Antecedents to Customer Acceptance of Information in E-Word of Mouth

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Abstract

The increasing rate of online shopping and online search of information about products and services has made online reviews or E-Word of Mouth (E-WoM) a common phenomenon with consumers. User generated opinions and information are gaining acceptance from prospective customers while they browse online for goods and services. Consumers often seek online user generated reviews to make offline purchase decisions as well. As online retail has picked up pace in India in recent years, the role of user generated content in the online space has become more relevant. This paper attempts to study the aspect of buying behaviour of customers and focus on how the upcoming users are utilizing E-WoM before making or abandoning a purchase. In this study, product ranking emerged as the strongest antecedent to customers' acceptance of information in E-WoM. Additionally, the study brings out that highly involved customers pay attention to the number of reviews written online, their timeliness as well as how accurate they are. An online retailer may rearrange his merchandise, especially in terms of displaying the products, on the basis of reviews and ranks he gets for his merchandise.

Keywords: *Customer Buying Behaviour, E-Word of Mouth, Information Acceptance, Online Shopping.*

Introduction

The increasing rate of online shopping and online search of information about products and services has made online reviews or E-Word of Mouth (E-WoM) a common phenomenon with consumers. Social networking sites, online retailers, blogs, etc. are promoting the sharing of knowledge and information in the online space. User generated opinions and information are gaining acceptance from prospective customers while they browse online for goods and services. Consumers often seek online user generated reviews to make offline purchase decisions as well. It is important to understand the role E-WoM plays in consumer purchase decisions. The focus on E-WoM research has seen a significant increase (Chan & Ngai, 2011).

Past research has shown that word of mouth is one of the most influential factors that affect consumers' buying behaviour. Social networking sites have now become a daily part of a customer's life. Consumers share information, knowledge, beliefs and many more things via this virtual medium. Face-to-face interactions are now shifting to online sharing of opinions. People create, share and promote their views and experiences through blogs, reviews, comments, etc. Digitally empowered consumers search for more information related to products, services and brands (Gillian, Laurent and Eoghan, 2014). Sharing of opinions and beliefs about any product or a service is known as E-word of mouth (E-WoM). E-WoM has been defined as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company that is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet" (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004).

Literature review

Research work on E-WoM is relatively new in India. E-

WoM has become a crucial part of online buying and surfing, and it is really important to understand it in-depth to comprehend the entire picture of the e-commerce ecosystem (Yoo, Kim & Sanders, 2015). Increasing social activities on the internet will make E-WoM one of the hot topics for research activities. The World Wide Web provides a number of ways for consumers to share their opinions with others (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2003; Gruen et al., 2006). E-WoM is present on many different portals apart from the marketplace such as discussion forums, Facebook, blogs, etc. (Chan & Ngai, 2011). Different channels allow users and experts to post their comments or views differently. For eg., Social Networking Sites (SNSs) force users to disclose their identity, whereas consumer forums, blogs etc, allow users to post anonymously (Moran, Muzellec & Nolan, 2014). Social media has now become a part of a new hybrid model of integrated marketing communication that allows brands to establish a strong relationship and engagement with their customers. With the establishment of customer relationships online, brands create a platform and encourage customers to discuss about the product dimensions and write a review about the product online (Selvi, 2016). With the growing penetration of E-WoM, many people, both in Industry as well as in academics, believe that E-WoM influences the buying behaviour of consumers (Zhu and Zhang, 2010; Awad & Ragowsky, 2008; Duan & Whinston, 2008). Nowadays consumers are attracted more towards communication or views of experienced peers and sharing their opinions with others. With this mechanism in place, consumers have developed an informal network E-WoM communication (Moran, Muzellec & Nolan, 2014). Consumers tend to adopt online peer recommendations irrespective of the peer's profile when the information provided by them is in abundance. The availability of information on online channels and social networking sites influences the choices made by consumers (Smith, Mennon, Shivkumar, 2005). Consumers too enjoy positive

sentiments by airing their reviews online. Many research studies in different parts of the world and in different environments have established the positive relationship between E-WoM and buying decisions of consumers. E-WoM works more for less popular products. Higher the number of online reviews, higher would be the sales (Duan et al., 2008). It also becomes a lot more important when the other means to gather information is limited (Zhu and Zhang, 2010).

