have limited our search from 2000 to July 2022 as people started writing eWOM messages at the beginning of 2000 (Verma & Yadav, 2021). Next, based on the previous meta-analytic studies (Hong et al., 2017; Ismagilova et al., 2019; Qahri-Saremi & Montazemi, 2019), we used the following search terms to identify the relevant articles: "User generated content" OR "Electronic word of mouth" OR "online customer review" OR "Online consumer review" OR "Online review" OR "Internet word of mouth" OR "Virtual word of mouth" OR "iWOM" OR "Online Recommendation." Combinations of these allowed us to locate those articles that have used different terminology for eWOM, such as an online review or online recommendation. The initial search resulted in 8943 articles (Appendix A). After removing the duplicates (N = 2891), 6052 articles were eligible for the screening stage.

3.1.2. Screening

We have used the following criteria for the first level of screening of the articles using abstract and titles: (1) The study should have direct relevance to the evaluation, adoption, or impact of Electronic word of mouth (2) the Language of the article should be English (3) Quantitative studies which have used the primary data (e.g., survey, experiments) for analysis. Based on the above criteria following types of articles were

excluded (1) Systematic review/conceptual/book reviews/editorial/meta-analysis articles (N = 121) (2) Articles which have not used primary data (e.g., data extracted from Amazon, Trip Advisor) (N = 2119) (3) Articles in other languages (N = 13) (4) Articles which have not focused on the eWOM evaluation and its impact (N = 3349) (e.g., eWOM providing behavior). In total, 5602 articles have not fulfilled the screening criteria, which resulted in 450 articles being eligible for the next stage.

3.1.3. Eligibility

After the initial screening, we assessed the full text of the articles. We included only those articles that fulfilled the following criteria: (1) the article had investigated one of the response variables (i.e., eWOM credibility, eWOM adoption, purchase intention, attitude towards eWOM, and eWOM usefulness) (2) the articles should provide the sample size and correlation coefficients (or other statistical parameters such as t value, F value, regression coefficients which can be converted into correlation coefficient). Based on the above criteria, 271 articles were excluded as 246 articles have not investigated the required response variables, while 25 articles did not provide the necessary details for meta-analysis.

3.1.4. Inclusion

After the eligibility phase, 179 articles were finally included for meta-analysis. We extracted the key information from the articles, which include descriptive items (title, year, authors, sample type, study design), statistical information (sample size, correlation coefficients), and details of variables studied. However, some articles did not report the correlation coefficient. In this case, we extracted other statistical values (t value, F value, Standardized regression coefficient). We also extracted the cultural background of the sample, platform type, and product type from the studies. Next, we standardized the nomenclature of the constructs, which had different names in studies but measured the similar concept. For example, review adoption, information adoption, and eWOM adoption were treated as the same construct in the analysis. Also, when more than one study was conducted in a single article, we treated them as two separate samples in our analysis. Details of common aliases and samples are given in the Electronic Supplementary Material. Two authors of the article were involved in the coding. Any discrepancies were solved through mutual discussion. Following the data extraction stage, we identified the most frequently studied relationships. As suggested in the previous studies, we did not include those relationships for meta-analysis, which appeared less than three times in the extant literature (Hong et al., 2017; Sarkar et al., 2020).

3.2. Meta-analytic correlation analysis

Meta-analysis can be conducted using the two statistical models, the fixed effect and random effect. These two models have different assumption which impacts the meta-analysis procedure and results (Borenstein, Hedges, Higgins, & Rothstein, 2010; Hong et al., 2017). The fixed effect model assumes that all estimated effect sizes in the studies are based on a common true effect, and sampling error is the main reason for the difference in observed effects. In contrast, the random effect model assumes that true effect size varies across studies due to heterogeneity (Borenstein et al., 2010; Hamari & Keronen, 2017; Lipsey & Wilson, 2001). Based on the extant literature, we believe that relationships in our research model vary due to the context and nature of the study (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Ismagilova, Rana, Slade, & Dwivedi, 2020). Thus, we employed a random effect model in our meta-analysis. Previous meta-analysis studies conducted in the eWOM context also used the random effect model (Hong et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2019). Moreover, we checked our random effect model approach using the Q statistics and I^2 index, which assess the extent of heterogeneity among effect sizes (Borenstein et al., 2010; Hong et al., 2017). Further, we also evaluated the risk of publication bias, which can occur

due to the exclusion of non-significant results. We have adopted the Orwin (1983) method, which uses the fail-safe N method to assess the publication bias (Hamari & Keronen, 2017). We have conducted a meta-analysis using the *dmetar* package available in R software (Harrer, Cuijpers, Furukawa, & Ebert, 2019). Based on the suggestion in extant literature (Hong et al., 2017; Sarkar et al., 2020), we did not conduct a meta-analysis on those relationships where the number of samples was less than three.

3.3. Moderator analysis

In the moderator analysis, we examine the moderating role of culture, product type, and platform type. Extant literature suggests that the impact and response to eWOM can vary based on these factors (Hong et al., 2017; Luo et al., 2014; Tsao & Hsieh, 2015). Based on the sample demographic, we categorized each study into two categories, western and eastern culture (Sarkar et al., 2020). Studies conducted in the cross-culture context were excluded from the moderator analysis. Similarly, we classified the platform type into five categories: online discussion platforms, online review sites, blogs, social networking sites, and e-commerce sites, as suggested by Cheung and Thadani (2012). Finally, based on the research context, we coded each study as “experience product” or “search product” (Hong et al., 2017). Studies not conducted in any specific product and platform context were excluded from the moderator analysis.

