

ACCEPTANCE AND ADOPTION OF ELECTRONIC WORD-OF-MOUTH (eWOM) ON GREEN PURCHASE INTENTION: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

With the development of digital technology, the consumers are more and more dependent upon Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) for their buying decisions especially in online. In parallel, awareness about sustainability has increased, and the demand for eco-friendly products is increasing, which has led to an extension of research interests on the role of eWOM in influencing the formation of green purchase intention. This study systematically reviews the literature to find the factors that affect eWOM acceptance and adoption, and how they impact consumers' green purchase intention. The literature is identified, screened and synthesized according to the guidelines of PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021). The credibility of the review, source trustworthiness, source expertise, quality of the argument, usefulness of information, consumer trust, and concern for the environment were found to be important factors in the adoption of eWOM. There are three moderating effects between the consumer trust and green purchase intention and between environmental concern and willingness to buy EPs, respectively: the first is the moderating effect of credible eWOM, which is the second. Moderating effect between consumer trust and green purchase intention is the first moderating effect of credible eWOM, and the second is the moderating effect of environmental concern between willingness to buy environmentally friendly products. The majority of the current studies are quantitative and cross-sectional, thus there is a need for more qualitative, mixed-method and longitudinal studies. This review aims to consolidate the scattered empirical research to gain insights into digital marketing and sustainable consumer behaviour in order to inform marketers, retailers and policy makers about how they can use credible online communication to encourage sustainable consumer behaviour.

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The study investigates the factors driving the adoption of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) and the influence of eWOM on the Green Purchase Intention of consumers. The aim of this research is to examine the factors that will motivate people to buy items that are environmentally friendly (green purchase intention) and how the eWOM will affect the green purchase intention of the consumers.

Keywords

Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), Green Purchase Intention, Online Review, Review Credibility, Consumer Trust, Sustainable Consumption

Introduction

With the digital revolution, consumers' ways of searching information, comparing products and making decisions have changed (Grewal, Motyka, & Levy, 2018). The rise of e-commerce and review sites has given consumers a wealth of product information, apart from marketing. One major source of this information is Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Lis, 2013), which is perceived as more accessible, credible and beneficial in solving the pre-purchase uncertainty compared to the traditional word of mouth (Mourali, Laroche, & Pons, 2005; Park, Lee, & Han, 2007).

In the recent years, with the increase of false and manipulated reviews, businesses are actively leveraging eWOM to create a credible image of the brand and to gain purchase intention, making credibility a concern, which is derived from the source trustworthiness, reviewer expertise and argument quality (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Xie, Zhang, & Zhang, 2014).

At the same time, environmental sustainability has emerged as a paramount issue on the global agenda (Paul, Modi, & Patel, 2016; Yadav & Pathak, 2017). Consumers will usually not believe a brand's sustainability claims, and they will rely on independent reviews prior to buying a product, which will help mitigate perceived risk and create positive attitudes towards green products (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

There are several theories to this link: The Hovland–Yale Communication Model (Hovland et al., 1953) which includes the communicator, message, and audience attributes, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) that has central argument and peripheral credibility persuasive strategies, and the Information Adoption Model (Sussman & Siegal, 2003) which focuses on the acceptance of credible and useful information. These collectively indicate a combination of source credibility, message quality and usefulness influence eWOM participation and eWOM purchases.

The role of eWOM in the context of green purchase intention has not been studied holistically and available evidence mostly comes from more limited contexts and settings, which are in need of further research due to the dynamism of digital

marketing (Alam et al., 2022; Dwivedi et al., 2021). To fill this gap, this study uses a systematic review approach to identify the factors contributing to eWOM acceptance, and how they affect green purchase intention.

Literature Review

The concept of eWOM: eWOM is one of the most powerful communication channels in e-markets that enables customers to share their experiences and opinions on e-commerce platforms, social networks and forums (Bickart & Schindler, 2001). It is considered to be more independent and authentic compared to conventional promotion and helps to minimize information asymmetry and provide direct product information (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Filieri, 2015; Park et al., 2007).

Theoretical Background: Source Credibility Theory (Hovland et al. 1953) suggests that the impact of eWOM is related to the credibility of its source (source trustworthiness and expertise) and Lis (2013) identifies review credibility, which is related to reviewer credibility, expertise, and argument strength. The Information Adoption Model (Sussman & Siegal, 2003) also suggests that people only adopt information if it is useful and credible, and that well-structured reviews have a stronger impact on attitude formation (which corresponds to the central and peripheral persuasion routes outlined in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986)).