E-WoM is different from the marketing communication generated by the producer (Ho-Dac, Carson, Moore, 2013). The user's opinion in the form of E-WoM is more trusted than any other channel of communication by corporates (Burton and Khammash, 2010). Consumers try to get quality information about products or services while they shop online. Past research has shown that reviews that score high on quality have a greater impact on purchase intention than reviews that score low (Park, Lee & Han, 2007). The role of E-WoM to disseminate information increases where the other sources of information are less. In the niche products category, e-WoM becomes a more important factor as even one single negative opinion may harm the overall sales (Zhu & Zhang, 2010). An increasing amount of E-WoM has significantly affected the way consumers make purchase decisions. Empirical studies have established an effect of E-WoM on sales but the degree of effect varies with websites and platforms used (Babic et. al., 2016). Consumer generated content always has the probability of being biased. Even when a consumer is posting his / her true opinion, he / she may be biased of unobserved quality (Li & Hitt, 2008). Nevertheless E-WoM plays a significant role in getting new customers (Trusov, Bucklin & Pauwels, 2009).

Presently, many E-commerce websites are encouraging their customers to share their experience online as it has been proven a successful tool for marketing of web portals and e-commerce websites

(Yoo, Kim & Sanders, 2015). Different research studies suggest that consumers' motives are different in different industries while they spread E-WoM. For eg., when it comes to fashion related products, research indicates that high fashion involvement and brand involvement of consumers motivate them to post their opinions online. It was also observed that brand commitment plays a vital role in spreading E-WoM (Wolny & Mueller, 2013). In the banking industry, customers' satisfaction is a prime motivator for consumers to engage in E-WoM (Casaló et al., 2008). Consumer intention to spread E-WoM is also related to various factors where the sense of belonging to a particular online group or community is most significant. The other reason for consumers' motivation towards E-WoM is the intention to help others by mediating in making purchase decisions (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Burton & Khammash, 2010). There are also a segment of consumers who would like to be viewed as experts by providing online reviews (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Wolny & Mueller, 2013).

It is equally important to understand the motives behind reading of online user generated reviews. Past research studies show that risk reduction works as a prime motive for going through online reviews (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2003; Burton & Khammash, 2010). Consumers accept E-WoM from various consumer opinion platforms because they feel it is more trustworthy, relevant and similar to their situation, which further reduces the risk factor (Bickart & Schindler, 2001). Consumers always wish to reassure themselves that they had made the right decision while seeking others' opinion (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2003; Bailey, 2005). Rewards and remuneration while participating in reading online reviews on social platforms also work as a motivation for consumers (Deci et al., 1999; Burton & Khammash, 2010). Nowadays consumers are communicating and serving other customers in the form of E-WOM. They are utilizing sellers' or manufactures' websites and social

networking platforms to pass and share their messages. In this exchange of information, consumers trust E-WoM which is from a credible and trustworthy source. It is interesting to know that negative E-WOM messages had a greater impact on the effects of E-WOM than positive messages (Hu et. al.,2015).

Model

In our paper, we have referred to the information adoption model proposed by Raffaele and Fraser (2013), to identify the factors that may influence purchase intention of customers. The information adoption model (IAM) was originally drawn from integration of Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) elaboration likelihood model (ELM) with Sussman and Siegal's (2003) information adoption model. The IAM proposed by Raffaele and Fraser (2013) was developed to understand the buying behaviour of consumers in terms of acceptance of information gathered from online reviews. The model was tested in the travel industry where it identified the travellers' behaviour. It gained insights on dimensions like relevance of information, timeliness, accuracy and completeness,

and their impact on purchase intention of customers.

