Research Article

Tourist Decision to Visit a Destination through eWOM Information: An UTAUT Approach Study in Indian Context

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Abstract
In today's digital age, eWOM has emerged as a powerful tool in shaping travel decisions and influencing consumer choices. The present study highlights the growing interest in eWOM as a mediator in tourism research and the application of the UTAUT model in studying this phenomenon. The study is descriptive and analytical in design and uses primary data from 359 respondent's tourist in India. Structured Equation Modelling (SEM) has been performed using SPSS AMOS to investigate the relationship between the constructs. By synthesizing existing knowledge as well as performing empirical analysis of data collected, this study contributes to an understanding of how eWOM influences tourists' decision-making processes and offers implications for both practitioners and researchers in the field of tourism. Particularly, the findings highlight how UTAUT constructs influence eWOM adoption to make travel decisions as well as how eWOM mediates the relationship of UTAUT constructs with tourist intention to visit a destination.

Keywords:
eWOM, Tourism, UTAUT, India

1 Introduction

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has gained significant attention in the field of tourism research due to its influence on consumers' decision-making processes. With the rapid advancement of technology, online platforms and social media have become prominent channels for travelers to seek and share information, opinions, and recommendations. The term "eWOM communication" refers to consumer evaluations of products or services that are posted online for individuals or organizations by past consumers who have used and experienced the product or services before (Seo et al., 2020). Before planning a trip or making a purchase, people often turn to online platforms such as review websites, social media, and travel forums to seek recommendations and read about others' people's experiences.

In the digital era, consumers tend to trust the opinions and experiences shared by fellow travelers more than traditional advertising or promotional campaigns (Tariyal et al., 2022). Social media platforms, travel review websites, and online communities enable individuals to reach a broad network of potential travelers. This amplification effect helps destination marketing organizations, hotels, airlines, and other tourism businesses increase their visibility, attract new customers, and expand their market reach.

Furthermore, eWOM generates user-generated content (UGC) in the form of reviews, ratings, photos, videos, and blog posts. UGC is highly valuable in the tourism sector as it provides an authentic and diverse range of perspectives, allowing potential tourists to gather comprehensive information about a destination or service. UGC contributes to the richness of online content, making it more engaging and dynamic.

As opined by Wandoko and Panggati (2022), eWOM facilitates ongoing engagement and interaction between tourists, tourism businesses, and destination management organizations. Through social media platforms and online communities, travelers can share real-time updates, ask questions, seek recommendations, and provide feedback. This two-way communication fosters relationships, improves customer satisfaction, and enables businesses to adapt and improve their offerings based on customer feedback.

Moreover, in an era where consumers actively research and compare options, favorable online reviews and recommendations can differentiate one business from another. Alkhwaldi et al. (2023) state that eWOM provides cost-effective marketing opportunities for tourism businesses. Unlike traditional advertising, where significant financial investments are required, eWOM relies on the experiences and recommendations of satisfied customers. Encouraging and incentivizing customers to share their positive experiences online can generate organic publicity and word-of-mouth marketing, reducing marketing costs while increasing reach and impact.

Intention to visit a destination may be defined as a measure of a potential visitor's eagerness to go to a certain destination. It is urged that eWOM may reach up to 30 times as many people as traditional methods of communication (Seo et al., 2020). This means that eWOM has the potential to provide travelers with more up-to-date, engaging, and trustworthy information than traditional channels like travel agencies. Wandoko & Panggati (2022) urged that online reviews of a destination spot, hotel, or resort have been demonstrated to improve reservations and room sales.

Consequently, there is a growing trend of research being carried out in terms of consumer consumption, evaluation, and sensitivity to eWOM information easily available online and its impact on the decision-making process in many developed countries. However, there has been few research who have focused on the way eWOM are being consumed in developing countries like India, where tourism potential is huge. It has been observed that the popularity of eWOM platforms is rising in India (Alkhwaldi et al., 2023). In India, it is estimated that more than 50 percent of the population uses eWOM information (Ministry of Tourism GoI, 2021). In Addition, by 2025, it is predicted that 67% of the population will have access to eWOM media in the country. Therefore, the present study has tried to investigate the influence of eWOM on consumers' decision-making processes in the context of the tourism industry from Indian context (Tariyal et al., 2022).

In order to do this, the UTAUT theory has been considered. According to the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), people's intentions while utilizing technology determine their actual use. Performance expectation (PE), facilitating conditions (FC), effort expectancy (EE), and social influence (SI) are four essential characteristics that have a direct impact on the likelihood of adopting any new technology. As stated by Venkatesh et al. (2003), the effect and strength of predictors may be moderated by a number of factors, including age, gender, experience, and whether or not the use of eWOM mediums is voluntary.

The purpose of the proposed study is to investigate the travel visit intention of individuals based on their likelihood to use eWOM information in order to access travel-related information using specific constructs from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), one of the most recent behavior theories of technology acceptance. The UTAUT was designed to provide a rigorous framework for describing technology use and adoption. In comparison to previous technological acceptance models, the UTAUT has shown a greater ability to explain variation in endogenous variables. According to Venkatesh et al. (2012), the explanatory power of UTAUT increased over conventional models like TRA, TAM, TPB, and TAM2 in terms of explaining behavioral intention (Verkijika, 2018).

