

The Impact of Electronic Word of Mouth on Tourists Visit Intention to Saudi Arabia: Argument Quality and Source Credibility as Mediators

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Abstract

The study objective was to examine the mediating role of source credibility and argument quality in the relationship between e-WOM and tourist visit intentions. As e-WOM in the form of comments, reviews, opinions, suggestions and recommendation are largely available in the online space, it has been found crucial to investigate the quality and credibility of such information. Elaboration Likelihood Model has been used to build the research model or framework. The study findings suggest the mediating role of source credibility and argument quality in the relationship between e-WOM and tourist visit intention. The study reveals that traveler seeks highly credible sources and information quality before deciding on any travel related products and services. The mediating role of source credibility and argument quality from ELM theory has been investigated from domestic tourism perspective.

Keywords: e-WOM, visit intention, elaboration likelihood model, argument quality, source credibility

Introduction

The tourism industry is an interconnected sector including the transportation sector, the lodging industry, the food and beverage industry and other related services industry (Fong, Lei & Law, 2017). In present context, this sector relies heavily on information given on the internet concerning the products and services that this sector provides (Abubakar, Ilkan & Eluwole, 2017). While making tour and travel related plans and sharing information with others about their travel experiences, consumers' widespread use of internet technology directly contributes towards the enormous increase of availability of information online (Prayogo, Ketaren & Hati, 2016). More and more tourists like writing opinions on their travel experiences on the internet, make blogs, which can be viewed and accessed from anywhere (Soeid, Kadir & Masepe, 2020). This is done because they are satisfied with the tourist product and service or either very dissatisfied. The information incorporated in such online e-WOM may be used as a resource for other tourists as they plan their trips. Tourists provide their travel-related experiences on online social media platforms to share their journey experiences with others. For instance, they post their writing on blogs; upload photos and images through online social media

communication sites like Instagram, Twitter and Facebook in order to share their journey through e-WOM (Gunawan, Najib & Setiawati, 2020). As a result, social media communication has become an essential interactive medium for tourist to communicate their experience, feelings and perceptions. In tourism based studies, information regarding tourist journey and their experiences that are been posted on the internet is referred to as e-WOM, which also acts as a kind of information and communication to other travelers (Chen & Law, 2016). In reality, the Internet today has surpassed all other media as the primary source of tourist information for travelers. Tourists prefer to read travel stories from other travelers to better understand the situation at a tourist destination (Prayogo at al., 2016). Therefore, e-WOM may impact the travel decisions of those who are planning to travel. Tourists often use social networking sites to get information on flights, hotels, and, most importantly, place to visit and explore (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Another traveler can only hear stories of e-WOM from a specific traveler if experiences and opinions are shared through social media platforms (Prayogo at al., 2016).

The growth and innovation as well as acceptance of information technology like the internet by more and more individuals, in the present age of digitization has resulted in development of e-WOM from the traditional Word of Mouth which was prevalent earlier from one person to another in offline mode. WOM conveyed through the internet or online communication mediums is known as e-WOM (Soeid et al., 2020). E-WOM is a remark made online by prospective customers who are already experienced, regarding the use of a product, service, or business and can be accessed by a large section of other customers who are willing to purchase (Qiang, Shuang, Yiqun & Lin, 2018). Usually when an individual is at early stage of making purchase or buying decisions, and planning for a service or a product, and is gathering adequate information, consumers may acquire online references from a variety of sources, including social media networks like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) or other online search engines (such as Google, Live, and Yahoo). Social media has developed into a channel for customers to acquire information about businesses or goods and services offered (Gosal, Andajani & Rahayu, 2020), including the choice to visit some destination places. E-WOM is used as a factor in determining travel choices to a location (Loya, Ubeja, Jain, Acharya & Bhosle, 2018). Prospective visitors may place a greater degree of confidence in information sources that are both credible and accurate, such as those given by past travelers' (Bateineh, 2015). This demonstrates the effectiveness of e-WOM in attracting visitors. Sari and Pangestuti (2018) examined the e-WOM variable, as well as the intention and decision to visit and revealed that e-WOM has a substantial beneficial impact on decision making and travel intention. (Doosti, Jalilvand, Asadi, Pool & Adl, 2016) performed a research and found that electronic word of mouth had a substantial favorable impact on travel intention, city image, and attitude toward the city. The proposed study aims to study travel intention from the perspective of electronic word of mouth source credibility and argument quality, in terms of using social media for acquiring travel related information and used generated content for travel planning and destination choices. Inbound tourism has been considered for this study within tourist destination across Saudi Arabia.