The model explains that there are two routes which influence customers' decision making; central route and peripheral route (Petty, Cacioppo, and Schumann, 1983). The central route is where a customer shows a high level of motivation as well as ability in information processing. When the customer takes this route, he tends to take rational decisions while spending more time on quality of arguments or information gathered. He engages in thoughtful arguments and draws a logical conclusion. Research in the past indicates that customers who are highly motivated to process information tend to make better decisions (Gupta & Harris, 2010). On the other hand, where customers are not so motivated to search and process the information nor have the ability to do so, tend to take the peripheral route. Consumers who take the peripheral route do not put much attention towards the content of information they have collected but focus on the source and credibility of the information (Parl, Lee & Han, 2007; Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Sussman & Siegal, 2003).

Figure 1: Information Adoption Model

Source: Filieri & McLeay, (2014)

Hypotheses Development
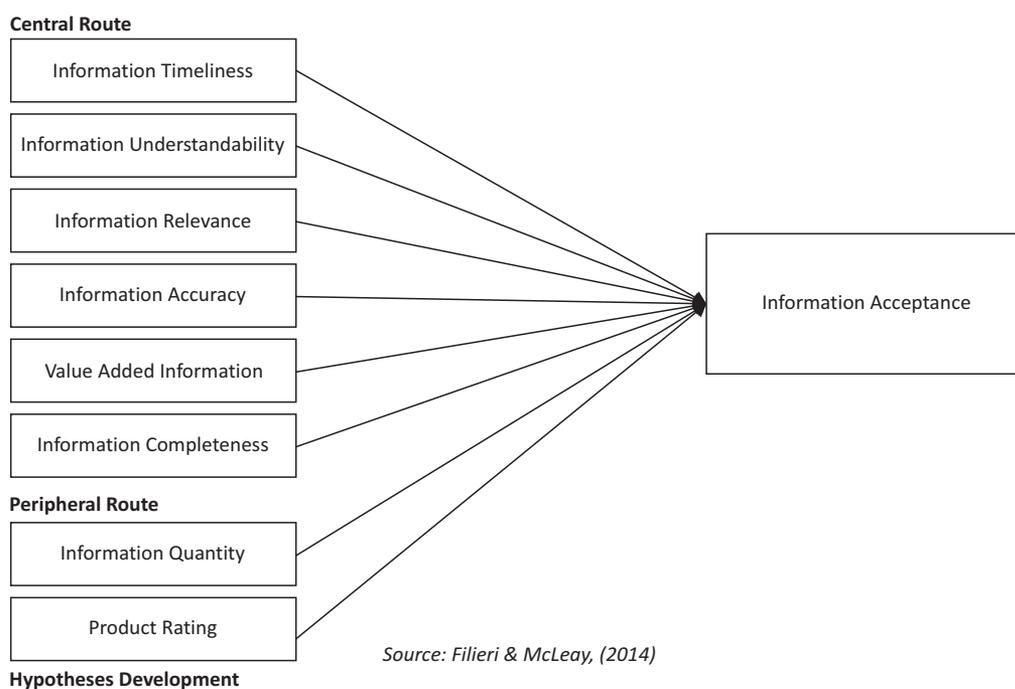
Factors from the central route

Information timeliness refers to the recentness of the information or E-WoM posted on a website. Online consumers pay special attention to the time of information posted or uploaded on the website. When the information becomes outdated or too old, it fails to serve its purpose. Timeliness of information means current and up-to-date information which is available 24 hours (Madu & Madu, 2002). Consumers can get the latest information from online reviews which may increase the likelihood that buyers or consumers will adopt the information provided from E-WoM (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). Thus:

H1: There is a positive relationship between information timeliness and buyers' acceptance of information from online reviews.

Information understandability means readability and interpretability of information to the readers. Information available online is easy to understand when the language used is simple, clear and logical; whereas when highly technical words are used or due to poor writing skills of reviewers, online reviews become hard to understand and interpret (Wang & Strong, 1996). The clarity of any online review may influence the consumer's acceptance of information (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). Thus:

H2: There is a positive relationship between information understandability and consumer's acceptance of information from online reviews.

Information relevance suggests the extent of helpfulness to the reader or a consumer trying to obtain certain information. Relevance of any message depends upon an individual's specific need (Wang & Strong, 1996). Online reviews would hold relevance if it matches with the individual's requirement (Filieri & McLeay, 2014) and therefore may satisfy the consumer's need. Thus:

H3: There is a positive relationship between information relevance and consumer's acceptance of information from online reviews.

