



Content-Driven Tourism: A Model of its Precursors for Impulse Buying and Tourist Behavior Intentions

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ABSTRACT

User-generated content (UGC) is considered the most authentic source by any consumer. In the case of tourism, being the service industry, the role of such content has transformed travel. The current study aims to examine the role of various promotional tools carrying UGC in influencing impulse buying (IB) and the behavioural intention (BI) of tourists. Using a modified scale, a sample of 410 tourists was taken using nonprobability purposive sampling. An analytical approach following structured equation modelling (SEM) was employed on Smart PLS 3. An original integrated model is developed and tested. Results show that the independent variables' website attributes (WAs) and social media (SM) significantly impact the dependent variables, i.e. BI and IB. Although eWOM did not affect BI, a significant impact was found on IB. The partial mediating role of BI was observed in the relationship of SM and WAs on IB. Research and managerial implications are also discussed.

Keywords: eWOM, Social Media, Website Attributes, Behavioural Intention, Impulse Buying, SEM.

Introduction

There was a time when people felt the internet was another world, now people realize it's a tool that we use in this world.

Tim Berners-Lee

Since the invention of online platforms content displayed by websites, social media (SM), and by users, i.e. eWOM has received tremendous acceptance worldwide. As a result, website attributes (WAs), SM, and user testimonials like eWOM came up as great promotional tools (Azim et al., 2021; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Many tourism marketers are synergizing efforts into advertising through such promotional tools to create an urge in the minds of tourists to visit an advertised destination. The tools are of great help and aids in accepting feedback and providing in-time solutions. Several studies have been conducted in recent times testing the impact of these promotional tools on purchase

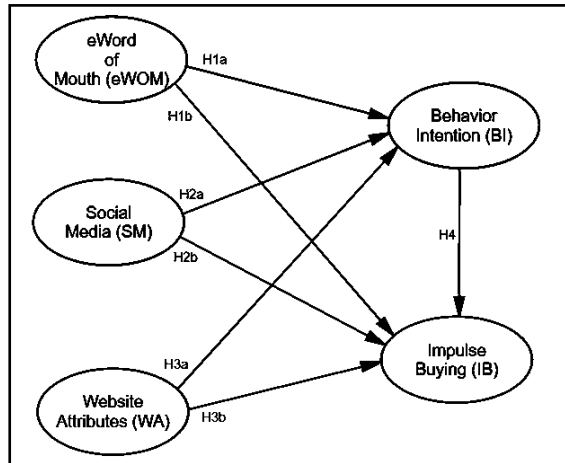
behavior/intent. But still there lies a gap in taking these variables altogether and testing them in the context of Indian destinations. Indian tourism has seen a recent shift in its latest travel patterns especially after the pandemic. Current trends include leisure travel, virtual tourism, sustainable tourism, personalized packages, etc. The current study aims to examine the impact of promotional tools on traveller's intent. Here the independent variables include eWOM, SM, and WAs while the dependent variable is impulse buying (IB). Behavioural intention (BI) is undertaken as a mediating variable influencing the relationship of eWOM, SM, and WA with IB. Testing the conceptual model presented remains the core objective of the study (Figure 1). Thus, with the fulfilment of the objectives, the study is expected to contribute to the field of online promotional tools and tourist behavior. Therefore, the

following *research questions* are attempted to be answered from the current study:

RQ1. What effect does UGC via eWOM, SM, and WA have on tourist BI and IB while selecting tourism services online?

RQ2. Does BI fully or partially mediate the relationship of eWOM, SM, and WA with IB?

RQ3. What is the direct association between BI and IB?



Source: Synthesized by authors

Figure 1: Conceptual Model

BACKGROUND LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

While referring to the literature present on the variables of the model, many studies highlighted the relationship between eWOM, SM and WA in industry other than tourism. Moreover, IB as the outcome was found to be rare in all literature keeping BI as a mediating one. The following literatures provided the ground for hypothesis formulation:

eWord of mouth

“eWOM can be defined as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet.” (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). “eWOM includes informal communications from consumers about the characteristics and features of products or brands.” (Ye et al., 2011). Cheung and Lee (2012) defined eWOM as “the process that allows consumers to share their views online and directs consumers to favor and go against specific products.” At times “eWOM refers to consumers' information exchange behavior online and can take place in the forms of user-generated

content (UGC), online product reviews, and social media posts.” (Chu & Kim, 2018).