Theoretical framework

Petty and Cacioppo in 1981 first developed the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which has been so far considered one of the most important contemporary methods of analyzing the impacts of persuasive communications. For consumer-based studies, the ELM is specifically more attractive as this model emphasizes on persuasive effects under both low as well as high participative situations (Shahab, Ghazali & Mohtar, 2021). At its core, audience participation in the process of persuasive communication (also known as motivation to analyze the message)

is considered to have a strong influence on decision-making process of the audience. The endpoints of the ELM involvement continuum are known by two distinct "routes" called "central" and "peripheral" route (Ismagilova, Dwivedi & Rana, 2021). Towards the "central route", there is a high involvement of participation, whereas towards the "peripheral route" the extent of involvement is low. According to Teeny, Brinol and Petty (2017) in the "peripheral route", persuasion signals such as source credibility and attractiveness, the quantity of arguments presented and other factors are more important in producing persuasive effects than the actual essence of the message itself. However, in the case of high participation or the central route, the quality of arguments and opinions are considered as more crucial. In this proposed study source, credibility from peripheral route and argument quality of central route has been selected for analysis, considering the e-WOM information availability through social media usage (Ismagilova et al., 2021). ELM model has been widely used and modified in number of studies in the past and has been considered to be robust and appropriate in terms of information flow and acceptance. For instance, Reyes-Menendez, Correia, Matos and Adap (2020) studied the online consumer behavior and e-WOM (online reviews and opinions) to provide new insights into tourists behavior to develop sustainable strategies of e-WOM in the tourism field. Likewise, ELM model have been used to explore the relationship of different variables and constructs in tourism related researches like quantity and quality of comments through e-WOM (Nuseir, 2019) examine the relationship of source credibility with tourist behavioral intention. (Reyes-Menendez, Saura & Martinez-Navalon, 2019) studied e-WOM on managing reputation of hotels through ELM theory by incorporating source credibility and found source credibility to be strongest predictor of e-WOM. The study also confirmed the ELM theory as powerful model to successfully predict e-WOM and information processing by individual through e-WOM. Considering the ELM theory, the proposed study has developed a research model consisting of e-WOM, argument quality source credibility and tourist visit intention, which is outlined as figure 1 as follows:

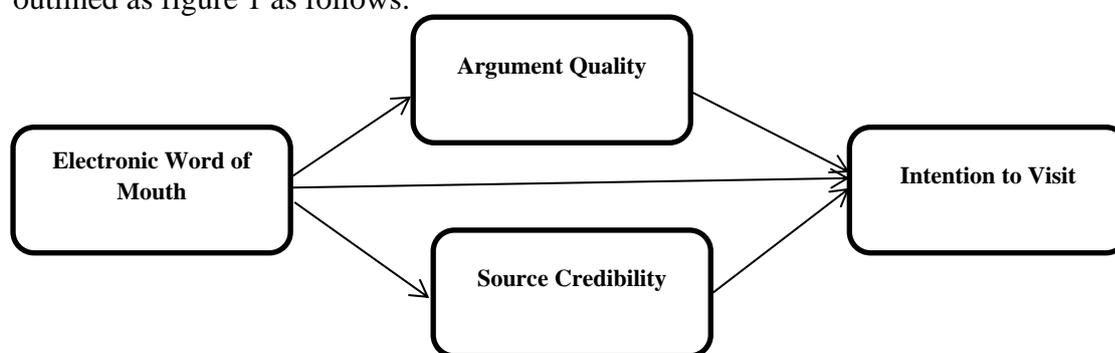


Figure1: Study Framework

Hypotheses development

Visit intention

When it comes to disseminating information or performing promotional activities on the internet, Eaton (2006) urged that e-WOM is the fastest mode available. Tourist visit intention may be considered as travel purchase decisions in the context of tourism. The purchase choice refers to purchasing something or selecting one of the alternatives that best meet the buyer's requirements. Sari and Pangestuti (2018) assert that "electronic word-of-mouth has a significant influence on travel intention as well as purchase decisions". Similar study findings have been reported by Briliana (2019) where they revealed that e-WOM had a strong impact on shaping attitudes to visiting cultural tourism sites. According to Themba and Monica (2013) customer participation in conveying e-WOM of a brand, consumer opinion, and information