The UTAUT theory has been widely applied and verified in a variety of consumer decision-making studies, showing its predictive relevance, ability, and validity (Morosan & DeFranco, 2016). However, Verkijika (2018) also stated that the outcomes from several investigations on the predictive capacity and interrelationships between the components of UTAUT on BI have been somewhat inconsistent, indicating that a

systematic study is still required to validate and expand the UTAUT formulation. Henceforth, the objective of this study is twofold. Firstly, to investigate the influence of eWOM on tourist visit intention and to align the UTAUT model to examine its constructs on travelers' adoption of eWOM reviews from travel websites, social media, videos, and personal blogs. The second objective is to investigate the mediating role of eWOM in the relationship between UTAUT constructs with intention to visit a destination.

1.2 Theoretical Background

Venkatesh et al. developed the UTAUT model after conducting a systematic examination and comparison of eight independent models of technology acceptance and usage. According to Venkatesh et al. (2003), the UTAUT model is comprised of six major constructs: Actual use behavior, Effort Expectancy (EE), Social Influence (SI), Performance Expectancy (PE), Facilitating Conditions (FC), and Behavioral Intention (BI) to utilize and adopt a new technology system. Age, experience, gender, and voluntary of use act as moderators in the UTAUT theory. According to Venkatesh et al., (2003) four variables define BI and actual usage: PE, FC, EE, and SI. Venkatesh et al. (2003) stated that the UTAUT model could explain roughly 70% of the variance in behavioral intention (Venkatesh et al., 2003) and 50% of the variation in actual technology use (Venkatesh et al., 2012) when compared to the other eight preceding models that utilized the same data. UTAUT's major purpose was to explain why some people accept particular technologies while others do not.

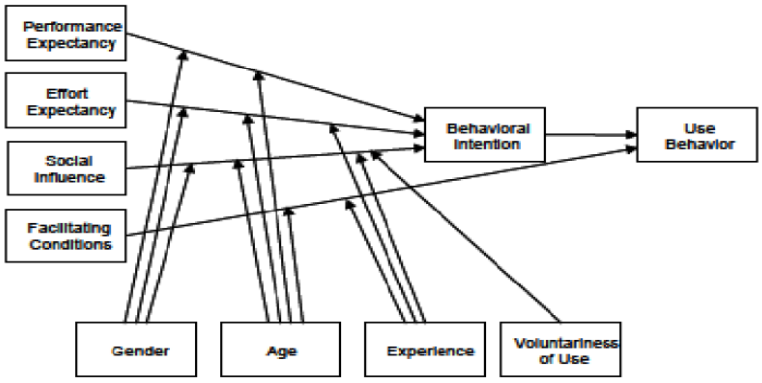

Figure 1: UTAUT Theory by Venkatesh et al., (2003)

For this study, the UTAUT has been modified by dropping the four moderating variables namely gender, age experience and voluntariness of use. The UTAUT constructs namely effort expectancy, performance expectancy, social influence and facilitating condition has been retained to examine their influence on eWOM. Also, the relationship between UTAUT constructs and intention to visit would be verified as well

the relationship between eWOM and intention to visit would be examined. UTAUT postulates that demographic variables like gender, age, experience and voluntary of use moderate the relationship of UTAUT constructs with BI. However, in this study, as a mediating variable eWOM has been added to examine the relationship between EE, PE, SI, FC with tourist Intention to visit (ITV) a destination. The research framework for the study has been shown in the figure below (Figure: 2).

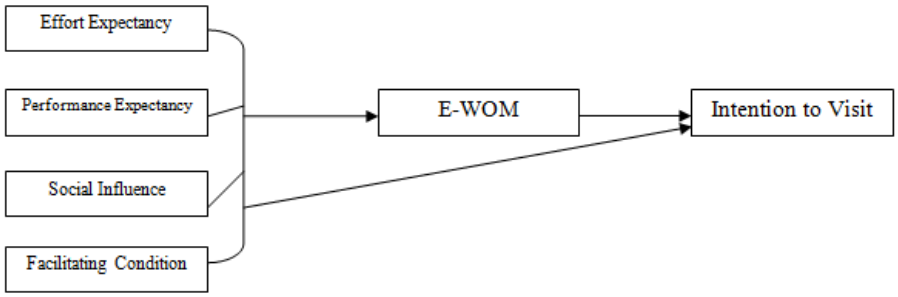

Figure 2: Research Model: Adapted from UTAUT Theory

For this research, a modified version of the UTAUT has been designed. To investigate the impact on eWOM, the UTAUT constructs effort expectancy; performance expectancy, social influence, and facilitating condition have been considered. Additionally, the association between eWOM and intention to visit would be investigated, as well as the relationship between UTAUT constructions and intention to visit. In addition, UTAUT holds that demographic factors like gender, age, experience, and voluntary usage might influence how closely UTAUT constructs relate to BI. Although the moderating factors were eliminated from this research, its mediating function (indirect impact) on the association between EE, PE, SI, and FC with visit intention will be investigated. The image above illustrates the study's research framework.