Using online testimonials and opinions like eWOM is gaining importance nowadays. eWOM is often used as a synonym for UGC (Smith et al., 2012). Many studies have tested the relationship between eWOM and BI wherein a significant association between eWOM and BI is seen (Abubakar, 2016; Khuong & Huong, 2016). eWOM being a component of UGC is found to affect IB mediated partially by emotional responses like pleasure and arousal; and cognitive responses like perceived information quality. Similarly, future intention to buy is found fully mediated by cognitive and emotional responses (Kim & Johnson, 2016).

Marketers, as well as consumers, are keen on such eWOM due to trust and its global coverage of audiences (Christodoulides et al., 2012). Other factors like review quality and secondary learning, i.e. through observations and interactions helps the consumer to get stimulated for IB (Zhang & Watts, 2008). There exists a positive significant relationship between eWOM and IB (Astuti et al., 2020; Abdullah & Artanti, 2021; Husnain et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2013).

H1a: There is a significant association between eWOM and BI.

H1b: There is a significant association between eWOM and IB.

Social Media

It was also found that there is a significant relationship between SM and BI (Salman et al., 2022; Kaurav & Gursoy, 2022; Arthini, 2018) which is positive as well (Abzari et al., 2014) leading to customer engagement (Yoong & Lian, 2019). Literature also confirms that SM and attitude are substantially associated with BI. Di Pietro et al. (2012) found that the attitude of tourists toward using SM networks has a substantial association with BI in the case of using technology for the selection of any destination for traveling (Kaurav et al., 2020).

The relationship between SM on IB specifically online is established by many authors (Khokhar et al., 2019; Nuseir, 2020; Szymkowiak et al., 2021). Other elements of SM like celebrities' posts and contextual

interactions impact the urge to buy impulsively (Zafar et al., 2021). At times SM advertising indirectly impacts online IB tendency through perceived relevance (Chawla, 2020; Dodoo & Wu, 2019).

It is essential to note that SM triggers the reach of UGC to consumers (Lipsman et al., 2012), as users like, comment, and share the posts. There are studies referring to the urge to buy impulsively on SM that is affected by recommender's trust and the need and attachment to the product recommended. (Chen et al., 2019). Recommendations through eWOM are at times mediated by the celebrity involvement in eWOM publicities (Zafar et al., 2021).

H2a There is a significant association between SM and BI.

H2b There is a significant association between SM and IB.

Website Attributes

"Website attributes (aesthetic appeal, usability, and customization) that form users' knowledge can lead to a favourable attitude toward a website." (Lai et al., 2014) In other literature, WAs are "the aesthetic appeal of a website is the sensory impression of pleasure or beauty that results from interface design." (Lazard et al., 2015)

Website quality and attributes are considered key factors that lead tourists toward IB (Wells et al., 2011). This is contradicted by many in the latest developments (Wiranata & Hananto, 2020; Febrilia and Warokka, 2021). Major factors included in WAs are ease of use, visuals, and product assortment or stock that contributes towards IB (Liu et al., 2013). However, navigability and visual appeal affect the degree of online shopping enjoyment which leads to online IB (Parboteeah et al., 2009). Some literature also highlights other categories of WAs, i.e. technology (usability, security, and privacy), shopping (convenience, trust, delivery), and product (product value and merchandizing) impact BI (Chen et al., 2010) wherein system quality, information quality, and privacy protection service influence BI (Dong et al., 2013). Some of the WAs such as lower download delay, more navigability, and higher quality content have a significant association with BI (Palmer, 2002).

Interestingly, the WAs like entertainment (power to engage customers) are much related to IB (Turkyilmaz et al., 2015). In a recent development, website personality and sales promotion have come up as factors affecting impulsive online purchases (Suryawardani et al., 2021). Thus, website personality and web browsing pattern like utilitarian aspect and hedonic web browsing aspects significantly impact IB (Rezaei et al., 2016). There exists a substantial association between website quality and online IB behavior in many other industries like fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) to name a few (Akram et al., 2018). Moreover, website quality is at times mediated by the hedonic value that has a positive significant association with IB (Chen et al., 2019).

Other elements associated with WAs like web browsing and web content significantly impacts IB (Park et al., 2012). Some of the studies have tested the relationship between WAs and BI wherein they found that there exists a substantial relationship between WAs and BI (Chen et al., 2010). There are studies wherein WAs being found to be correlated to customer satisfaction and subsequently affect purchase intention in tourism settings (Law & Bai, 2008). However, less initiative website can also lead to more dissatisfaction among tourists (Foris et al., 2019). There is rare literature that identifies direct the relationship between WAs and behavior intention in tourism; thus, the disproportion in a number of studies leads to the following hypothesis:

H3a: There is a significant association between WA and BI.