3.4. Meta-analytic structural equation modeling (MASEM)

In order to investigate the proposed casual relationships in our research model, we conducted meta-analytic structural equation modeling (MASEM). Previous studies have widely used the MASEM technique to examine the interrelationship among constructs (Jeyaraj & Dwivedi, 2020). MASEM requires two inputs: covariance matrix or correlation matrix with a standard deviation of constructs and sample size of the model. Based on the recommendations and previous practice in meta-analytic studies (Cheung, 2015; Hamari & Keronen, 2017), we used a correlation matrix with unit standard deviation. The use of a correlation matrix avoids the unnecessary exclusion of studies, as most of the studies in our analysis have not reported the standard deviation of the constructs (Cheung, 2015). A correlation matrix was constructed using the results of a meta-analysis. Besides, in our meta-analysis, each relationship has a different sample size. Thus, to calculate the sample size of the model, we used the harmonic mean of each relationship's sample size as suggested in the previous studies (Hamari & Keronen, 2017; Landis, 2013; Yu et al., 2020). We conducted the MASEM using AMOS v 24.0 software using the correlation matrix obtained from the meta-analysis (Appendix C).

4. Results

We first present the results of a meta-analysis. Then we present the result of the moderator analysis and finally conclude the section with MASEM results.

4.1. Meta-analytic correlation results

Table 2 shows the result of the meta-analytic correlation analysis. In summary, all the factors associated with the stimuli and communicator have a significant positive relationship with eWOM responses. Results of the heterogeneity test (Appendix B) show that the majority of the estimated Q values (more than 96%) are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), which confirms the heterogeneity among studies (Hamari & Keronen, 2017; Yu et al., 2020). Moreover, the mean value of I^2 is 90.52%, which is above the threshold value (80%), which also confirms the presence of heterogeneity in the data (Hong et al., 2017; Sarkar et al., 2020). Results of the heterogeneity test validate our assumption of the random effect

Table 2
The univariate results.

	Response									
	eWOM Credibility		eWOM Adoption		Purchase Intention		eWOM Usefulness		Attitude Towards eWOM	
	r	C.I. [Lower, Upper]	r	C.I. [Lower, Upper]	r	C.I. [Lower, Upper]	r	C.I. [Lower, Upper]	r	C.I. [Lower, Upper]
Stimuli										
Argument Quality	0.567***	[0.487, 0.638]	0.511***	[0.456, 0.562]	0.446***	[0.351, 0.533]	0.517***	[0.410, 0.609]	0.586***	[0.468, 0.684]
Recommendation Valence	0.235***	[0.134, 0.332]	0.203***	[0.143, 0.262]	0.522**	[0.338, 0.667]	–	–	–	–
Recommendation Comprehensiveness	0.553***	[0.295, 0.736]	0.501***	[0.379, 0.606]	0.310**	[0.117, 0.481]	0.567***	[0.422, 0.684]	–	–
Recommendation Consistency	0.418***	[0.287, 0.534]	0.410***	[0.330, 0.484]	0.277***	[0.142, 0.402]	–	–	–	–
Recommendation Quantity	0.455***	[0.364, 0.538]	0.366**	[0.139, 0.556]	0.286***	[0.147, 0.415]	–	–	–	–
Recommendation Rating	0.401***	[0.277, 0.511]	0.450***	[0.268, 0.601]	–	–	–	–	–	–
Recommendation Sidedness	0.302***	[0.206, 0.392]	–	–	0.241*	[0.017, 0.442]	–	–	–	–
Recommendation Timeliness	–	–	0.240**	[0.078, 0.389]	0.255*	[0.014, 0.468]	0.380***	[0.170, 0.558]	–	–
Recommendation Accuracy	–	–	0.402***	[0.277, 0.513]	0.170*	[0.021, 0.311]	0.498***	[0.336, 0.631]	–	–
Communicator										
Source Credibility	0.539***	[0.447, 0.619]	0.439***	[0.376, 0.498]	0.458***	[0.373, 0.535]	0.494***	[0.390, 0.586]	0.452**	[0.128, 0.689]
Source Expertise	0.535***	[0.447, 0.612]	0.519***	[0.413, 0.612]	0.435***	[0.347, 0.515]	0.451***	[0.315, 0.569]	0.506***	[0.374, 0.619]
Source Trustworthiness	0.571***	[0.435, 0.682]	0.521***	[0.350, 0.658]	0.416***	[0.317, 0.505]	0.461***	[0.332, 0.573]	0.554***	[0.427, 0.659]
Tie Strength	0.366***	[0.202, 0.510]	0.393***	[0.223, 0.539]	0.287**	[0.113, 0.444]	–	–	–	–
Homophily	0.465***	[0.220, 0.655]	0.386***	[0.294, 0.471]	0.357***	[0.192, 0.502]	0.351***	[0.261, 0.435]	0.456***	[0.422, 0.488]

Note: ***p-values <0.001, **p-values <0.01, *p-values <0.05.

model in the meta-analysis. Regarding the publication bias, [Orwin's \(1983\)](#) fail-safe N test indicates the low risk of publication bias per the ad-hoc rule (ratio of fail-safe N/number of studies should be greater than 2.0). As per the results ([Appendix B](#)), around 85% of the estimated ratios exceed the threshold limit of 2.0, which shows that publication bias has a negligible impact on the results. The univariate meta-analysis ([Table 2](#)) shows a large variation in correlation strength between eWOM attributes and eWOM responses. For example, source trustworthiness is the strongest predictor of eWOM credibility ($r = 0.571^{***}$), and eWOM adoption ($r = 0.521^{***}$). It also has a strong association with attitude towards eWOM ($r = 0.554^{***}$) and eWOM usefulness ($r = 0.461^{***}$). In contrast, recommendation valence is the weakest predictor of eWOM credibility ($r = 0.235^{***}$), and eWOM adoption ($r =$

0.203^{***}). However, recommendation valence is strongly associated with the purchase intention ($r = 0.522^{**}$). Argument quality also shows the strong relationship with eWOM credibility ($r = 0.567^{***}$), attitude towards eWOM ($r = 0.586^{***}$), and eWOM adoption ($r = 0.511^{***}$). Moreover, recommendation comprehensiveness, source credibility, and source expertise are also strongly associated with the eWOM responses, as shown in [Table 2](#).