search all have a statistically significant influence and beneficial impact towards purchase decision making and choices for a particular brand. Semuel and Lianto (2014) also claimed that electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) has been shown to affect purchase intention substantially. The better an individual evaluation of e-WOM is, the more likely it is that they will make a purchasing decision based on that review. According to Gretzel and Yoo (2008) travelers utilize electronic word-of-mouth communication to create ideas and limit options during the stage of deciding trip planning, which is referred to as travel intention. According to Semuel and Lianto (2014), it has been shown that e-WOM has a substantial impact on purchase intention. Sari and Pangestuti (2018) conducted a study in which they evaluated the relationship of e-WOM, behavioral intention to visit a destination image and the final decision to visit a tourist attraction. Their study has revealed electronic word-of-mouth to have a statistically significant and positive impact on travel intention and actual travel choices. It was also found that having a positive attitude about travel had a substantial beneficial impact on travel choices. (Doosti et al., 2016) also revealed e-WOM was to have a statistically significant influence on individual travel intention, attitude and city image. Given the findings of Doosti et al. (2016) and Sari and Pangestuti (2018), which examined e-WOM as an antecedent variable of travel visit intention, it is intriguing to examine the relationship between the two variables in greater detail.

Electronic word of mouth and visit intention

As opined by Hennig, Gwinner, Walsh and Gremler (2004) e-WOM is referred to as any customer feedback, opinions, and reviews about product and services either positive or negative, regarding any business or goods through the Internet, online platforms, online communities, social media networking sites, etc. The Internet today enables the customer to participate, engage and contribute to diverse content creation, which can be referred to as e-WOM. Consumers may share product and service information through the Internet. As stated by Lavelle (2017) e-WOM is assumed to endure longer than traditional WOM, owing to its digital record and the fact that customers may also consume it over an extended period of time, once and forever, it is considered as useful. Additionally, e-WOM is seen to be more accessible than traditional WOM, owing to the information availability over the internet. According to Chen, Tang and Jheng (2014) e-WOM refers to the practice of prospective consumers visiting web sites and reading reviews and evaluations from other prospective customers. As opined by Qiang et al. (2018) while conventional media has seen a significant decrease in their role as information sources, more customers are switching to product customer reviews and other related post on the internet while seeking product related information and knowledge. (Daowd, Hasan, Eldabi, Rafi-ul-Shan, Cao & Kasemsarn, 2020) states that due to its anonymous character and broad variety of user generated content, the impact and influence of e-WOM is considerably growing in strength and acceptance. Seraphin, Sheeran and Pilato (2018) asserts that there are many important antecedents of e-WOM that impacts its influence which has to be considered. Firstly, the nature of e-WOM information either positive or negative can impact individual intention and decision making process. Individuals may be more inclined to rely on e-WOM information and communications, if they have same value proposition as anticipated by consumers. As a result, e-WOM communications with greater levels of credibility and quality have the potential to be more compelling than ones with lower levels of consensus. Second, consumer-related variables, such as engagement and previous understanding of the services and product, have a significant impact on e-WOM. In other words, individual consumers might tend to get more thorough in their information processing needs as their involvement with the service or the product grows. Using e-WOM to obtain information about tourism sites for visitors is a simple and effective method (Prayogo and Kusumawardhani,

2016). A good image with respect to certain tourist destinations as described by e-WOM information can promote specific related tourist products more successfully by incorporating the views of past and experience visitors which are credible trustworthy and of quality information about a certain tourist locations. The information revealed via comments or evaluations, as a result, affects and aids in the decision-making process when selecting a tourist location (Jorge, Teixeira, Correia, Gonçalves, Martins & Bessa, 2018). It is possible to enhance the image of a tourist location, as well as consumer delight and loyalty, via the use of e-WOM. As consumers are more often triggered by positive e-WOM communication (Soeid and Baumassepe, 2020), marketers in current marketing environment are increasingly switching their strategies to social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Previously published research by Gunawan et al. (2020) and Jorge et al. (2018) has revealed that there is significant impact of e-WOM available through social media towards tourist visit as well as revisit intention to a particular place.