Information accuracy plays a vital role in the reliability of E-WoM. It is also concerned with the reviewer's perception on information correctness (Wixom & Todd, 2005). The information provided on the internet is posted both by users and non-users; hence, the viewers may find it more or less trustworthy and accurate compared to other marketing communications (Bickart &Schindler, 2001). Therefore, the increase in perceived information accuracy will lead to increase in acceptance of information from online reviews.

H4: There is a positive relationship between information accuracy and the consumer's acceptance of information from online reviews.

Value added information refers to how much benefit the information gathered through E-WoM has been to the viewer. It explains how much advantage an individual has after going through the information provided (Wang & Strong, 1996). Most of the marketing communication aims at bringing out the positive image of the products or services offered by them whereas E-WoM brings out both positives and negatives (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). Taking E-WoM into consideration also reduces the negative consumption experience after buying (Amblee & Bui, 2008). Thus:

H5: There is a positive relationship between value added information and the consumer's acceptance of information from online reviews.

Information completeness refers to the comprehensiveness of E-WoM or online review. It involves the details provided within the information, its depth and breadth and the scope covered (Wang & Strong, 1996). The comprehensiveness of E-WoM

increases its acceptance by users and is more useful to them.

H6: There is a positive relationship between information completeness and the consumer's acceptance of information from online reviews.

Factors from Peripheral Route

Information quantity refers to the number of reviews or opinions shared online or on a particular online portal for a single product or service. In the past, research showed that increase in the quantity of E-WoM led to increase in acceptance of information from other prospective customers in case of low involvement products. On the contrary, increase in the quantity of E-WoM would decrease the level of acceptance of information in case of high involvement products (Park, Lee & Han, 2007). It was also found that increase in E-WoM increases the popularity of the product (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). Thus:

H7: There is a positive relationship between information quantity and the consumer's acceptance of information from online reviews.

Product ranking refers to the method where users translate their evaluation and experiences into numerical information of the product. It is difficult for consumers to sort out all E-WoM; hence, different e-sellers adopt different methods or scales for building rankings (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). These rankings are generally graphically illustrated by most of the e-sellers using the number of stars. Some e-sellers represent the average of positive, neutral and negative ratings whereas others simply put graphs of numbers of stars awarded by users. (Filieri & McLeay, 2014) further argued that product ranking is one of the simplest and most convenient methods for online browsers to understand users' opinions through E-WoM. It saves time for online reviewers and presents a summarized picture of product reviews. Thus:

H8: There is a positive relationship between product ranking and consumers' acceptance of information from online reviews.

Methodology

Data Collection

We have created an online questionnaire using a professional survey-design website. The questionnaire was developed only in English language. The link for the survey was created and disseminated to the sample audience by e-mail. A hard copy of the survey was also used to collect the sample manually. Distribution was done in a deliberate manner and it was ensured that the sample collection would come from those individuals who are residing in Ahmedabad, India, and browse online while purchasing or planning to purchase electronics / digital equipment. The questions were measured on 5 points' Likert-scale. An e-mail was sent to a sample of 30 individuals having different backgrounds for sample check. A total number of 230 respondents completed our survey. Out of these, we filtered it down to 192 responses for analysis. We excluded 38 responses as they were incomplete or inconsistent in nature. Respondents comprised of 60% males and 40% females.

Majority of the respondents (74%) were in the age group of 20-30 years. More than 60% of the respondents had 1-4 years of internet shopping experience. The scales used to construct the survey have already been used in similar research studies done overseas related to E-WoM (Wixom & Todd, 2005; Wang & Strong, 1996; Park, Lee & Han, 2007; Cheung, Lee, & Rabjhon 2008; Filieri & McLeay, 2014).

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, Cronbach's Alpha

Items	Mean	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Information Relevance	3.71	.680	.798
Information Understandability	3.83	.703	.831
Information Accuracy	3.33	.850	.927
Information Completeness	3.11	.823	.820
Value added Information	3.61	.897	.876
Information Timeliness	3.48	.661	.755
Information Quantity	3.53	.854	.793
Product Ranking	3.77	.714	.792
Information Acceptance	3.58	.755	.860

Table 2: Regression Analysis Result, t Value, Standard Error, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF)

R Square = 0.535; Adjusted R Square = 0.514.