4.2. Moderator results

We have tested the impact of three moderators, mainly culture, product type, and platform type. We tested the role of moderators only on those relationships which appeared in our research model. Further,

Table 3
Meta-analysis for moderating effect of culture and product type.

Relationship	Culture			Product			
	Q	Eastern (k)	Western (k)	Q	Experience (k)	Search (k)	Others (k)
Argument quality-eWOM credibility	0.76 ^{n.s.}	0.548*** (21)	0.620*** (8)	5.84 ^{n.s.}	0.459*** (10)	0.537*** (6)	0.646*** (14)
Argument quality-eWOM usefulness	0.01 ^{n.s.}	0.513*** (22)	0.538*** (4)	0.65 ^{n.s.}	0.541*** (11)	0.377 ^{n.s.} (5)	0.551*** (10)
Source credibility-eWOM credibility	–	–	–	2.76 ^{n.s.}	0.517*** (5)	0.417*** (3)	0.592*** (8)
Source credibility-eWOM usefulness	–	–	–	331.40***	0.517*** (8)	0.521*** (3)	0.431*** (4)
eWOM credibility-eWOM usefulness	0.30 ^{n.s.}	0.504*** (12)	0.555*** (11)	1.29 ^{n.s.}	0.570*** (11)	0.421*** (6)	0.564*** (7)
eWOM credibility-eWOM adoption	0.59 ^{n.s.}	0.565*** (30)	0.611*** (10)	1.95 ^{n.s.}	0.565*** (15)	0.632*** (9)	0.535*** (18)
eWOM credibility- Purchase intention	0.00 ^{n.s.}	0.474*** (21)	0.471*** (13)	0.70 ^{n.s.}	0.464*** (21)	0.467*** (6)	0.505*** (8)
Attitude towards eWOM-eWOM usefulness	2.14 ^{n.s.}	0.509*** (10)	0.622*** (4)	21.30***	0.549*** (9)	0.257*** (2)	0.660*** (3)
Attitude towards eWOM-eWOM adoption	–	–	–	19.22***	0.642*** (7)	0.318*** (3)	0.645*** (3)
Attitude towards eWOM -Purchase intention	0.02 ^{n.s.}	0.551*** (10)	0.566*** (5)	3.23 ^{n.s.}	0.596*** (10)	0.479*** (4)	0.482*** (2)
eWOM usefulness-eWOM adoption	2.82 ^{n.s.}	0.582*** (26)	0.686*** (10)	0.17 ^{n.s.}	0.613*** (21)	0.599*** (5)	0.623*** (12)
eWOM usefulness-Purchase intention	0.18 ^{n.s.}	0.461*** (15)	0.504*** (10)	12.57**	0.568*** (15)	0.037 ^{n.s.} (4)	0.485*** (6)
eWOM adoption-Purchase intention	0.10 ^{n.s.}	0.533*** (21)	0.492*** (3)	2.97 ^{n.s.}	0.503*** (15)	0.466*** (5)	0.684*** (5)

Note: ***p-values <0.001, **p-values <0.01, *p-values <0.05, k = sample size.

we could not perform the moderator analysis for some relationships due to insufficient data (minimum of three studies in at least two subgroups).

Results of moderator analysis reveal that culture does not significantly impact the relationships' strength, as indicated in Table 3. Regarding the product type, results reveal that (Table 3), product type moderates the relationship between source credibility and eWOM usefulness ($Q = 331.40^{***}$), attitude towards eWOM and eWOM usefulness ($Q = 21.30^{***}$), attitude towards eWOM and eWOM adoption ($Q = 19.22^{***}$) and eWOM usefulness and purchase intention ($Q = 12.57^{**}$). The moderator analysis also established the moderating role of platform type (Table 4). For example, the relationship between argument quality and eWOM credibility ($Q = 16.24^{**}$), source credibility and eWOM usefulness ($Q = 80.22^{***}$), eWOM credibility and eWOM usefulness ($Q = 11.98^*$), eWOM credibility and eWOM adoption ($Q = 29.91^{***}$), attitude towards eWOM and eWOM usefulness ($Q = 11.20^*$), attitude towards eWOM and purchase intention ($Q = 61.56^{***}$), eWOM usefulness and eWOM adoption ($Q = 14.40^{**}$), eWOM usefulness and purchase intention ($Q = 47.25^{***}$), and eWOM adoption and purchase intention ($Q = 18.45^{**}$). Therefore, we suggest that platform type is a significant moderator in the context of eWOM communication.

4.3. MASEM results

The results of the MASEM indicate that hypothesized model fits the data reasonably well as several fit indices meet the required values ($\chi^2 = 818.7$, $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.956, NFI = 0.955, GFI = 0.962, SRMR = 0.054). As shown in Table 5 and Fig. 2, the all-proposed hypotheses are supported by the results. Our research model explains the 38 percent variance in purchase intention, 48 percent variance in eWOM adoption, and 40 percent variance in eWOM usefulness. According to results, argument quality is significantly related to eWOM credibility ($\beta = 0.385^{***}$), eWOM usefulness ($\beta = 0.145^{***}$), and attitude towards eWOM ($\beta = 0.486^{***}$), which supports the H1a-c. Similarly, source credibility has a significant positive impact on eWOM credibility ($\beta = 0.321^{***}$), eWOM usefulness ($\beta = 0.186^{***}$), and attitude towards eWOM ($\beta = 0.176^{***}$), supporting H2a-c.