2 Literature Review

2.1 eWOM and Visit Intention

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) is described as the dynamic and continuing flow of information between future, existing, or past customers about a product, service, brand, or business that is accessible to a large number of individuals and institutions over the Internet (Martini, 2022). It refers to the impression of a good and negative comment consumers make about a product or business over the Internet or online. According to Akbari et al., (2022) eWOM is a key information source since it influences tourist intentions to visit a destination as well as location selection. Previous studies in literature indicate that internet travel reviews has an impact on tourist choice of a destination (Martini, 2022, Akbari et al., 2022, Ismagilova et al., 2017). Unlike the conventional WOM communication; eWOM eliminates the negative connotations connected with the transmission of biased information among friends,

relatives, and family due to the anonymity of the reviewer (Jalilvand et al., 2012). A study by Filieri & McLeay (2014) demonstrates that eWOM has the ability to significantly improve tourist visit intentions. The more favourable a person's assessment of eWOM is, the more probable it is that they will base their decision choice based on that review (Semuel and Lianto, 2014). According to Martini (2022), while selecting a vacation, consumers utilise electronic word-of-mouth communication to develop ideas and limit their options. Studies by Semuel and Lianto (2014) have shown that eWOM has a considerable impact on customers' propensity to make a purchase of any product or services. Similar findings have been confirmed by Akbari et al., (2022) while investigating the relationship between eWOM, the behavioural intention to travel, and the actual decision to visit a tourist attraction. Doosti et al., (2016) also discovered that eWOM influenced people's travel intentions, attitudes, and impressions of make their decision to select a destination. Doosti et al. (2016) and Sari and Pangestuti (2018) focused on drawing the conclusion that eWOM has an impact on visitors' intent to visit. According to Lavelle (2017), eWOM is thought to have a longer shelf life than conventional WOM because of its digital record and the potential for one-time consumption by clients. Additionally, eWOM is seen as being more accessible than traditional WOM since information is readily available online. According to Qiang et al. (2018), more customers are turning to user generated reviews and other pertinent postings on the internet when seeking for product or services related information and expertise. EWOM's impact and influence are reportedly growing dramatically in strength and acceptance because of its anonymous character and broad variety of user-generated content (Daowd et al., 2020). According to Dogra et al. (2021), including the feedback of previous and experienced tourists who are reliable, trustworthy, and have excellent knowledge about a particular tourist place may assist to develop a positive perception of specific tourist locations as indicated by eWOM information. As a result, the information offered by comments or evaluations influences and aids in the decision to visit a certain tourist site. A tourist destination's reputation, as well as client happiness and loyalty, may be enhanced via the application of eWOM. Since customers are more often stimulated by positive eWOM communication, marketers are gradually transferring their techniques to social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter in the current marketing environment (Soeid and Baumassepe, 2020). Previous research by Gunawan et al. (2020) and Mohamad et al., (2020) has shown that eWOM available on social media has a significant impact on tourists' intention to visit a certain destination again. Numerous studies have shown the direct and considerable impact of electronic word-of-mouth on visitor intention.

Hypotheisis1: There is a positive and significant influence of eWOM on tourist visit intention to a destination.

2.2 Performance Expectancy

The term performance expectancy is described as "the degree to which an individual believes that using the system will help him or her to attain performance in the job" (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Performance expectancy have been derived from earlier articulated theories of new system use and acceptance such as the TAM (Technology Acceptance Model) theory, Model of PC Usage (MPCU), Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), Combined Motivational Model (MM), TAM2 and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Hence, as per Venkatesh et al., (2003) perceived usefulness, relative advantage; extrinsic motivation, outcome expectation and job-fit have been included in the PE construct of UTAUT. As stated by Venkatesh et al., (2003) PE could be considered as one of the most crucial construct while determining ICT usage and intention to use, both in voluntary as well as mandatory situations of technology usage (Venkatesh et al., 2003). According to Davis (1989) and Neo et al., (2014), performance expectancy is comparable to the TAM model's construct namely 'perceived usefulness'. As per Gupta and Dogra (2017) the utility, ease, time saving, and productivity can all be explained by PE of UTAUT model. Performance Expectancy may also be explained in terms of usefulness of the system, improved performance, effectiveness, higher productivity, and time savings (Rahman and Sloan, 2017). Gupta and Dogra (2017), Rahman and Sloan, (2017), and Alsharif (2013) through their study found PE to have a significant role in understanding consumer adoption of e-travel and online travel buying behavior.