H3b: There is a significant association between WA and IB.

Behavioural Intention

Behavioural intention refers to "the degree to which a person is prompt to accomplish certain behaviour" (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). In many pioneer literature, BI refers to the "signal of whether customers will remain or exit the relationship with the service provider. Zeithml et al., (1996) identified "two dimensions to measure BI—favourable and unfavourable" while Chan & Bishop (2013) stated that "personal attitude, social influence, perceived Behavioural control, and habit greatly and directly impact one's Behavioural intention."

Abbasi (2017) found that IB is affected by buying intention. Moreover, it was also found that IB intention, new product knowledge, and excitement influences IB behavior as stated by Kapoor & Kulshrestha (2009). There are substantial studies done in the recent past wherein the relationship between emotional and rational content has affected BIs for future purchases and IB although directly mediated by values specifically on tourist's organisms and responses (Cheung et al., 2022). In line with Cheung et al. (2022), there are studies that identified the effect of positive and negative emotions mediating IB and buying intentions in tourism settings (Kwon & Ahn, 2021). On the contrary, the literature states that IB behavior indicators mediate the intention to purchase and actual behavior intention among tourists (Meng & Xu, 2012). From the context of tourism, there is rare literature on the relationship between BI and IB; thus, the discussion leads to the following hypothesis:

H4: There is a significant association between BI and IB.

H5: There is a mediation effect of BI on eWOM, SM, WA, and IB.

Impulse Buying

Many authors have given definitions and concepts of IB wherein notable literature stated that "impulse buying refers to the state of desire that is experienced while encountering an object in the environment." (Beatty & Ferrell, 1998) "Impulse buying is an abrupt and instant buying with no pre-shopping intention to buy the specific product, resultant of exposure to a stimulus." (Sohn & Lee, 2016) Thus, "buying which presumably was not planned by the customer before entering a store, but which resulted from a stimulus created by a sales promotional device in the store is known as impulse buying." (Applebaum, 1951) "Impulse buying occurs when a consumer experiences a sudden, often powerful and persistent urge to buy something immediately. The impulse to buy is hedonically complex and may stimulate emotional conflict." (Rook, 1987) Stern (1962) conceptualized that "impulsive buying refers to consumers engaging in irrational and unreflective unplanned buying when they are influenced by external stimuli; furthermore, impulsive buying is divided into four categories (i.e., impulse mix)—including pure

impulse buying, reminder impulse buying, suggestion impulse buying, and planned impulse buying."

Impulse buying is a common phenomenon in tourism services (Rezaei et al., 2016). Recently, many studies are conducted on tourism setting, be it online or offline (Ahn et al., 2020). At times due to time scarcity, the tourist often opts for local services offline; however, such a relationship is mediated by overconfidence and travel experiences (Li et al., 2021). Focusing on online tourism services, several factors lead to online IB in tourism and tourism product. These are websites (Rezaei et al., 2016), mobile applications (Do et al., 2020), and product attributes (Kwon & Ahn, 2021) to mention a few. Undoubtedly, the SM content posted leads among all as the antecedents affecting the IB among tourists for various services related (Szymkowiak et al., 2021).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Previous literature and research works were considered before finalizing the conceptual model. Pioneer and the latest studies were researched extensively to observe the variables and their relationships. The main aim was to find the gap present in the relationships along with explored and unexplored areas and to test the model with the core variables. After studying various research papers on tourism promotions, it was concluded that there lies a gap with all these variables taken together in a model and tested. It is important to note that the researchers found no concrete or formal research carried out to study these promotional tools and tourist behavior in the context of India. Therefore, this study is unique in exploring this model in the Indian context.

Apart from that the industry of the current study, i.e. tourism and travel are unexplored considering the model presented. Therefore, there lies a bigger prospect of studying the same. Thus, the attempt aims to discourse this lacuna. Also, the framework could help destination planners in identifying areas to further improve the experience of the tourist.

METHODS AND DATA

The current study describes the behavior of tourists in context to content present online. For identifying the effect of content generated through eWOM, SM and WA over BI and

simultaneously over IB survey approach was incorporated to draw statistical inferences.