Numerous studies have shown that electronic word of mouth has a direct and substantial impact on visitor intention. (Jalilvand, Ebrahimi & Samiei, 2013) found that e-WOM communication has a significant effect on visitors' intention and opinions about a destination's image. (Jalilvand et al., 2013) constructed a model in which e-WOM influences travel purchase intention through a partial mediator variable called brand image, concluding that brand image mediated travellers' purchasing decisions. (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012) demonstrated the value and potential of e-WOM in influencing buying intentions both directly and indirectly. Fan and Miao (2012) investigated purchasing decisions in e-commerce virtual communities using an expanded Elaboration Likelihood Model. According to the study's results, high involvement has the biggest effect on e-WOM's perceived legitimacy. Additionally, the study's results suggest that perceived e-WOM legitimacy significantly influences e-WOM acceptance and purchase intention. Additionally, the study's results demonstrated that e-WOM does influence visitor intention to visit a tourist area. Through mediating factors, e-WOM has the ability to influence both purchase intention and tourist behaviour directly or indirectly. As a result, this research hypothesises that e-WOM has a direct and positive connection with traveller intention to visit.

Hypothesis1: e-WOM has a direct positive relation with Visit Intention.

Relationship e-WOM with argument quality and source credibility

Consumer behaviour in online environment can be influenced by number of factors such as comments, testimonials, messages, opinions, personal experiences, expert evaluations and reviews of products' and services. Different type of opinions and comments online create different level of confidence and excitement on decision-making process (Ismagilova, Slade, Rana & Dwivedi, 2020). The ELM model has been used in a number of studies in order to study online trustworthiness like source credibility and argument quality of information and sources available online (Mun, Yoon, Davis & Lee, 2013). Capkinoglu, Yilmaz and Leblebicioglu (2020) have revealed the credibility and expertise of source and quality of arguments are crucial determinants in examining and validating the power and strength of information persuasion from one end to the other. In other words, persuasion was found to be stronger when arguments are of quality and sources of information are considered as delivered from an expertise (Le-Hoang, 2020). There is a dearth of literature investigating the relationship between argument quality and eWOM. EWOM is referred to as any positive and negative opinion online made by former customers or users, actual or potential customers, about any service or a product (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). On the other hand, argument quality refers to persuasive strength of arguments included inside an information transmission"

(Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). Source credibility is defined as the extent to which source of information message, opinion or views expressed online are deemed to be appropriate for receivers as credible, trustworthy, believable and competent (Bhattacharjee & Sanford, 2006). Past researches on argument quality reveal that more number of arguments increase the persuasion only if the arguments were convincing enough, whereas the persuasion of information decrease if arguments were found to be deceptive and misleading. Kim and Benbasat (2009) have highlighted the importance of evaluating the characteristics of argument available online in order to strengthen online trust of information available. Similarly, Anastasiei, Dospinescu and Dospinescu (2021) have revealed how credibility of source can help customer to build trust online. An Information source characteristic has been found to influence the extent of persuasiveness of e-WOM by number of studies (Elaziz & Mayouf, 2017; Filieri, 2015; Filieri, Hofacker & Alguezaui, 2018; Ismagilova et al., 2020; Le-Hoang, 2020; Levy & Gvili, 2015; Saleem & Ellahi, 2017; Teng, Khong, Chong & Lin, 2017; Zhang, Zhao, Cheung & Lee, 2014). There have been several studies examining the impact of argument quality and source credibility on purchase intention or buying behaviour but studies related to examining the relationship between argument quality and source credibility with e-WOM has been very scarce. Therefore, the present study has made an attempt to fill this gap by investigating the relationship of e-WOM with argument quality and source credibility.

Hypothesis2: e-WOM has a direct positive relation with Argument Quality.

Hypothesis3: e-WOM has a direct positive relation with Source Credibility.

Argument quality

Argument quality refers to “an individual subjective perception of arguments in the persuasive message to be strong, rational and of quality” (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). “Thus, assuming that the information has been thoroughly processed and examined for quality, powerful arguments are expected to elicit positive emotional and cognitive responses to the message, whereas weak arguments are likely to result in counter argumentation and are generally regarded as unfavorable for reaction or action” (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). According to Tien, Rivas and Liao (2019), “argument quality has a favourable effect on the perceived utility of information”. (Aghakhani & Karimi, 2013) referred to argument quality as “the persuasive power of arguments contained in a transmission of information”. According to Chang, Yu and Lu (2015), “the ELM model highlights argument quality as a key predictor of information impact under circumstances of high participative or central route”. As per literature, increase in quality of arguments will result into more compelling form of communication between individuals. Individuals tend to agree with information messages when more reasons were presented in peripheral route or in situation where participation is lower. Haugtvedt and Petty (1992) classify the number of arguments as a peripheral cue since the message receiver is not necessarily evaluating the message's content but is instead considering external factors like length of the message's or the number of arguments the recipient could recall. According to Tien et al. (2019), “more arguments resulted in increased persuasion when the arguments were convincing, but decreased persuasion when arguments are deceptive”. In contrast to the quantity of arguments, these studies indicate that while participants are highly engaged, if the reasons are not persuasive, the message may result in less elaboration and persuasion.