The green purchase intention was also found to be significantly influenced by eWOM: Green purchase intention is one's intention to purchase products which help to minimize environmental impacts (Paul et al., 2016). Consumers are skeptical of brand sustainability claims, and validate product and environmental performance through trusted reviews (Yadav & Pathak, 2017). Positive eWOM reduces perceived risk and increases trust in green claims, resulting in greater confidence in green products (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

Mediation and Moderation: Credibility is a consistent mediator of the eWOM–green purchase intention relationship, affecting attitudes towards environmentally friendly products (Zhang et al., 2014). Another important mediator is the consumer trust which is built when the consumer believes that the reviews are genuine and it enhances consumer green brand trust (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). However, environmentally-related reviews have greater influence when they are directed at the consumer's environmental concern (Alam et al., 2022), meaning that eWOM has a greater impact when consumers are also concerned about the environment.

Fake reviews and AI-generated content: Although there is a positive relationship between eWOM and green attitude, the increasing presence of fake, sponsored, and AI-generated reviews poses a challenge to the credibility of the

reviews (He, Hollenbeck, & Proserpio, 2020; Kumar & Gupta, 2023). Transparency is more and more important to maintain the trust of consumers, because manipulated reviews can mislead customers about the real quality of the product (Lee, Park & Han, 2008).

Summary: Meta-analytic evidence shows the link between eWOM and purchase intention is positive (Ismagilova, Slade, Rana, & Dwivedi, 2021), which is supported by the relationship between source characteristics (trustworthiness, expertise, argument quality, information usefulness, review credibility, consumer trust, and environmental concern) and eWOM acceptance. The current review is based on such a body of evidence.

Research Gap

Although numerous studies have investigated the role of eWOM on consumer behavior, limited few studies have sought to synthesize the specific role of eWOM in the green purchase intention in a systematic way and across contexts. The majority of the previous research is based on a quantitative, cross-sectional research design, such as SEM or PLS-SEM, and the methodology of secondary data synthesis for common patterns and theories (Wang, Hong, Li, & Gao, 2022) is relatively low. The study of credibility, consumer trust and source trustworthiness is mostly studied separately, while some new developments, such as social media, influencer marketing, and AI-generated content (Li, Larimo, & Leonidou, 2021; Nuseir, 2022) have not been sufficiently studied in the context of eWOM credibility and sustainable consumption. There are also numerous studies that are limited in definition and scope, and therefore cannot be generalized. This study tackles the gaps by comprehensively reviewing the determinants of eWOM acceptance and their relation to green purchase intention.

Objectives

1. Perform a systematic literature review related to eWOM acceptance and adoption in consumer behaviour.
2. Determine the important factors that affect the credibility, acceptance and adoption of eWOM.
3. Give a summary of the relationship between eWOM and green purchase intention from previous empirical studies.
4. Combine methodological perspectives, theories and trends from past research.
5. Recognize gaps in the literature and suggest the next steps in research.
6. Gain an in-depth knowledge of eWOM's importance for sustainable consumer behavior.

Research Methodology

Research Design: This descriptive and exploratory study will follow the methodological rigor and reproducibility of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guidelines as proposed by Page et al. (2020), and Wang et al. (2022).

Data Sources: Secondary data were gathered from six databases: Scopus, Web of Science, Science Direct, SpringerLink, Emerald Insight, Taylor & Francis Online, Wiley Online Library and Google Scholar, which were chosen due to their robust coverage of marketing and consumer behaviour, sustainability, and digital commerce research.

Search Strategy: The Boolean operators AND, OR were used to combine the various key terms such as eWOM, Online Reviews, Review Credibility, Source Credibility, Consumer Trust, Green Purchase Intention, Green Consumer Behaviour, Sustainable Consumption, Green Marketing, and Information Adoption.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.

S. No.	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
1	Peer-reviewed journal articles, 2015–2026	Conference papers, editorials, book reviews, dissertations, opinion articles
2	English-language articles	Duplicate publications
3	Studies on eWOM, review credibility, consumer trust, or green purchase intention	Unpublished, methodologically non-transparent studies
4	Empirical studies, SLRs, and meta-analyses with clear methods	Articles unrelated to eWOM and green purchasing behaviour

The importance of study selection and data extraction: After PRISMA 2020, the title and abstract of all the articles were screened, then the duplicates were eliminated, and the full texts of the eligible articles were then screened. The data that were collected were authors, year, country, research design, theory, variables, methods of analysis and results.