Sample Characteristics and Data Collection

The present study is causal and was conducted on respondents aged 18 to 65 years being the travelable age (Jönsson & Devonish, 2008). Both male and female respondents were part of the survey that was conducted using a modified scale. The responses were gathered using the online form on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 wherein 1 being highly disagreed to 5 highly agreed through a nonprobability sampling technique as there was no respondent list available. Among 700 responses, some were filtered out due to incomplete questionnaires. Finally, 410 usable responses were taken into consideration out of which 214 were males and 196 were females. Individual tourists were taken as the sampling elements of this study through purposive sampling.

Instruments Used

The scale for eWOM was adopted from Abubakar (2016) with three statements. Similarly, SM and WA were adopted from Qi et al. (2018) and Loiacono et al. (2007), respectively with three and five statements in each. BI is adopted from Kim et al. (2012) and IB is adopted from Puspaningrum (2017) comprising four and two statements, respectively. Due care was taken while modifying the scale for the Indian tourism context to avoid respondents' errors. All 17 items were used.

Status of Variables

The study incorporates SM, eWOM, and WA as independent variables. BI is considered a dependent as well as mediating variable. A direct influence of SM, eWOM, and WA is analysed in BI wherein it acts as a dependent variable, and further, the role of BI as a mediator is analysed influencing the relationship of SM, eWOM, and WA with IB. Thus, BI is also considered a mediating variable. IB is the dependent variable in the current study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Smart PLS 3 is used for data analysis purposes keeping its advantages over other similar software into consideration (Ringle & Sarstedt, 2016). Initially, the exploratory factor analysis method is used to remove the error of cross-loadings. Thereafter, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is applied to establish the validity and reliability of the tools used followed by structural equation modelling (Rajput et al., 2022). Cronbach's alpha reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability were evaluated along with discriminant validity (Nunnally, 1978). The data had no biasness as was found using Harman single factor method (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The common method biasness value was well within the threshold limit of 50% (CMB value = 34.1%). Therefore, CMB is not found. Two statements BI3 and IB3 were dropped due to poor loading and thus the outcome resulted in a better model fit (Table 1).

Table 1 Measurement Model Summary

Constructs	Variables	Factor Loads	Items Retained	Contribution
eWOM AVE = 0.637 Composite reliability (CR) = 0.839	eWOM 1	0.874	3 statements retained out of 6 (3/6)	Abubakar (2016)
	eWOM 2	0.713		
	eWOM 3	0.799		
SM AVE = 0.709 CR = 0.879	SM1	0.853	3 statements retained out of 3 (3/3)	Qi et al. (2018)
	SM2	0.811		
	SM3	0.861		
WA AVE = 0.633 CR = 0.896	WA1	0.798	5 statements retained out of 5 (5/5)	Loiacono et al. (2007)
	WA2	0.684		
	WA3	0.832		
	WA4	0.839		
	WA5	0.814		
BI AVE = 0.567 CR = 0.839	BI1	0.796	4 statements retained out of 5 (4/5)	Kim et al. (2012)
	BI2	0.837		
	BI3	0.698		
	BI4	0.669		
IB AVE = 0.759; CR = 0.863	IB1	0.859	2 statements retained out of 3 (2/3)	Puspaningrum (2017)
	IB2	0.883		

Note: *Statements not retained are dropped during the factor analysis due to low loadings

Source: Compiled by authors

Measurement Model

The validity and reliability are simultaneously checked along with evaluating the measurement model. Table 2 shows the convergent validity and construct reliability. All the values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were within the threshold limit of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). The AVE was found to be as per the threshold limit of 0.5 (Rajput et al., 2020). Table 3 shows the comparison of AVEs with squared inter-construct (SIC) correlation. The discriminant validity depicts that all AVEs were found to be b-greater than SIC's thus reflecting the clear discrimination between the two constructs. Therefore, in discriminant validity, all the values are under the permissible limit as suggested by Baldus et al. (2015) (Figure 2).

Table 2: Measurement Summary of Validity and Reliability

	α	CR	AVE
BI	0.838	0.839	0.567
eWOM	0.839	0.839	0.637
IB	0.863	0.863	0.759
SM	0.88	0.879	0.709
WA	0.895	0.896	0.633

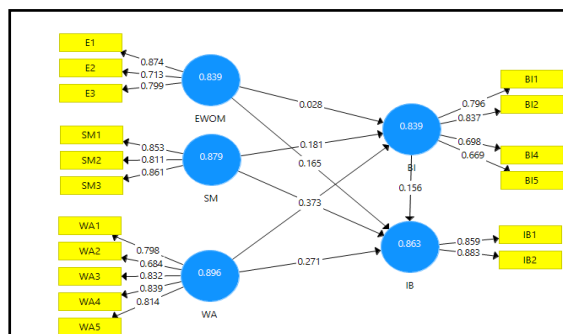
Note: α = Cronbach's Alpha; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE= Average Variance Extracted