Hypothesis4: Argument Quality has a direct and significant impact on Visit Intention.

Hypothesis5: Argument Quality mediates the relationship between e-WOM and Visit Intention.

Source credibility

According Seraphin, Butcher and Korstanje (2017) source credibility refers to as individual perceptions of views, opinions and suggestions expressed by other tourist on social media sites as truthful and trustworthy and based on experience or facts, among other things. Only if an individual perceived the source as credible and reliable, the receiver trusts such e-WOM (Grewal, Gotlieb & Howard, 1994). As e-WOM, provide reliable and comprehensive information about travel and not usually supplied by brands on public platforms, consumers prefer electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) communications (Verma & Dewani, 2020). The review of literature have shown that e-WOM is currently regarded as one of the most credible sources of information after family and friends suggestions (Matikiti & Kruger, 2019). Past studies in tourism industry have shown a positive correlation between source credibility and trustworthiness of information with visit intention of tourist as well as increase in their propensity to make travel related decisions (Daowd et al., 2020; Filieri et al., 2018). According to Qiang et al. (2018) a message must be informative, appeal to emotions and credible in order for it to be persuasive and inspire the customer to make purchase decisions or trigger visit intention. Source credibility has been examined in prior literature and found to be significant in relation with behavioral intention in information adoption studies by Coursaris and Van (2016), making purchase decisions (Filieri, 2015; Filieri et al., 2018; Hill, Troshani & Chandrasekar, 2017; Qiang et al., 2018).

Hypothesis6: Source Credibility has a direct and significant influence on Visit Intention.

Hypothesis7: Source Credibility mediates the relationship between e-WOM and Visit Intention.

Research methodology

The research is quantitative and deductive in approach. Hypothesis was set in order to examine the results through empirical data collected from individual tourist across Saudi Arabia. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the responses. The sample size was 515 respondents. The variables in the study were measured through 7-Point Likert Scale using item and indicators from past literature, as shown in table1.

Table 1: Construct measurement items

Construct Measurement items		Sources
Electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM)		San Martin et al. (2013)
I feel more comfortable travelling when I have other people’s online travel opinions.	e-WOM1	
When I consider travelling, I seek opinions and advice online from commercial as well as independent sources.	e-WOM2	
Online opinions influence my choice of travel.	e-WOM3	
Argument Quality (AQ)		Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006)
Information offered is helpful.	AQ1	
Information offered is persuasive.	AQ2	
Information offered is valuable.	AQ3	
Source Credibility (SC)		Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006)
Social media platform(s) for the online travel experience or review are an expert in tourism.	SC1	
Social media platform(s) for the online travel experience or review is trustworthy.	SC2	
Social media platform(s) for the online travel experience or review has (have) good knowledge on tourism.	SC3	
Intention to Visit (ITV)		Han et al. (2011)
I desire to visit tourist places in Saudi Arabia in the near future.	ITV1	
If I plan a trip, I will visit tourist places in my country.	ITV2	
In short, I think Saudi Arabia is a good place worth visiting.	ITV3	

Data analysis

A conceptual model was created using PLS-SEM. PLS-SEM method is used to analyze the causal relationships and measure both formative and reflective models. It is considered to be non-parametric test, requiring no assumptions of distribution of data. PLS-SEM method enables providing solutions to complex relationships and interrelationships among the variables. It determines the path coefficient, direct and indirect effects and through bootstrapping process computes the significance value.