Our MASEM result also confirms the hypotheses H3a-c as eWOM credibility is positively related to eWOM usefulness ($\beta = 0.208^{***}$), eWOM adoption ($\beta = 0.237^{***}$), and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.117^{***}$). Besides, results also establish the positive influence of attitude towards eWOM on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.296^{***}$), eWOM usefulness ($\beta = 0.262^{***}$), and eWOM adoption ($\beta = 0.267^{***}$). Further, eWOM usefulness is positively related to eWOM adoption ($\beta = 0.353^{***}$) and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.118^{***}$). Finally, eWOM adoption has a significant positive impact on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.230^{***}$).

4.3.1. Indirect effects

Our indirect effect analysis reveals (Table 6) that eWOM credibility (0.054^{***}), eWOM usefulness (0.081^{***}), and attitude towards eWOM (0.061^{***}) have an indirect effect on purchase intention through eWOM adoption. Since these variables also have a direct and positive relationship with purchase intention, eWOM adoption acts as a partial mediator. Our indirect analysis results also confirm that eWOM usefulness partially mediates the impact of eWOM credibility (0.073^{***}) and attitude towards eWOM (0.092^{***}) on eWOM adoption. Overall, our results support the indirect impact of eWOM credibility (0.016^{***}) and attitude towards eWOM (0.021^{***}) on purchase intention through both eWOM usefulness and eWOM adoption, as indicated in Table 6.

4.3.2. Total effects

We also computed the total effect of all variables on purchase intention, which helps us to determine the importance of each construct towards purchase intention. Total effect (Table 7) indicates the combined effect of both direct and indirect effect paths from a given factor to a dependent factor. Based on the total effect, the most important factor is attitude toward eWOM (0.410^{***}), followed by the eWOM adoption

Table 4
Meta-analysis for moderating effect of platform type.

Relationship	Platform	Q	k	r
Argument quality-eWOM credibility	E-commerce	16.24 ^{**}	4	0.519 ^{**}
	Online Discussion Forum		6	0.546 ^{***}
	Online Review Site		7	0.571 ^{***}
	Social Networking Site		12	0.573 ^{***}
	Others		1	0.744 ^{***}
Argument quality-eWOM usefulness	E-commerce	1.96 ^{n.s.}	4	0.414 ^{***}
	Online Discussion Forum		6	0.478 ^{***}
	Online Review Site		4	0.624 ^{***}
	Social Networking Site		9	0.555 ^{***}
	Others		3	0.440 ^{***}
Source credibility-eWOM credibility	Online Discussion Forum	2.47 ^{n.s.}	7	0.569 ^{***}
	Online Review Site		3	0.417 ^{**}
	Social Networking Site		4	0.485 ^{***}
	Blogs		2	0.671 ^{***}
	E-commerce		1	0.513 ^{***}
Source credibility-eWOM usefulness	Online Discussion Forum	80.22 ^{***}	3	0.516 ^{***}
	Online Review Site		4	0.584 ^{***}
	Social Networking Site		5	0.517 ^{***}
	Others		2	0.156 ^{***}
	E-commerce		8	0.516 ^{***}
eWOM credibility-eWOM usefulness	Online Discussion Forum	11.98 [*]	2	0.379 ^{***}
	Online Review Site		7	0.519 ^{***}
	Social Networking Site		6	0.595 ^{***}
	Others		1	0.664 ^{***}
	E-commerce		10	0.578 ^{***}
eWOM credibility-eWOM adoption	Online Discussion Forum	29.91 ^{***}	7	0.494 ^{***}
	Online Review Site		8	0.558 ^{***}
	Social Networking Site		12	0.658 ^{***}
	Blogs		1	0.452 ^{***}
	Others		4	0.381 ^{***}
eWOM credibility- Purchase intention	E-commerce	5.76 ^{n.s.}	8	0.455 ^{***}
	Online Discussion Forum		2	0.409 ^{***}
	Online Review Site		12	0.472 ^{***}
	Social Networking Site		9	0.488 ^{***}
	Others		4	0.515 ^{***}
Attitude towards eWOM-eWOM usefulness	E-commerce	11.20 [*]	2	0.521 [*]
	Online Discussion Forum		1	0.689 ^{***}
	Online Review Site		4	0.562 ^{***}
	Social Networking Site		7	0.513 ^{***}
	Others		4	0.515 ^{***}
Attitude towards eWOM -Purchase intention	E-commerce	61.56 ^{***}	2	0.400 ^{**}
	Online Discussion Forum		1	0.789 ^{***}
	Online Review Site		4	0.640 ^{***}
	Social Networking Site		6	0.519 ^{***}
	Others		3	0.401 ^{***}
eWOM usefulness-eWOM adoption	E-commerce	14.40 ^{**}	8	0.617 ^{***}
	Online Discussion Forum		3	0.303 ^{**}
	Online Review Site		12	0.597 ^{***}
	Social Networking Site		9	0.719 ^{***}
	Others		6	0.595 ^{***}
eWOM usefulness-Purchase intention	E-commerce	47.25 ^{***}	5	0.449 ^{***}
	Online Discussion Forum		3	0.536 ^{***}
	Online Review Site		6	0.555 ^{***}
	Others		10	0.461 ^{***}

(continued on next page)

Table 4 (continued)

Relationship	Platform	Q	k	r	
eWOM adoption-Purchase intention	Social Networking Site	18.45**	1	0.034***	
	Blogs		4	0.516***	
	E-commerce		1	0.508***	
	Online Discussion Forum		7	0.531***	
	Online Review Site		11	0.589**	
	Social Networking Site				
	Others		2	0.300***	

Note: ***p-values <0.001, **p-values <0.01, *p-values <0.05.

Table 5

Results of hypotheses testing using MASEM.