Data Analysis: Based on that, a thematic approach was followed, analysing the findings in a Methodological Review (Research designs, theories, methods, geography) and a Thematic Review (Source trustworthiness, expertise, argument quality, review credibility, consumer trust, Environmental concern, and green purchase intention), which highlighted patterns, trends, and gaps.

Scope of the Study

This review collates and synthesises research examining the factors which influence eWOM acceptance and its effect on green purchase intention, as well as

source trustworthiness, argument quality, review credibility, source expertise, information usefulness, consumer trust and environmental concern. It includes research from 2015 to date in fields like sustainable fashion, organic food, green cosmetics, electric vehicles and eco-tourism (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006; Filieri & McLeay, 2014). In addition to being based on secondary data only, these results are simply a summary of the existing empirical studies, rather than reflecting direct measurements of consumer behaviour, and contribute to the consolidation of the scarce empirical literature and provide guidelines for researchers, marketers, policymakers and platform managers.

Conceptual Framework

The reviewed literature led to the development of the eWOM acceptance determinants and the proposed framework of eWOM determinants and green purchase intention is shown in Figure 1. Review credibility is positively related to information usefulness, argument quality, source expertise and source trustworthiness, which positively influence the acceptability of eWOM, consumer trust and green purchase intention. The moderation of the effect of eWOM adoption on green purchase intention by environmental concern is hypothesized.

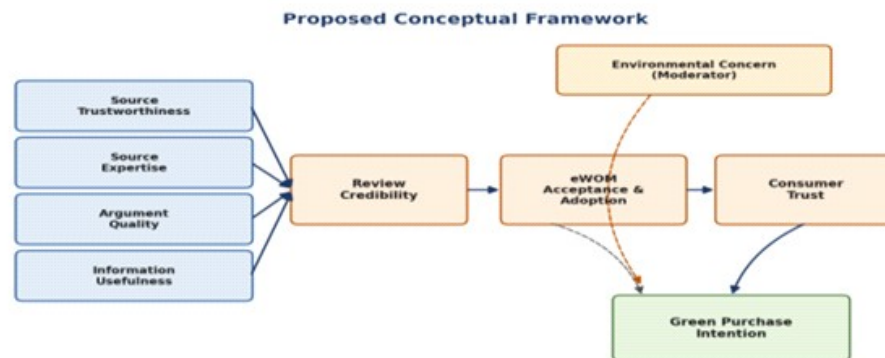


Figure 1. The relationship between the determinants of eWOM acceptance and consumers' green purchase intention (author's own construction).

This framework integrates key literature findings and offers a theoretical basis for future empirical testing across consumer segments, industries, and regions.

Results and Discussion

Methodological Review: The literature on the subject is scant and qualitative, mixed-method, or review-based, since quantitative, cross-sectional survey-based studies are most suitable for data collection over a large number of

people (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). The most prevalent analytical methods, apart from CFA and EFA analyses, that are used are SEM and PLS-SEM, indicating an emphasis on relationships at one point in time rather than across time. The most commonly used models in studies include the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), the Information Adoption Model (Sussman & Siegal, 2003), the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) and Source Credibility Theory (Hovland et al., 1953). Geographically, research focus is relatively limited to the EU and NAM with a significant amount of research focus on emerging Asian markets (China, India, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam) highlighting cross-cultural research avenues.

Thematic Review: Six themes emerged. The basis for eWOM acceptance is credibility, which includes consumers' perceptions of credibility, knowledge, and honesty, with source trustworthiness being the most influential (Hovland et al., 1953; Lis, 2013; Xie et al., 2014). Consumer trust as mediator: Authentic reviews create trust in product quality and sellers, and engender more positive attitudes and purchase intention toward green products (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012). However, the influence of eWOM on green purchase intention consistently showed a positive link because there is a greater tendency for people to check the sustainability information online before purchasing any product (Paul et al., 2016; Yadav & Pathak, 2017). Environmental concern as a booster: environmentally concerned consumers are more active in looking for and are more impacted by credible sustainability information (Alam et al., 2022; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Digital transformation and social media platforms: The reach of eWOM has grown with the emergence of platforms such as the Metaverse, which are anticipated to further broaden this scope in the future (Dwivedi et al., 2022), and with the advent of social media, influencer marketing and user-generated content have become new outlets for eWOM (Yan et al., 2016; Nuseir, 2022; Li et al., 2021; Sharma, Dwivedi, Arya, & Siddiqui, 2021). New challenges: fake and sponsored reviews, as well as AI-generated reviews, pose risks to authenticity and trust (Lee et al., 2008; He et al., 2020; Kumar & Gupta, 2023), highlighting the importance of reviewer independence.