Assessment of measurements model

In order to examine the validity of the measurement model, construct validity and discriminant validity was examined. For construct validity, indicator item cross loadings with respect to each construct was captured. Also, average variance extracted has been used to establish the construct validity. Hair, Matthews, Matthews and Sarstedt (2017) specified a threshold value of 0.7 or higher to assert convergent validity for item loadings and a value greater than 0.5 or higher for average variance extracted. The computed values for each indicator item measuring a construct was found to be higher than 0.7. In addition, the average variance extracted was higher than 0.5, establishing construct validity of the measurement model. Discriminant validity was examined through variable correlation, examine the cross loadings and HTMT. Variable correlation was found to be highest within each constructs than the corresponding correlation values with other variables. The cross loadings study revealed that each item indicator value has the highest loading against the other constructs. The HTMT values as suggested by Kline (2011) must not exceed a value of 0.85 as a maximum value. The HTMT values were found to be less than the maximum value of 0.8.

Assessment of structured model

In order to assess the structured model, path co-efficient, significance values, R-Square, affect size, goodness of fit and predictive relevance were measured.

Path coefficient and hypothesis testing

The path coefficient of PLS-SEM analysis through bootstrapping procedure has shown the significant relationship of endogenous and exogenous variables in the structured model. Among the five hypothesis (direct relationships) stated in this study, all are supported. The p-value was found to be significant at 0.05 supporting all the direct relationship among the variables as shown in Table 2. It was evident that, e-WOM has a direct and positive relationship with tourist intention to visit Saudi Arabia, e-WOM had a direct and positive influence on argument quality and source credibility and argument quality and source credibility directly influence tourist visit intention.

Table 2: Path coefficient of direct relationships

Path Coefficient of Research Hypotheses						
Hypo	Direct Relationship	Std. Beta	Std. Error	T-Value	P-Value	Decision
H1	e-WOM → Visit Intention	0.274	0.126	2.169	0.031	Supported
H2	e-WOM → Argument Quality	0.347	0.025	3.058	0.017	Supported
H3	e-WOM → Source Credibility	0.129	0.024	2.283	0.009	Supported
H4	Argument Quality → Visit Intention	0.279	0.014	1.537	0.032	Supported
H6	Source Credibility → Visit Intention	0.273	0.014	1.874	0.018	Supported

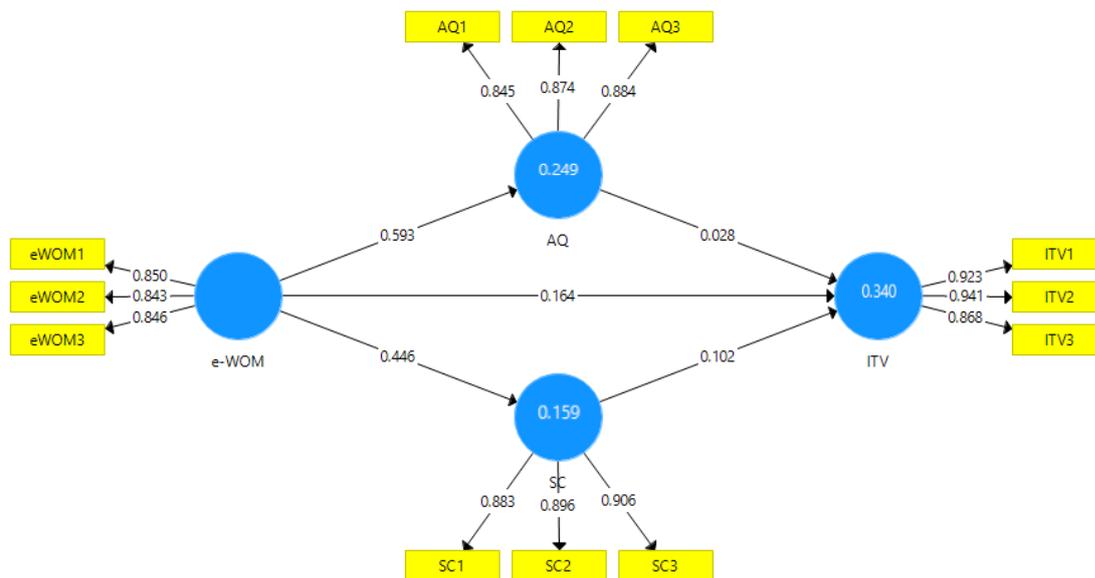


Figure 2: Research model path coefficient

R-square (R^2)