Hypothesis 2: Performance Expectancy exert a positive significant relationship with tourist visit intention

Hypothesis 3: Performance Expectancy exert a positive significant relationship with eWOM

2.3 Effort Expectancy

Effort expectancy refers to the ease with which consumers can embrace new technologies. According to Venkatesh et al., (2003) effort expectancy has been derived by considering the constructs used by previous measurement models like TAM and includes perceived ease of use (PEOU), skillfulness or expertise, complexity and understandability. As opined by Sharma et al., (2021) a crucial construct for both the UTAUT and TAM model that possibly has an influence on the individual's desire to use the new technology is effort expectancy. In the past, tourist travel intention has been found to significantly impact EE (Zhang et al., 2021). Literature existing within this area of study supports that tourist is more willing to embrace technology in order to make travel related decisions (Zhang et al., 2021, Sharma et al., 2021, Chao, 2019). Effort Expectancy has experimentally shown to have a substantial impact on behavior intention to adopt and use new systems and technology including travel related applications (Rahman and Sloan, 2017). However, researches like Pan & Gao (2021) could not find any evidence to support the impact of EE on behavioral intention.

Hypothesis 4: There is significant relationship between EE with tourist visit intention

Hypothesis 5: There is a significant relationship of EE with eWOM

2.4 Social Influence

According to Venkatesh et al., (2003), the subjective norm, which is included in the TPB model, is equivalent to the social effect of UTAUT. Ali et al. (2022) discovered that people who are experiencing technology anxiety seek out others' experiences to consolidate their own. A substantial influence as well as positive relation between SI and BI for ICT adoption and use has been shown by several researches, including Nnaji et al. (2023), Pan & Gao (2021), and Wu et al. (2021). Social Influence, according to Venkatesh et al. (2012), refers to the extent to which an individual realize the importance other people perceived about him or her decision of using the new system. Tan and Lau (2016) found a substantial positive link between social influence and behavioral intention. Further evidence for a strong positive significance was found in earlier studies like Ali et al. et al., (2022), Pan & Gao (2021), Gupta et al., (2018), and Ali et al. (2022) between SI and Behavioral Intention (BI).

Hypothesis 6: There is a significant relationship of Social Influence with Intention to visit a destination

Hypothesis 7: There is a significant relationship op Social Influence with eWOM

2.5 Facilitating Conditions

The term facilitating conditions (FC) refers to the knowledge and apprehension required to use a certain system (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Facilitating conditions refers to the requirement of both technical and managerial preparedness to use any system at place. According to Gupta and Dogra (2017) the construct “facilitating conditions” amy be explained in terms of different variables such as compatibility, the need for resources and expertise, someone being present while operating the new system, help available from others, and the presence of hardware and auxiliary equipment in order to facilitate the system use. The UTAUT theory suggests that surrounding environment can either encourages or discourage individuals from adopting and using any new technology. Sharma et al., (2020) found behavioral intentions to have a significant influence on facilitating condition to make online travel purchase. Similar significant results were confirmed between the facilitating condition and behavioral intentions by past studies of Venkatesh et al., (2012); Huang (2023), Kamboj & Joshi (2021). Other studies, including Bakasi et al., (2019), Gupta et al. (2018), Alkhwaldi et al (2023), found no evidence to support the relationship between facilitating condition and behavioral intentions. According to study by Venkatesh et al., (2012), age and gender may function as a moderator in the connection between facilitating conditions and behavioral intention as well as facilitating conditions and use behavior.

Hypothesis 8: There is a significant relationship between Facilitating Condition and Intention to Visit a destination

Hypothesis 9: There is a significant relationship of Facilitating Condition with eWOM

2.6 e-WOM as Mediating Variable

Very few researches have focused on how eWOM interacts with other factors to mediate travel intention. While there are many researches exploring the direct effects of eWOM on visit intention, purchase intention and the adoption and use of new technologies, there are few studies that focus on the role of eWOM as a mediator between other dimensions. Although few research, like Adam et al. in (2023), have examined the role of eWOM as mediating variable in the relationship between revisit and tourist perceptions of a destination choice. Fachrurazi et al., (2022) found eWOM to be significant in mediating the relationship between a brand choice and re-purchase intention. According to Jain et al., (2022) eWOM serves as a mediating variable in the relationship between customer satisfaction and purchase intention. The mediating role of eWOM in the relationship between marketing mix elements and destination image as well as visit and revisit intention was validated by Adam et al. in (2023). EWOM communication has a considerable impact on tourist intention and decision of a location choice (Jailil vand et al., 2013). Jailil vand & Samiei (2012) through their study demonstrated the significance and potential of eWOM in affecting purchase intentions both directly and indirectly. The results of a study by Fan and Miao (2012) suggest that perceived eWOM has a significant impact on eWOM acceptance and purchase intention (Jailil vand & Samiei, 2012). The study's results also show that eWOM does have an impact on visitors' intentions to go to a tourist destination. Past literature suggest, eWOM has the potential to directly or indirectly influence both visitor behaviour and purchase intention.