Hypotheses	Relationship	Coefficient Estimation	Standard Error	Results
H1a	Argument quality-eWOM credibility	0.385***	0.013	Supported
H1b	Argument quality-eWOM usefulness	0.145***	0.015	Supported
H1c	Argument quality-attitude towards eWOM	0.486***	0.013	Supported
H2a	Source credibility-eWOM credibility	0.321***	0.013	Supported
H2b	Source credibility-eWOM usefulness	0.186***	0.013	Supported
H2c	Source credibility-attitude towards eWOM	0.176***	0.013	Supported
H3a	eWOM credibility-eWOM usefulness	0.208***	0.013	Supported
H3b	eWOM credibility-eWOM adoption	0.237***	0.011	Supported
H3c	eWOM credibility-purchase intention	0.117***	0.012	Supported
H4a	Attitude towards eWOM-eWOM usefulness	0.262***	0.013	Supported
H4b	Attitude towards eWOM-eWOM adoption	0.267***	0.011	Supported
H4c	Attitude towards eWOM -purchase intention	0.296***	0.013	Supported
H5a	eWOM usefulness-eWOM adoption	0.353***	0.012	Supported
H5b	eWOM usefulness-Purchase intention	0.118***	0.014	Supported
H6	eWOM adoption-Purchase intention	0.230***	0.015	Supported

Note: ***p-values <0.001, **p-values <0.01, *p-values <0.05.

(0.230***).

5. Discussion

Our study not only resolves the inconsistencies in the extant literature but also tests the comprehensive model of eWOM communication. Based on the results of our study, we focus on five major areas:

First, our univariate meta-analytic analysis reveals that communicator-related attributes are more influential than stimuli-related attributes. For example, source trustworthiness is the strongest predictor of eWOM credibility and eWOM adoption. However, most studies have not paid much attention to source trustworthiness in the context of IAM. We also could not include source trustworthiness in our research model due to data unavailability. Thus, researchers should pay more attention to source attributes, as they play an important role in influencing consumers' response to eWOM communication. Also, it is

easy for consumers to evaluate the source's trustworthiness and credibility as eWOM platforms provide various cues (e.g., badges, profile picture) related to source attributes. In contrast, evaluation of stimuli-related attributes (e.g., recommendation comprehensiveness, argument quality) requires more cognitive efforts.

Second, our univariate analysis indicates that recommendation valence exerts the least influence on eWOM credibility and eWOM usefulness. This is due to inconsistency in the literature as some studies suggest that positive eWOM are more credible than negative eWOM (Lim & Van Der Heide, 2015; Pentina et al., 2018), while some studies suggest negativity in online reviews leads to higher credibility (Hong & Park, 2012; Kusumasondjaja et al., 2012). Furthermore, the stronger impact of argument quality on eWOM usefulness than source attributes suggest that convincing and valid points enhance the eWOM usefulness.

Third, our model extends the Information Adoption Model by incorporating eWOM credibility and attitude towards eWOM in the original model. Results indicate that apart from eWOM usefulness, eWOM credibility and attitude towards eWOM significantly influence the consumers' decision to adopt eWOM messages, which further impact the purchase intention. Empirical validation of the extended IAM model provides much-needed clarity to the researchers. For example, most of the eWOM studies conducted in the context of the Information Adoption Model suggest that there is no direct influence of attitude towards eWOM and eWOM credibility on eWOM adoption, and their impact is mediated through eWOM usefulness (Chong et al., 2018; Erkan & Evans, 2016; T. Park, 2020). Our analysis of indirect and direct effects clearly shows that eWOM credibility and attitude towards eWOM have a direct and indirect (through eWOM usefulness) impact on eWOM adoption. Moreover, the significant effect of eWOM credibility on eWOM usefulness resolves the inconsistencies present in the literature where many researchers have not modeled the causal path between them (Erkan & Elwalda, 2018; Tien et al., 2018). Furthermore, our MASEM model also supports a serial mediation model of eWOM credibility and attitude towards eWOM on purchase intention through eWOM usefulness and eWOM adoption.

Fourth, total effects of all variables on purchase intention to establish the importance of attitude towards eWOM. Analysis of total effects indicates that attitude towards eWOM has the strongest impact on purchase intention than other variables. Many prominent behavioral models, such as Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977), Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), and Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), also supported the significant relationship between attitude and behavioral intention. However, some of the previous studies have overlooked the impact of attitude towards eWOM on purchase intention, which resulted in model specification error and inconsistent results (Erkan & Elwalda, 2018; Filieri, McLeay, Tsui, & Lin, 2018; Tien et al., 2018).

Finally, the findings of moderator analysis suggest that culture is not the prominent moderator in the context of eWOM communication. Although some previous studies (Luo et al., 2014) suggest that culture influences the consumer response to eWOM communication, our meta-analysis could not detect any significant moderating role of culture. One of the reasons for the insignificant impact is the less clarity regarding the sample mix. For example, study conducted in the USA (western) country may involve Chinese (Eastern) consumers as well. However, very few studies provide detailed information, and also it is challenging to integrate this information into meta-analysis. However, platform and product type emerged as a significant moderator, which suggests that platform and product type may have caused the mixed findings in the extant literature as most of the studies were conducted in the context of the specific platform (Social networking sites, E-commerce, etc.).

6. Theoretical implications

Our study has several contributions and implications for the study.