Source: Compiled by authors

Table 3: Discriminant Validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981)

	BI	EWOM	IB	SM	WA
BI	0.753				
eWOM	0.127	0.798			
IB	0.356	0.267	0.871		
SM	0.309	0.161	0.36	0.842	
WA	0.438	0.187	0.435	0.329	0.796

Source: Smart PLS output



Source: Smart PLS Output

Figure 2: Initial Path Model

Structural Model

As per Table 4 and Figure 3 (**H1a**), there is no effect of eWOM on BI. This is verified using beta value (β) which is 0.028, statistics (t) = 0.552, and the p-value = 0.581 ($p < 0.05$).

Whereas (**H1b**), eWOM is found to influence IB significantly. The relationship is verified using beta value (β) (0.165), statistics t (3.567), and p-value (***)

(**H2a**): There is a visible influence of SM on BI. The beta value (β) is 0.181, statistics (t) = 0.055, and the p-value is 0.001.

In (**H2b**), a similar effect is found of SM on IB. This was checked using the beta value (β) (0.196), statistics t (0.059), and p-value (**).

(**H3a**): The effect of WAs on BI is supported and found significant. This is verified using the beta value (β) (0.373), statistics t (6.98), and p-value (***)

(**H3b**): Simultaneously WA is positively influencing the IB. The beta value (β) is 0.271, statistics (t) = 4.002, and the significant p-value is 0 ($p < 0.05$).

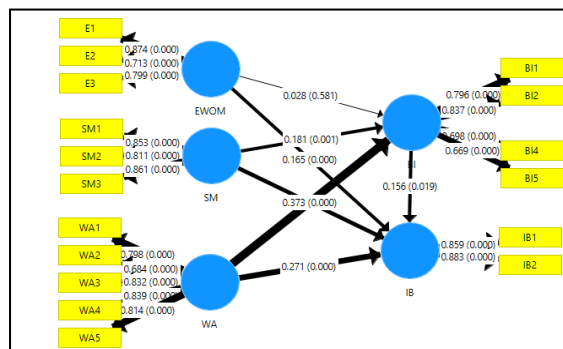
The unique relationship explored through this study was between BI and IB. The statistics revealed that (**H4a**) BI and IB relationship is supported and found significant, wherein the beta value (β) is 0.156, statistics (t) = 2.344, and the p-value is 0.019 ($p < 0.05$). The model fit estimated values were found as per the threshold limit where standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and normed fit index (NFI) were reported to be 0.045 and 0.911, respectively.

(**H5**): There is full mediation by BI on the relationship between eWOM and IB. This is verified by β which is 0.004, statistics (t) = 0.519, and the p-value is 0.604. Although BI intervenes in the relationship of SM partially and IB wherein the β is 0.028, t = 1.965, and the p-value is 0.05. BI also intervenes partially between the association of WA and IB where the beta value (β) is 0.058, statistics (t) = 2.099, and the p-value is 0.036 ($p < 0.05$).

Table 4: SEM Statistics

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	(STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Direct Effects					
BI → IB	0.156	0.154	0.066	2.344	*
eWOM → BI	0.028	0.028	0.051	0.552	0.581
eWOM → IB	0.165	0.166	0.046	3.567	***
SM → BI	0.181	0.18	0.055	3.325	**
SM → IB	0.196	0.2	0.059	3.326	**
WA → BI	0.373	0.376	0.053	6.98	***
WA → IB	0.271	0.272	0.068	4.002	***
Mediation Effect					
eWOM → BI → IB	0.004	0.004	0.008	0.519	0.604
SM → BI → IB	0.028	0.027	0.014	1.965	0.05
WA → BI → IB	0.058	0.059	0.028	2.099	0.036
Note: O = Original sample; M = Sample mean; STDEV = Standard deviation; O/STDEV = T Statistics. *** (P<0.001), ** (P<0.01), * (P,0.05)					