The predictive ability of a specific model and the standard path coefficient for each relationship between the endogenous and exogenous variables is produced by R-Square (R^2) of the endogenous values. The interpretation of R^2 values in PLS-SEM has much similarity with R^2 obtained through multiple linear regression analysis. It explains the variation of dependent variables able to be explained by independent variables in the model. According to Chin (1998) the value of R^2 reveals the percent of variance in endogenous variables being explained by the exogenous variables. R-square also ascertains the quality of the model variables in the structured model (Maiyaki, 2012). Chin (1998) specified values of R-Square to explain the predictive ability of the model as follows: (Chin, 1998): $R^2 > 0.67$ High, $0.33 < R^2 < 0.67$ Moderate, $0.19 < R^2 < 0.33$ Weak and $R^2 < 0.19$ Unacceptable. The proposed study examined the influence of e-WOM on argument quality, source credibility and intention to visit. The predictive power of e-WOM on tourist intention was found to be moderate at 0.340, the predictive power of e-WOM on argument quality and source credibility was found to be weak respectively at 0.249 and 0.159.

Effect size (f^2)

The effect size (f^2) is used to determine if removal of certain independent constructs could have a smaller or greater impact on the R-Square value of the endogenous constructs. According to Cohen (1988) effect size is used to ascertain the degree and significance to which the investigated path construct modifies the explanatory power of endogenous variable (Cohen, 1988). Cohen (1988) specified $f^2 > 0.35$ as large, $0.15 > f^2 < 0.35$ as medium, $0.02 > f^2 < 0.15$ as small and $f^2 < 0.02$ as having no effect size. As per the path analysis of PLS-SEM through bootstrapping procedure showed that effect size of e-WOM on intention to visit is small at 0.047, e-WOM effect size on argument quality is medium at 0.332, the impact of e-WOM on source credibility is medium at 0.189, and the impact of argument quality and source credibility on intention to visit is small at 0.067 and 0.056.

Predictive validity (Q^2)

The predictive validity of the structured model is determined by Stone Geisser test statistics also known as Q^2 (Chin, 1995). The Q^2 value is computed through blindfolding procedure from the variable score to generate the cross validated redundancy score and indicates model quality and validity in predicting the endogenous construct. According to Hair, Sarstedt, Pieper and Ringle (2012), Q^2 evaluates not just the model's built-around values, but also the model's parameter estimations. Since, the study examines the relationship between e-WOM and visit intention, e-WOM and argument quality and source credibility, Q^2 of three constructs have been computed as show in the table below. As generally agreed principle, the Q^2 value has to be greater than zero to show predictive accuracy for the endogenous variables. Usually the value specified by Sarstedt, Ringle and Hair (2017) for Q^2 value higher than 0.50 indicate high predictive relevance, Q^2 value of 0.25 or greater indicate medium predictive relevance in the structured PLS path model. For this study, the Q-Square values of the endogenous latent variables were found at 0.098, 0.182 and 0.111 which are within the acceptable range to establish predictive relevance of the endogenous variable.

Mediation analysis

Mediation Analysis show partial mediation of argument quality and source credibility in the relationship between e-WOM and tourist visit intention (refer Table 3: Mediating Effect).

Table 3: Mediating effect

Path Coefficient of the Mediating Effect							Bootstrapped Confidence Interval		Decision
Path	Path a IV → Mediator	Path b Mediator → DV	Indirect effect	Std. Error	T- Value	P- Value	95% LL	95% UL	
e-WOM → AQ → ITV	0.499	0.274	0.137	0.027	5.064	0.005	0.084	0.190	Mediation
e-WOM → SC → ITV	0.398	0.235	0.094	0.027	3.464	0.005	0.041	0.146	Mediation

Discussion

The study examined the impact of e-WOM on visit intention of tourist and also the role of argument quality and source credibility as a mediator in the relationship between e-WOM and tourist visit intention. Empirical findings of this study conclude that when perception of source credibility and argument quality is high, individual trust e-WOM sources which in turn impact tourist visit intention. The study confirms the mediating role of source credibility and argument quality to impact the relationship with e-WOM and tourist visit intention. The findings of this study also confirm the direct relationship between e-WOM and tourist visit intention. Since, the direct effect of e-WOM and tourist visit intention has been found to be significant, therefore the magnitude of mediation by source credibility and argument quality is partial. Social media act as a catalyst in producing and delivering persuasive user generated contents and information, which trigger tourist visit intention to visit a specific destination choice, as well as make tourist purchase decision in terms of different product and services like hotel booking and ticketing.