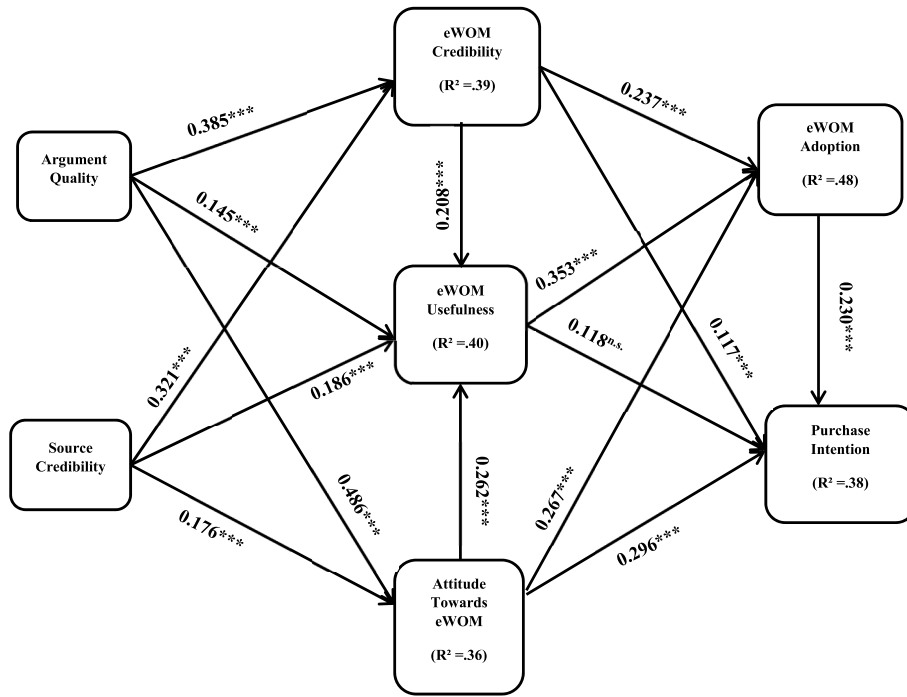


Fig. 2. Path model results. Note: ***p-values <0.001, **p-values <0.01, *p-values <0.05.

Table 6
Mediation analysis.

Relationship	Indirect effect via	Indirect effect	Mediation
eWOM credibility- Purchase intention	eWOM adoption	0.054***	Supported
eWOM usefulness- Purchase intention	eWOM adoption	0.081***	Supported
Attitude towards eWOM- Purchase intention	eWOM adoption	0.061***	Supported
eWOM credibility-eWOM adoption	eWOM usefulness	0.073***	Supported
Attitude towards eWOM-eWOM adoption	eWOM usefulness	0.092***	Supported
eWOM credibility- Purchase intention	eWOM usefulness and eWOM adoption	0.016***	Supported
Attitude towards eWOM- Purchase intention	eWOM usefulness and eWOM adoption	0.021***	Supported

Note: ***p-values <0.001, **p-values <0.01, *p-values <0.05.

Table 7
Direct, indirect, and total effect on purchase intention.

Importance	Factors	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect
1	Argument quality	-	0.310***	0.310***
2	Source credibility	-	0.178***	0.178***
3	eWOM credibility	0.117***	0.096***	0.213***
4	eWOM usefulness	0.118***	0.081***	0.199***
5	Attitude towards eWOM	0.296***	0.114***	0.410***
6	eWOM adoption	0.230***	-	0.230***

Note: ***p-values <0.001, **p-values <0.01, *p-values <0.05.

First, our univariate meta-analysis not only empirically validated the theoretical framework of Cheung and Thadani (2012) but also extended the same by adding new variables. In this process, we not only resolved the inconsistencies present in the extant literature but also found the most important factors which influence the consumers’ response to

eWOM communication. The findings of the univariate analysis present two important implications for researchers. First, when consumers evaluate the eWOM message, they consider multiple attributes; thus, researchers need to include or control all the relevant variables to minimize the model specification error. Second, univariate analysis allows researchers to develop future research areas as it indicates the worst, best, and frequently examined predictors of eWOM response. For example, the relationship between attitude towards eWOM and eWOM attributes has gained less attention from the researchers.

Second, we incorporated several important elements in the Information Adoption Model to provide a more comprehensive framework for eWOM adoption. For example, the positive impact of eWOM credibility and attitude towards eWOM suggest that both factors play an important role in consumer decision to adopt eWOM messages. However, most of the studies in information adoption have failed to analyze the broader role of eWOM credibility and attitude towards eWOM, despite its importance established in many theoretical models and empirical studies (Cheung et al., 2009; Davis, 1989; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1977). Thus, the integration of eWOM credibility and attitude toward eWOM provides a more comprehensive and integrative view of eWOM communication. Further, our findings have important implications for information processing literature. For example, credibility and attitude are the two important factors that can influence information adoption in other contexts, such as healthcare, politics, and finance. Thus, researchers should examine and validate the role of credibility and attitude towards information in different contexts as well. The role of credibility is critical considering the rapid rise of fake information in healthcare and political context.

Third, extant literature has inconsistent findings regarding the mechanism, as some studies suggest that eWOM credibility and attitude have a direct impact on eWOM adoption and purchase intention. In contrast, some studies indicate that their effect is routed through eWOM usefulness. Our examination of both direct and mediating paths suggests that both eWOM credibility and attitude towards eWOM have a direct and indirect impact (through eWOM usefulness and eWOM adoption) on purchase intention. Thus, we not only resolved the conceptual inconsistencies in the extant literature but also established the relative importance of various constructs towards purchase intention.

The fourth contribution of our study comes from the examination of moderating role of culture, product type, and platform type in eWOM communication. Our findings suggest that eWOM attributes on information adoption and its consequences can vary based on the platform type. Further, examination of multiple platforms type provides a detailed understanding of platform types as most previous studies have focused on two or three categories of the platform (e.g., internal vs. external, e-commerce vs. social media). Thus, the strength of relationships in the Information Adoption Model, which is conceptualized in the universal context (Internet), may depend on the contextual factors. Thus, researchers should not ignore the contextual factors when they apply the information adoption model in other contexts.

7. Managerial implications

Several practical implications arise from the findings of our study. We suggest that companies/eWOM platforms should focus on four major areas.