Hypothesis 10: eWOM act as a mediator in the relationship between Effort Expectancy and Intention to visit a destination

Hypothesis 11: eWOM act as a mediator in the relationship between Performance Expectancy and Intention to Visit a destination

Hypothesis 12: eWOM act as a mediator in the relationship between Social Influence and Intention to visit a destination

Hypothesis 13: eWOM act as a mediator in the relationship between Facilitating Condition and Intention to Visit a destination

3 Methodology

The study is descriptive and analytical in design. Data were collected from tourist visiting Meghalaya, India a tourist attraction state of Northeast India. A sample of 400 respondent tourists was surveyed through a well developed questionnaire. Out of 400 samples, 359 respondents were found to be appropriate for the analysis. The questionnaire was pilot tested and verified for content validity, before doing the final survey from the tourist respondents. The statements and indicators items of the

construct were adapted from authors available in the literature. All the construct were measured through three items scale adapted from past authors available in the literature (refer to table 1). The jurisdiction of data collection for this study included favourable tourist destinations across the state of Meghalaya. Meghalaya is a tourist destination state, situated across the North-eastern states of India. The state is renowned for its natural beauty, cold climate, waterfalls, and diverse culture as compared to other states of North-eastern states of India. Substantial number of tourist visits the state every year, to experience the diversity of climate, culture and natural beauty of the place. Particularly, during summer (June-September) the state experience the highest tourism visits from neighboring states.

3.1 Variables

Table 1: List of Variables

Variable	Code	Statements	References
Effort Expectancy	EE1	It would be simple for me to learn about a destination if I used eWOM information online	Venkatesh et al., (2003)
	EE2	I feel that using eWOM to learn about tourism locations would be handy for me	
	EE3	Travel arrangements using eWOM information are simple for me	
Performance Expectancy	PE1	eWOM available online is an useful information	Sharma et al., (2021), Venkatesh et al. (2012),
	PE2	Using eWOM allows me to travel more easily.	
	PE3	When compared to travel agents, eWOM allows me to make travel arrangements quicker	
Facilitating Conditions	FC1	The devices I have and use are typically well suited to obtain eWOM information	Venkatesh et al. (2012)
	FC2	It is easy to get eWOM information considering all facilities available within my reach	
	FC3	Use of eWOM information are compatible with other platforms and technologies	
Social Influence	SI1	Because so many others are doing it, I make my decision via eWOM information.	Venkatesh et al. (2012),
	SI2	People that have an impact on my conduct believe that I should utilise eWOM information while choosing tourist location.	
	SI3	People that matter to me believe that I should utilise eWOM to plan my travel itinerary.	
eWOM	eWOM1	While I have other people's internet travel views, I feel more at ease while travelling.	Jalilvand et al (2013)
	eWOM2	When I think of travelling, I look for ideas and advice online	
	eWOM3	My trip plans are influenced by online reviews.	

ITV	ITV1	In the near future, I want to visit tourism attractions.	Ali et al (2022)
	ITV2	If I go on a vacation, I will go to tourist attractions.	
	ITV3	I believe travelling once in a while is a worthwhile decision.	

4 Findings

Data was analyzed using SPSS AMOS, to examine the relationship among the variables used within the study. In SEM, the data validation and analysis follow a two step process of evaluating the outer and inner model. The results of the findings have been described in the following subsections:

4.1 Validity and Reliability

In order to examine the validity and reliability of the data, through composite reliability, average variance extracted, factor loadings and inter correlation, confirmatory factor analysis was performed. To calculate the values of composite reliability, average variances extracted and inter correlation, Gaskin (2020), Stats Tools Package was used.