Variables	Beta	SE	t Value	VIF
Information Relevance	.491	.078	2.709	1.972
Information Understandability	-.087	.067	-1.404	1.508
Information Accuracy	.198	.059	1.487	1.709
Information Completeness	.210	.057	1.765	1.531
Value added Information	-.081	.051	-1.307	1.506
Information Timeliness	.341	.070	2.769	1.492
Information Quantity	.398	.053	2.043	1.490
Product Ranking	.578	.071	5.278	2.020

Results

In any survey, reliability of scales has always been a key concern. To check reliability, we have applied Cronbach's Alpha which is one of the most widely used methods to assess the reliability of variables among researchers. Cronbach's Alpha value of more than 0.6 is acceptable and value which exceeds 0.7 is considered to have a good reliability (Nunnally, 1978). In this study, the value of Cronbach's Alpha remains more than 0.6 for all variables (Table 1). The overall value of all items of the model is 0.885 which suggests that the model is reliable.

The other important aspect in the primary survey is to assess whether there is multi-collinearity between any of the constructs. To check multi-collinearity between constructs, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was adopted. The VIF value in regression output never crossed 1.5 (Table 2) which is far less than its recommended upper limit of 5 (Hair et. al., 2010). It suggests that there is no multi-collinearity among constructs that were used in the study.

The results were further analyzed by applying regression analysis. SPSS software was used for the same. Table 2 holds results of regression analysis. The

overall model explained approximately 51% of variance which is considered fair in social science (R square = 0.535; adjusted R square 0.514.; F = 56.266; p<.001). Factors information relevance (β = 0.491, p<.001), product ranking (β = 0.578; p<.001), information quantity (β = 0.398; p<.001) and information timeliness (β = 0.351; p<.001) were found to be most significant. Information accuracy (β = 0.198; p<.001) and information completeness (β = 0.210;

p<.001) have also shown a fair amount of effect on acceptance of information. Information understandability (β = -0.087; p<.001) and value added information (β = -0.081; p<.001) has a very weak relationship with the criteria and proved insignificant on information acceptance. Hence, hypotheses 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8 were supported and hypotheses 2 and 5 were not supported from the analysis.

Figure 2: Proposed Information Acceptance Model from this study

p <0.001, R square = 0.535
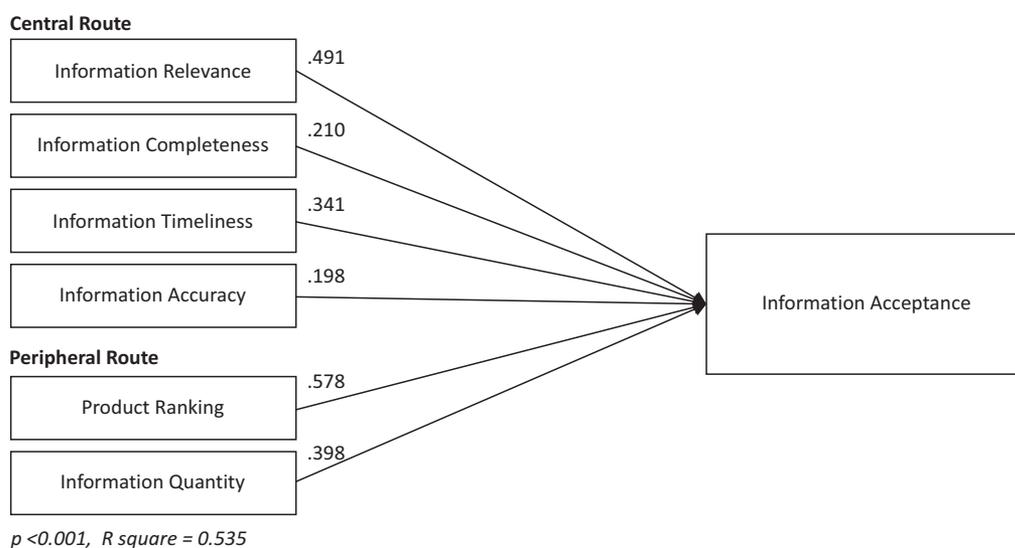
Generalizability of Model