7.1. Management of eWOM content

Our study suggests that consumers' purchase intention and eWOM adoption are strongly influenced by the eWOM credibility, eWOM usefulness, and attitude towards eWOM. However, due to information overload, it is very difficult for consumers to identify credible and useful eWOM messages. Therefore, the management of eWOM content becomes an important factor. For example, eWOM platforms should allow consumers to rate the credibility of the eWOM message. Currently, customers can rate only the usefulness of the message, which limits the options for consumers. Both credibility and usefulness rating will allow consumers to locate credible reviews quickly. Second, e-commerce companies can also categorize the reviews in various categories such as 'most read,' 'most shared,' 'most viewed,' 'most commented,' 'most rated,' etc., to help consumers identify credible and useful reviews. Organizations should also allow consumers to report suspicious reviews so that companies can take immediate action. Further, quick resolution of consumer complaints on social media and continuous monitoring of eWOM content will help companies reduce the negative impact of eWOM. eWOM platforms can also present a summary of eWOM messages in the form of the pros and cons.

7.2. Increasing the customer participation in eWOM generation

Our study confirms that eWOM significantly impacts consumers' consumption decisions. Therefore, companies should encourage consumers to write and share eWOM messages. This can be done in two ways: monetary incentives and non-monetary incentives. Companies or eWOM platforms can give specific monetary incentives (e.g., discount coupons, cash backs, extended warranty, and free delivery) to encourage consumers for writing eWOM messages. Companies can also use non-monetary incentives such as special badges, early access to products, lucky draws, and social media mentions. However, companies should maintain full transparency regarding the incentives to maintain the credibility of eWOM messages. Besides incentives, an organization can use special nudges to motivate consumers to write reviews. For example, hotels can request consumers to post reviews at the time of check out. Similarly, e-commerce platforms can remind consumers through email and phone notifications.

7.3. Improving the credibility and usefulness of eWOM content

With the vast amount of eWOM messages, companies and eWOM platforms face problems maintaining the credibility and usefulness of eWOM content. Therefore, organizations should focus on those attributes which can enhance the credibility and usefulness of the eWOM message. Results of our study suggest that attributes related to stimuli

and communicator significantly influence the eWOM credibility and usefulness. Thus, eWOM platforms should focus on those attributes. For example, argument quality is a significant predictor of credibility and usefulness. However, most consumers have limited understanding and experience in writing online reviews. Therefore, companies should provide detailed guidelines to consumers on writing online reviews. Further, companies can provide a standardized template that can be used by consumers to write online reviews. Apart from argument quality, eWOM platforms should encourage consumers to include both positive and negative aspects of the reviews.

Communicator-related attributes are the strong predictors of credibility and usefulness. For example, source credibility, expertise, and trustworthiness are the important factors that influence the evaluation of the eWOM message. Thus, companies should disclose maximum information about the reviewer so that consumers can judge the credibility of the reviewers. Information about the reviewer will also help consumers to evaluate the expertise, trustworthiness, and extent of social relationships (tie strength, homophily). Further, eWOM platforms can give special badges to credible sources for easy identification. E-commerce and online review platforms should also encourage the reviewer to display their social media profile to enhance their credibility.

7.4. Customization of eWOM platforms

Moderator analysis reveals that platform and product type influence how consumers evaluate and use eWOM messages. Thus, companies can modify their platform according to platform and product type. For example, companies can focus more on the reviews for experience products than search products. Similarly, for some platforms content related attributes are more important than communicator attributes and vice versa. Thus, eWOM platforms should focus on customization.

Apart from these, companies can utilize the eWOM content to gain insights into consumer behavior, including consumer preferences, strengths and weaknesses of products, and consumer complaint behavior. Companies can use artificial intelligence, text mining, and machine learning techniques to extract these valuable insights from eWOM content.

8. Limitations and future research

There are a few limitations of our study which are inherent to any meta-analytic study. First, we were unable to include some studies due to the language barrier and unavailability of unpublished studies. Second, we included only a subset of antecedents in our research model due to insufficient reporting of necessary statistical information required for the MASEM analysis. Third, the impact of studies' quality and measurement problems cannot be ruled out entirely, even with a large number of independent samples (189) in our study. Our study provides some valuable guidelines for future research. First, very few studies have investigated the role of social connections (homophily and tie strength) on the eWOM usefulness and attitude towards eWOM. A strong social relationship enhances the source credibility, which positively impacts the eWOM credibility. Thus, future studies should explore the impact of the social connection on consumer attitude towards eWOM and its further effects on consumer behavioral intention. Second, future studies can further investigate the moderating role of product type by adopting different classifications such as; hedonic vs. utilitarian, low vs. high price, and luxury vs. necessities. Third, more research is needed on the impact of source identity on consumer response to eWOM communication.

9. Conclusion

In this study, we used meta-analysis and MASEM to reconcile the inconsistent findings in the extant eWOM literature. Results indicate that attributes related with stimuli and communicator have a significant

positive impact on eWOM response. Using the MASEM analysis, we also extend the Information Adoption Model by incorporating eWOM credibility, attitude towards eWOM, and purchase intention in the original model. Further, MASEM analysis supports the serial mediation model of eWOM credibility and attitude towards eWOM on purchase intention through eWOM usefulness and eWOM adoption. We also examined the moderating role of culture, product and platform type. Our study resolves the inconsistencies in the extant literature, which will help researchers in setting future research directions. Managers can use this study to enhance the consumers' purchase intention using effective management of eWOM communication.

Credit authors statement

Deepak Verma: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Methodology, Validation, Visualisation, Writing – original draft. Prem Pakash Dewani: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Formal analysis, Project administration, Writing – original draft. **Abhishek Behl**: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Validation, Writing- original draft. **Yogesh Dwivedi**: Methodology, Supervision, Writing-review, and editing.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

Appendix D. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2023.107710>.