Discussion: This review adds to the existing body of evidence on the direct link between eWOM and purchase intention that is supported by Source Credibility Theory (Hovland et al., 1953), the Information Adoption Model (Sussman & Siegel, 2003), and the evidence of the effect of eWOM usefulness, eWOM argument quality, eWOM review credibility, eWOM source expertise, and eWOM trustworthiness on eWOM acceptance (Ismagilova et al., 2021). Consumer trust proved to be the key mechanism between the credibility of reviews and the intention to make a green purchase (Cheung & Thadani, 2012), and environmental concern has been shown

to boost confidence in online information regarding green products, highlighting the need for transparency in the information communicated about sustainability. The assessment of the dominant cross-sectional and quantitative study design restricts the understanding of the evolution of consumer behaviour over time, an aspect to which this synthesis contributes. Review systems, quality information and fake review management could be improved to reinforce the green purchase intention of companies.

Conclusion

This systematic review aimed to investigate eWOM acceptance and adoption and its effect on green purchase intention, reviewing the peer-reviewed literature published in the period 2015–2026. The main factors influencing eWOM acceptance were those related to source trustworthiness, source expertise, argument quality, information usefulness, and review credibility. Credible eWOM is found to have an indirect effect on green purchase intention through consumer trust, and when buying sustainable products, environmental concern can be seen to boost the use of online reviews. In the methodological approach to the studies, the previous ones are mainly quantitative cross-sectional studies based on SEM, followed by fewer systematic reviews and fewer longitudinal designs. Credible eWOM is crucial for effective green marketing - businesses should foster true reviews, bolster verification mechanisms and make sustainability information transparent.

Theoretical Implications

This review contributes to the emerging understanding of eWOM and its link to green purchase intention by (1) synthesising the fragmented knowledge on eWOM and green purchase intention; (2) reaffirming the relevance of Source Credibility Theory (Hovland et al., 1953) and Information Adoption Model (Sussman & Siegal, 2003) for digital consumer behaviour; (3) highlighting the gaps in longitudinal and mixed-method research and the need for attention to AI, influencer marketing and new platforms (Kumar & Gupta, 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2022); and (4) providing an overview of how consumer trust connects review credibility and green purchase intention.

Managerial Implications

The findings have several practical implications: (1) Organizations should give more weight to authentic customer reviews; (2) social media platforms should improve their review-verification mechanisms and systems to identify fake or manipulated reviews; (3) green product manufacturers should clearly communicate sustainability information, and encourage customer feedback; (4) use of social media engagement, UGC, and collaboration with influencers must be transparent and

ethical; and (5) regulatory measures must be developed to promote the use of honest environmental claims.

Limitations

The study has several limitations: it focuses on secondary data rather than primary empirical data; it is a qualitative systematic review, therefore the findings might not be applicable to all cultural, economic and technological contexts, or all other industries; it is not a formal meta-analysis, and thus cannot provide the effect-size estimates of a formal meta-analysis.

Future Research Directions

Future studies should include longitudinal designs that can track the evolution of eWOM use and consumer trust over time, mixed methods (surveys, interviews, experiments) for improved understanding of consumer behaviour, cross-cultural studies (developed vs. developing economies) to identify variations in eWOM adoption, industry-specific variations (e.g., electric vehicles, sustainable fashion, organic food, eco-tourism) for enhanced understanding of industry-specific variations, and explore the role of short-form video, influencer marketing, review credibility, and AI-driven reviews in consumer trust and green purchase intention (Kumar & Gupta, 2023; Nuseir, 2022), and examine the potential of the Metaverse on short-form video and e-commerce, eWOM and its linkages with consumer trust and green purchase intention (Dwivedi et al., 2022; Ismagilova et al., 2021).

Data Availability Statement

This systematic literature review is completely based on secondary data from published, peer-reviewed literature and no primary data were created; all synthesized studies are included in the reference list.

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