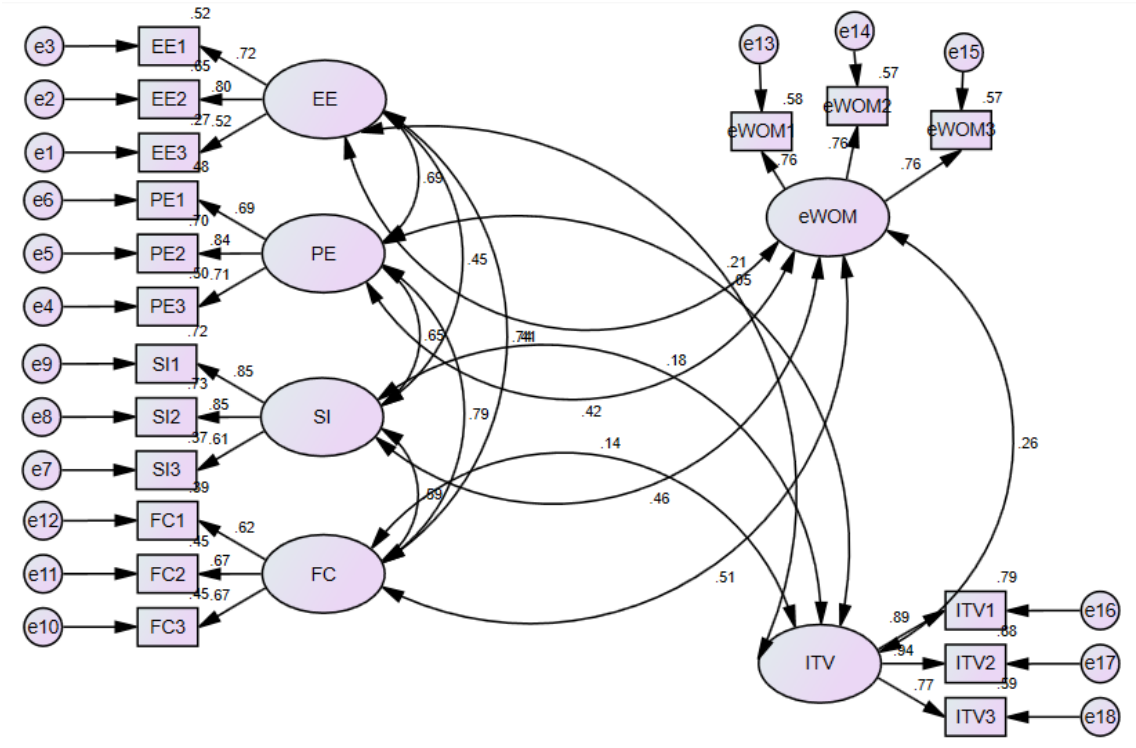

Figure 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Hair et al (2019) suggest determining the inter item loadings, Composite reliability score and average variance extracted for determining the validity of the data used in SEM. On the other hand, to examine the discriminant validity Hair et al (2019) asserts examining the square-root of average variance extracted (AVE) and inter-construct correlation. Confirmatory factor analysis was undertaken to examine the outer model assessment to examine convergent and discriminant validity.

4.1.1 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity of the model can be accessed through factor loadings of indicators items of the latent variables, composite reliability scores and average variance extracted. As rule of thumb, factor loadings of indicators items must be greater than 0.70, CR should be greater than 0.07 and AVE greater than 0.50 is acceptable in order to establish convergent validity (Ong & Puteh, 2017). The factor loadings of all the indicator items has been found to be greater than 0.05, CR>0.07, and AVE>0.05, thereby establishing convergent validity of the outer model (refer table 2).

Table 2: Convergent Validity

Variables	**Indicators Items**	**Loadings**	**CR**	**AVE**
Effort Expectancy	EE3	0.518	0.727	0.578
	EE2	0.804		
	EE1	0.721		
Performance Expectancy	PE3	0.709	0.791	0.560
	PE2	0.837		
	PE1	0.691		
Social Influence	SI3	0.608	0.820	0.608
	SI2	0.855		
	SI1	0.85		
Facilitating Conditions	FC3	0.668	0.791	0.527
	FC2	0.67		
	FC1	0.621		
eWOM	eWOM1	0.762	0.802	0.753
	eWOM2	0.757		
	eWOM3	0.755		
Intention to visit	ITV1	0.887	0.898	0.575
	ITV2	0.937		
	ITV3	0.77		

4.1.2 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was established using the square root of average variance extraction method. Square-root of AVE should be greater than inter construct correlation (Zaiţ & Bertea, 2011). The diagonal values represent the square-root of AVE and has been found to be greater than inte item construct correlation, establishing discriminant validity (refer to Table 3).

Table 3: Discriminant Validity

	EE	PE	SI	FC	ITV	eWOM
EE	**0.792**					
PE	0.689	**0.898**				
SI	0.454	0.651	**0.880**			
FC	0.739	0.785	0.586	**0.793**		
ITV	0.207	0.045	0.185	0.144	**0.867**	
eWOM	0.413	0.419	0.461	0.514	0.262	**0.758**

4.1.3 Model Fit

A SEM using AMOS to test the relationship between the variables generated the following results (refer Table:4). The CMIN/DF value computed is 5.38 indicates a reasonable fit of the data with the hypothetical model developed. As Kline (1985) and Marsh and Hocevar (1985) suggest CMIN/DF value of less than 3 to be acceptable fit and value less than 5 to a reasonable fit. Generally, excellent, good, and mediocre fit are indicated by RMSEA threshold values of less than 0.01, 0.05, and 0.08 respectively (MacCallum et al, 1996). An RMSEA computed score of 0.92 for the default model indicates excellent fit of the model. CFI score generated is 0.881 which indicates acceptability of the model. As suggested by Ullman & Bentler (2012), CFI value of 0.9 indicate good fit of the model, where more liberal approach to assess the model fit is of 0.9 < CFI <0.85. Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) are two common fit indices used to assess the goodness-of-fit of a structural equation model in SPSS AMOS. GFI and TLI values range from 0 to 1, where 1 indicates a perfect fit. The GFI and TFI computed from confirmatory factor analysis for this model indicate a reasonable fit.

Table 4: Model Fit

Item	Criteria	Result	Remarks
CMIN/DF	≤ 3.00	5.385	Reasonable fit
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	.092	Acceptable fit
GFI	0.8 – 0.9	.866	Reasonable fit
TLI	0.8 – 09	.848	Reasonable fit

CFI	0.8 – 09	.881	Reasonable fit

4.1.4 R-Square

The analysis of percentage of variance explained by four variables in UTAUT show that they could explain 30% of variance of eWOM. In addition the percentage of variance explained by the model on ITV is 13%. This substantially lower percentage of R-Square of eWOM and ITV shows that other factors can be included within the study to enhance the measure of variability of dependent variables namely e-Word of Mouth and Intention to visit a destination.