Appendix A. Detailed process for studies selection

	Relationship	k	N	Q	I ²	Fail-Safe N	N/k
Appendix B: Results of heterogeneity and publication bias tests							
eWOM Credibility ↔	Argument Quality	30	11,357	1041.50***	97.20%	140	4.67
	Attitude Towards eWOM	9	3637	122.23***	93.50%	42	4.67
	eWOM Adoption	42	15,920	1066.31***	96.20%	196	4.67
	eWOM Usefulness	24	9065	751.38***	96.90%	104	4.33
	Homophily	8	2824	389.35***	98.20%	29	3.63
	Purchase Intention	35	13,586	744.43***	95.40%	131	3.74
	Recommendation Valence	12	2820	82.61***	86.70%	16	1.33
	Recommendation Comprehensiveness	5	1341	136.06***	97.10%	23	4.60
	Recommendation Consistency	12	5062	300.29***	96.30%	38	3.17
	Recommendation Quantity	7	1421	25.30***	76.30%	25	3.57
	Recommendation Rating	8	2183	69.79***	90.00%	24	3.00
	Recommendation Sidedness	7	3147	40.79***	85.30%	14	2.00
	Source Credibility	16	4808	263.87***	94.30%	70	4.38
	Source Expertise	19	7072	430.78***	95.80%	83	4.37
eWOM Usefulness ↔	Source Trustworthiness	11	4807	399.61***	97.50%	52	4.73
	Tie Strength	9	2892	186.49***	95.70%	24	2.67
	Argument Quality	26	9525	1120.04***	97.80%	108	4.15
	Attitude Towards eWOM	14	6715	237.31***	94.50%	62	4.43
	eWOM Adoption	38	17,996	1349.15***	97.30%	196	5.16
	Homophily	4	2349	14.91***	79.90%	10	2.50
	Purchase Intention	25	9928	899.40***	97.30%	95	3.80
	Recommendation Accuracy	4	1170	31.71***	90.50%	16	4.00
	Recommendation Comprehensiveness	8	2201	141.56***	95.10%	37	4.63
	Recommendation Timeliness	4	1063	38.88***	92.30%	11	2.75
	Source Credibility	15	5735	331.40***	95.80%	59	3.93
	Source Expertise	9	3358	170.15***	95.30%	32	3.56
	Source Trustworthiness	11	4051	237.71***	95.80%	40	3.64
	eWOM Adoption ↔	Argument Quality	34	10,836	464.33***	92.90%	140
Attitude Towards eWOM		13	5787	292.59***	95.90%	63	4.85
Homophily		7	3753	58.16***	89.70%	20	2.86
Purchase Intention		25	8428	845.92***	97.20%	110	4.40
Recommendation Valence		5	1010	2.22 ^{ns}	0.00%	5	1.00
Recommendation Accuracy		4	1372	18.30***	83.60%	12	3.00
Recommendation Comprehensiveness		9	2850	130.76***	93.90%	36	4.00
Recommendation Consistency		8	2516	36.95***	81.10%	25	3.13
Recommendation Quantity		5	1615	93.69***	95.70%	13	2.60
Recommendation Rating		7	2367	152.43***	96.10%	24	3.43
Recommendation Timeliness		6	2133	69.91***	92.80%	8	1.33
Source Credibility		22	7357	214.80***	90.20%	75	3.41
Source Expertise		17	6429	473.95***	96.60%	71	4.18
Source Trustworthiness		13	5521	745.27***	98.40%	55	4.23
Purchase Intention ↔	Tie Strength	7	2058	109.73***	94.50%	20	2.86
	Argument Quality	26	7940	641.02***	96.10%	90	3.46
	Attitude Towards eWOM	16	5831	312.54***	95.20%	73	4.56
	Homophily	6	2243	90.39***	94.50%	15	2.50
	Recommendation Valence	12	3669	522.12***	97.90%	51	4.25
	Recommendation Accuracy	4	1438	24.73***	87.90%	3	0.75
	Recommendation Comprehensiveness	6	1752	88.64***	94.40%	13	2.17
	Recommendation Consistency	7	3047	84.96***	92.90%	12	1.71
	Recommendation Quantity	9	1975	85.17***	90.60%	17	1.89
	Recommendation Sidedness	4	2134	72.38***	95.90%	6	1.50

(continued on next page)

(continued)

	Relationship	k	N	Q	I ²	Fail-Safe N	N/k
Appendix B: Results of heterogeneity and publication bias tests							
Attitude Towards eWOM ↔	Recommendation Timeliness	7	2184	197.57***	97.00%	11	1.57
	Source Credibility	16	4413	176.52***	91.50%	57	3.56
	Source Expertise	23	7722	464.96***	95.30%	77	3.35
	Source Trustworthiness	21	7478	490.69***	95.90%	66	3.14
	Tie Strength	4	1471	37.43***	92.00%	7	1.75
	Argument Quality	7	2727	109.65***	94.50%	34	4.86
	Homophily	3	2238	0.78 ^{ns}	0.00%	11	3.67
	Source Credibility	3	1506	49.88***	96.00%	11	3.67
	Source Expertise	8	3276	156.39***	95.50%	33	4.13
	Source Trustworthiness	9	3811	216.25***	96.30%	41	4.56

Note: ***p-values <0.001, **p-values <0.01, *p-values <0.05.

Appendix C. Correlational matrix used for MASEM

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Argument quality	1.000						
2. Source credibility	0.567	1.000					
3. eWOM credibility	0.567	0.539	1.000				
4. eWOM usefulness	0.517	0.494	0.534	1.000			
5. Attitude towards eWOM	0.586	0.452	0.568	0.544	1.000		
6. eWOM adoption	0.511	0.439	0.567	0.615	0.583	1.000	
7. Purchase intention	0.446	0.458	0.474	0.479	0.555	0.538	1.000

N = 5723.

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