Source: Smart PLS Output



Source: Smart PLS Consistent Bootstrapping Output

Figure 3: Final Structural Equation Model

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

All the values of Cronbach's alpha to check the reliability were within the permissible limit. Exploratory factor analysis was checked which was followed by CFA. CFA was applied to all the variables. All the values of Cronbach alpha, composite validity, and discriminant validity were within the permissible limit. The results of SEM confirmed the insignificant association between eWOM and BI. These results are supported by the findings of Zhang et al. (2010) and Matute (2016). The visible reason for such insignificant influence might be because of travelers' clear understanding of the reviews and testimonials. The said reviews or eWOM at times are so equivocal that these lead to indecisiveness for the traveler. The BI

has a full mediation on the relationship between eWOM and IB as after introducing BI, the said relationship converts as insignificant. However, there is a significant association between eWOM and IB which is supported by the studies of Husnain et al. (2016) and Liu & Hsu (2013) as consumer tends to refer to eWOM in the case of short time thus leading to impulsiveness in his decision-making. The findings also confirmed that there is a significant association between SM and BI which is in line with the findings of Arthini (2018) and Abzari et al. (2014). From this, it can be inferred that the consumer very deeply analyses the information presented via SM.

There exists a substantial association between SM and IB (Nuseir, 2020). The way any organization presents its website is another substantial element affecting BI as well as IB. As a result, a consumer/traveller is influenced by well-organized, responsive, and interactive websites more as compared to any testimonial written for the product. The findings of the current study supported the association between WAs and BIs which is in line with the studies of Chen et al. (2010) and Dong et al. (2013). There is a significant association between WAs and IB as supported by Turkylmaz et al. (2015) and Suryawardani et al. (2021). A very rare relationship is established between SM and WA with IB via BI as mediating variable. Here the BI partially

mediated the relationship between SM and WA with IB.

Lastly, the findings confirmed that BI has a substantial association with IB. This is supported by Abbasi (2017). Although very rare literature was found to support this relationship. There are new researches where IB is connected to the intention to shop via customer satisfaction (Goel et al., 2022). This indicates that it is the satisfaction that is the key factor that connects IB and BI.

The current study was based on the people's motivation to travel and the factors affecting them to visit the destination. After thoroughly reviewing the impact of eWOM, SM, and WAs on BI and IB, it is a clear understanding that destination marketers should know the importance of these promotional tools to attract many tourists. These tools also help in spreading awareness about a destination. SM is a very important source of getting information about a city, its accessibility, accommodation facility, and other important details. The pictures posted on SM help in creating an urge in people to visit. On the other hand, WAs such as website quality, interaction, navigation, etc., aid a layman to use these websites. The more the website is easy to use, the large number is its users. Apart from that, the design of the website and the informativeness creates curiosity in a tourist to know about a destination. The current study did not support the relationship between eWOM and BI since people might post wrong reviews or the information about their experience might be biased due to different weather, different services, etc. However, existing literature has proved numerous times that eWOM leads to BI and IB. Nevertheless, the present findings have received enormous support from the literature. Also, eWOM leads to IB because people trust their friends and acquaintances and their posts and pictures create an urge in them to impulsively book a visit. Therefore, tourism planners must utilize these promotional tools in the right manner to allure travellers. Tools like advertisements can have a positive impact on purchase intention (Sharma et al., 2021). It is a must to remember that too much of advertisements may cause irritation and will lead to negative repercussions (Sharma et al., 2022).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The current research study has research and managerial implications. For those who are willing to work in the area of the BI of tourists and IB, these findings are of great contribution. The proposed model can be explored further by future researchers. The self-designed questionnaire can be used again to conduct a similar kind of study. Furthermore, this study can be done for a different industry, on a different sample, and in a different country to derive varied results. For managers, the importance of these promotional tools and proper planning will lead to more tourist inflow. Destination marketers must update their websites and SM pages to ensure more tourist visits. Also, the information provided on these tools will help managers as well as tourist to create awareness in their minds for destinations and lead to sustainable tourism. More tourist activities must be initiated at the destination to ensure satisfaction and revisit intention.

LIMITATIONS

The current study is conducted using a limited and small population including fewer cities in India. Therefore, it is challenging to generalize the fact, as India has a vast population. Moreover, the study considered selective destinations and took all the cultural destinations of India as the study area. Thus, the destinations not selected resulted in a wide gap. As the sample population comprises India, the results cannot be applied to other countries. Another limitation pertains to questionnaire distribution in online mode. An entire offline aspect of data collection is not considered. Further, under different circumstances present in e-environments, these relationships are assumed to depict varied results. As the study remained focused on the proposed model, the many variables that could have been part of the model are not included. Even changing the status of a variable could be something unique to explore in future studies which is not done in the current study. Lastly, using a similar model for other industries is recommended to extend the proposed model.

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