Travel business firms and social media managers must be aware that e-WOM may be utilized to influence users' travel planning process (Ayeh, Au & Law, 2013; Chatzigeorgiou & Christou, 2020) and strengthen tourist destinations through good e-WOM creation. Individual travelers visit intention on social media is affected by interpersonal shared comments and views on destinations, hotels, and restaurants, among others. A positive e-WOM message minimizes information asymmetry, improves decision-making, and favorably affects visit intention. Thus,

it is essential to follow specific criteria to guarantee the information's authenticity in order to differentiate one from the competitors. These findings is similar to study by Shu, Sliva, Wang, Tang and Liu (2017) who concluded that the positive impact of e-WOM messages on visit intention is determined by their perceived source credibility and information quality and message credibility. (Chatzigeorgiou & Christou, 2020) shared similar views on tourism based research and stated that as a matter of trust, anonymous users appear more credible, as is the case with e-WOM, which enables companies or brand ambassadors to disseminate false opinions in order to promote their products and persuade individual travelers. Considering the e-WOM's substantial impact, it should be used to enhance the efficacy of marketing efforts in hospitality, tourism, and travel industry.

Additionally, Semuel and Lianto (2014) claimed that e-WOM has been shown to substantially impact purchase intention. The more positive a review is in electronic media, the more likely it is to result in a high buying intention. According to Gretzel and Yoo (2008), visitors utilize e-WOM communication to create ideas and limit their options throughout the stage of deciding trip planning, specifically travel intention. Additionally, Semuel and Lianto (2014) claimed that e-WOM has been shown to substantially impact purchase intention.

Conclusion

The present research discovered that the perceived source credibility and quality of e-WOM like user sharing comments, experiences and opinions on social media had a significant impact on tourists' behavioral intentions in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, this research demonstrates that the relationship between e-WOM and visit intention is mediated by argument quality and source credibility of information source. These findings of this study has been found to be similar with prior research carried by (Doosti et al., 2016; Nechoud, Ghidouche & Seraphin, 2021; Revilla, Santana & Parra, 2016; Shome, 2020; Shu et al., 2017; Teng et al., 2017) who demonstrated that individual perceptions of credibility and quality of reviews have a substantial impact on their behavioral intentions.

ELM model for persuasive communication has been used as the basic framework for this research. In future studies, researchers might extend e-WOM source credibility and quality by considering other theoretical constructs of technology acceptance theories to study the impact of social media usage on tourism sector. The present study has limited the source credibility to expertise and experience dimensions. Likewise argument quality in this present study has been limited to information being valuable, helpful and persuasive. In future more comprehensive study of the argument quality and source credibility can be done by considering other dimensions. For instance, compelling arguments, factual information, and relatable information, number of sources or arguments can be considered to examine the quality and reliability of e-WOM. The study sample comprise of respondents of Saudi Arabia who are likely to take a domestic trip. In future studies, international tourism can be studied and comparison can be made on the findings with domestic tourism studies. Besides, incorporating culture of diverse nationalities to know the impact of culture on the tourist's behavioral intention could be emphasized. Finally, it would be fascinating to investigate the role of e-influencers rather than just consumers in this conceptual model, since this is a potential topic of research to pursue in the future.

The rapid development of interactive tourism benefits both individual travelers and firms (Pujiastuti, Nimran, Suharyono & Kusumawati, 2017). Tourism generates employment opportunities and help country to improve economic and sustainable growth. Tourism has recently been considered as one of the world's biggest industries due to its ability to produce substantial income and economic growth for a nation (Pangestuti, 2017). Tourism has a critical role in providing employment opportunities and attracting foreign currency. Additionally, the

advancement of information technology has prompted tourism industry to develop more effective strategies to attract visitors and increase or enhance the number of tourist to their destination places. The advancement of information technology has resulted in the creation of a electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM), which offer information sharing and persuasive communication process and help each other travelers in times of need by providing valuable information ranging from products and services to safety and security of travel. E-WOM also encapsulate a broader reach of audience (Charo, Sharma, Shaikh, Haseeb & Sufya, 2015). Through e-WOM, current, prospective, or past consumers may write a favorable or negative review of a product or travel related services, with the information made available to be used and accessed by anybody or any institution through the internet (Hennig et al., 2004). E-WOM has the potential to impact a traveler's choice of tourism destination and effectively promotes specific tourist attractions by portraying a positive image of the tourist site. Positive online word-of-mouth is a reliable indicator of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Setiawan, Troena & Armanu, 2014). The internet and social media platforms enable e-WOM both positive as well as negative which in turn help shape a destination's image.

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