Table 5: R Square

Squared Multiple Correlations	
	Estimate
eWOM	0.309
ITV	0.133

4.1.5 Hypothesis Testing

The analysis of the model shows that H1, H3, H5, H7, H8 and H9 are significant, whereas H2, H4 and H6 are not supported. There is no significant relationship between PE and ITV, EE and ITV, SI and ITV. But, there is a significant relationship between eWOM and ITV, PE and eWOM, EE and eWOM, SI and eWOM, FC and eWOM, FC and ITV.

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis				Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
H1	ITV	<---	eWOM	0.261	0.083	3.136	0.002	Supported
H2	ITV	<---	PE	-0.4	0.136	-2.948	0.003	Supported
H3	eWOM	<---	PE	-0.106	0.106	-1.001	0.317	Supported
H4	ITV	<---	EE	0.463	0.167	2.778	0.005	Supported
H5	eWOM	<---	EE	0.114	0.129	0.883	0.377	Not supported
H6	ITV	<---	SI	0.226	0.086	2.613	0.009	Not Supported
H7	eWOM	<---	SI	0.247	0.067	3.674	0.001	Supported
H8	ITV	<---	FC	-0.007	0.217	-0.033	0.974	Supported
H9	eWOM	<---	FC	0.461	0.172	2.682	0.007	Supported

4.1.6 Path Analysis

The path diagram with standardized coefficient (estimate) is as shown in the figure. The influence of FC on eWOM is highest with a standardized estimate of 0.29,

followed by SI on eWOM with a standardized estimate of 0.28. The influence of EE on eWOM is the lowest and PE has a negative impact on eWOM. This indicates that eWOM available over the web regarding a destination does not enhance tourist performance to visit a destination but in fact weakens the tourist performance to visit a destination. This may be due to widespread information available regarding a destination. eWOM available over the web has a positive and significant relationship with tourist intention to visit a destination. Facilitating condition has a significant positive relationship with ITV.

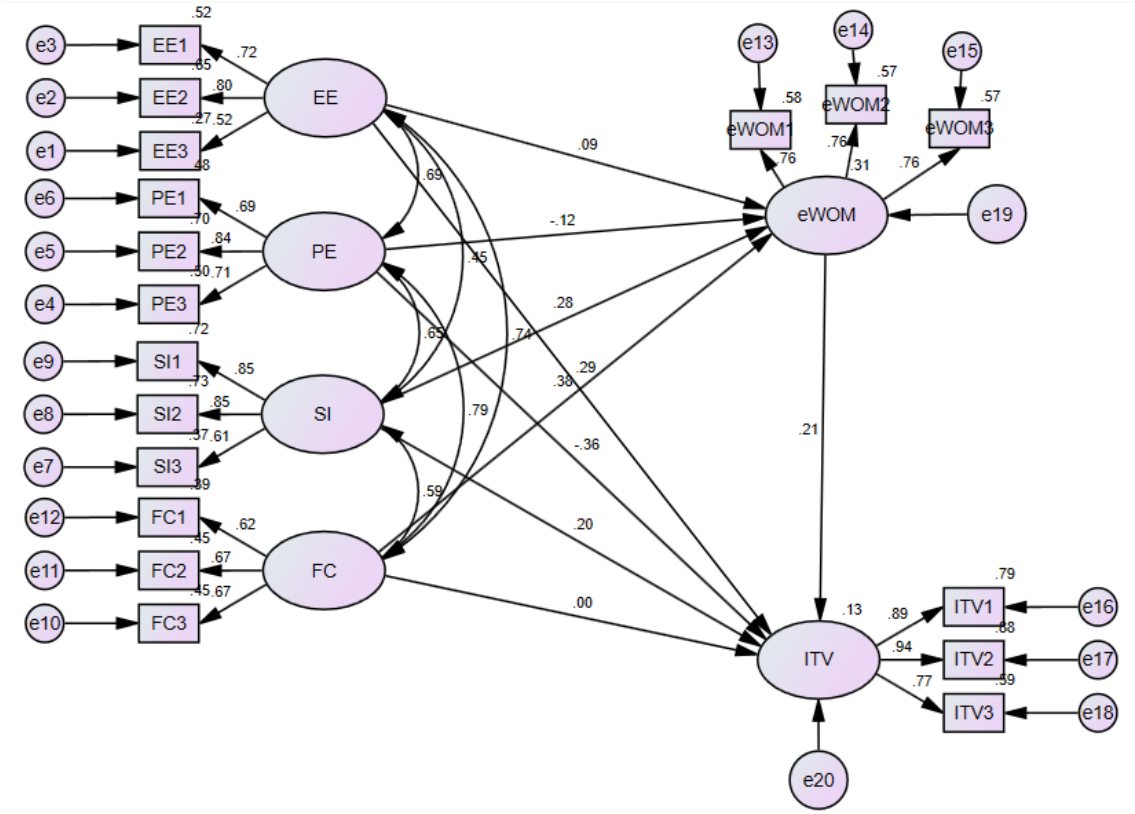

Figure 4: Path Diagram

4.1.7 Indirect Effects (Mediating Effects)

Mediation analysis was performed by following classical approach suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986), where the process involves examining the output through indirect, direct and total effects. A bootstrap procedure was performed with 5000 number of bootstrap samples, 95% bias corrected (BC) confidence interval. The results of the mediation analysis are presented as follows:

Table 7: Mediating Effects

	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Total Effects	Remarks
EE-EWOM -ITV	0.463	.030	0.493	Non significant
PE-EWOM-ITV	-0.400	-.028	-0.427	Non significant
SI-EWOM-ITV	0.226	.064*	0.290*	Mediation is significant as indirect effect is significant (full mediation)
FC-EWOM-ITV	-0.007*	.120*	0.113	Mediation is significant as indirect effect is significant(partial mediation)

Baron and Kenny (1986) suggest examining the level of significance of indirect effects in bootstrapping procedure of verifying the mediating effect. The analysis result shows mediation of eWOM in the relationship between social influence and intention to visit a destination and facilitating condition and intention to visit a destination. As direct effect of FC and ITV was found to be already significant, therefore the extent of mediation of eWOM in the relationship between facilitating condition and intention to visit a destination is partial mediation. In addition as no direct effect of SI on ITV could be established, hence, there is a full mediation of eWOM in the relationship between Facilitating condition and intention to visit a destination.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

The present study was conducted to address the growing demand for ICT-based eWOM information available online for tourist to make their travel choices. The study findings show a positive relationship between PE, SI and FC with eWOM. These findings reveal that tourist perceived that their decision making ability is enhanced through use of eWOM information which support the findings of Iqbal et al., (2022). The findings also confirm that tourist or visitors assume that their social surroundings support their use of eWOM. eWOM has been found to have a significant impact on tourist intention to visit a destination. Effort Expectancy (EE) was found to be not significant in its relationship with eWOM, indicating that effort has to be put by the tourist in finding relevant contextual information related to a destination. Performance Expectancy (PE), Effort Expectancy (EE) and Facilitating condition (FC) has been found to influence intention to visit a destination by a tourist. However, Social Influence was found to be insignificant in their direct relationship with ITV in this study, which confronts the UTAUT theory. Tariyal et al., (2022), Mutlu and Der (2017), Gupta and Dogra (2017), and Baptista and Oliveira (2015) found social influence to be non-significant in influencing behavioral intention which contradicts the results of Venkatesh et al., (2003). In terms of eWOM as mediator, it was found to significantly mediate the relationship between FC and ITV and SI and ITV but insignificant in mediating the relationship between EE and ITV, PE and ITV.

Studies like Ali et al., (2022), Bronner & de Hoog (2011), Hamouda & Yacoub, (2018), Ismagilova et al., (2017), Daowd et al (2020), Seraphin et al, (2018), Dogra et al (2021) share similar results confirming a positive relationship between eWOM and tourist intention to visit a destination. Gupta and Dogra (2017), Rahman and Sloan (2017), Alsharif (2013) confirmed a positive association between PE and ITV. The less effort tourist perceives they need to search online information, the more likely it would impact their decision for a travel to their preferred destination. In addition, once tourist experience better performance, through use of eWOM information, they are more likely to finalize their itinerary plans. However, in this study, the direct impact of EE, PI, FC and SI could not be established on ITV which is contrary with UTAUT findings as the theory have established a direct, positive and significant relationship with PE, EE, SI, FC with BI. This possibly could be attributed to the use of eWOM as the mediators between UTAUT constructs and ITV. Venkatesh et al. (2012) observed a similar conclusion, noting that moderators were often deleted and that most research only used a portion of the model, resulting into inconsistent outcomes. As stated by Dwivedi et al., (2019) the original UTAUT model may be given another look in the context of other theories that might help to explain how people accept and use new technologies. According to their study Dwivedi et al., (2019) concluded that approximately 25% of studies using the UTAUT model, did not use additional constructs. A study by Chao (2019) using UTAUT model found 47.9% of the variation in BI was explained by the research model. BI was most significantly impacted by PE and EE. In this study only 30.90 of eWOM and 13.3% of ITV could be explained by the UTAUT constructs namely PE, EE, SI and FC.

6 Theoretical & Managerial Implication

The application of the UTAUT theory to study eWOM in planning tourism destination choices by travelers offers practical guidance for destination marketers and businesses while contributing to theoretical advancements in understanding tourist behavior, information processing, and communication patterns in the digital age.

Exploring how individuals engage with eWOM in the context of tourism visits through the study findings provide valuable insights to marketers, travel bloggers, travelers as well as novice who are planning their itinerary. From the study findings, it is reaffirmed that eWOM influence destination visit intention of travelers, which travel marketers must consider seriously in order to build and maintaining online reputation of their services. The very conclusion that UTAUT constructs PE, EE and FC are significant in impacting eWOM demystify that travel marketers must envisage for custom services to maintain simplicity of their platforms, easy to use, performance targeted and streamline infrastructure requirements through which user generated eWOM are easily and readily available for users for consumption.

The study is noble in a way that it investigates the mediating role played by eWOM in the relationship between UTAUT constructs and intention to visit a destination by

tourist. Past studies in the literature have put less emphasize on the role of eWOM on the interplay between UTAUT constructs and visit intention of tourist.

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