We have tested this model on those who have bought or searched for electronics and digital gadgets online. This has covered a large audience. As per the study of Images Retail Bureau, e-commerce in India is growing at the rate of 30% and is expected to reach USD 40 billion in 2018. In this scenario, e-tailing has grown by 57% since year 2014. In the e-commerce market, e-tailing remains the most dominant category among non-travel online spend. Among e-tail categories, mobile phones and mobile accessories accounted for the biggest share. Consumer and computer electronics along with apparels come second in the list. In a study conducted by Google, it was revealed that electronics were the most searched category for online shopping

in India and the second biggest product category after apparels. The study also suggested that 71% of the respondents surveyed were interested in buying electronics online.

Considering the facts mentioned above, the study addresses a much larger audience than it appears. Also the model we have referred to in the study has already been tested in the travel industry or people who have bought travel services online. Hence, the study has much larger implications both in research and practice in terms of gaining more knowledge about consumer behaviour and their interactions online.

Findings

Online reviews represent user generated content. In our study, we found that while shopping or searching for information on electronic and digital gadgets online, customers look for online user generated content. There is not much research work in India in the E-WoM domain. As online retail has gathered pace in India in the last 5 years, the role of user generated content in the online space will become more relevant over time. This paper attempts to study an aspect of buying behaviour of customers and focuses on how the upcoming users are utilizing the content available online before making or abandoning a purchase. In this study, we have focused on exploring a number of possible criteria which may or may not affect the acceptance of information by prospective customers. The study becomes more relevant as traditional E-WoM has been a central core for customer engagement for the past many years (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010).

This study is not comprehensive as it has not incorporated all the factors which might affect customers while they search for or absorb information online. Factors incorporated in this research paper are information timeliness, its quality, relevance, accuracy, quantity and the value addition along with the product ranking provided online. The main objective of the study was to find the relevant factors, out of the incorporated ones, which affect the acceptance of E-WoM by customers.

The major findings of this research paper are relatively new as the field itself has not been explored in India. The first and most important inference that can be drawn from this study is that customers who look for information online are highly involved customers. This is proven by the fact that out of four hypotheses that were strongly supported, two were from peripheral routes which argues that customers focus on information quantity and product ranking given by

users. The other finding reveals that product ranking in the peripheral route has the highest significance on acceptance of E-WoM which is in line with what is suggested in the information acceptance model (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). Preference to product ranking could be understood in the sense that customers are looking for summarized and brief information which at the same time, also portrays a clear picture of the product preference by others while considering the average score. Advantages of following the ranking method is that it saves time and helps in developing alternates for comparison (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). This particular outcome although does not follow the original ELM model which suggested that consumers get involved in the quality of arguments put in an advertisement for their purchase decisions (Petty & Cacioppa, 1986). The peripheral route was also found to be significant as information quantity emerged as one of the strongest antecedents to information acceptance. This outcome opposed the suggestion by the original model proposed by Filieri & McLeay (2014). Past studies have also revealed similar results. The consumer's intention to purchase increases with increase in the number of online reviews. High involvement consumers' trust increases with the quantity of reviews available online. Lower the reviews written on web pages means the popularity of the product is low (Park, Lee & Han, 2007). The availability of many online reviews indicates the popularity of the product as well as the trust on the opinions provided by a number of people. Past studies also demonstrated that increase in the quantity of E-WoM leads to increase in sales (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Duan et al., 2008; Dellarocas, Zhang & Awad, 2007).

The relevance of information is the second most significant factor that the study reveals in adopting the information from E-WoM. Users or non-users both may pass a plethora of information about different aspects of electronics. Nowadays, an electronic / digital gadget is generally able to perform multiple

tasks; hence, related E-WoM also tends to cover various aspects of it. The study suggests that consumers, because of the high variety of E-WoM, may get relevant information and adopt it in their decision making process.

Information timeliness on the other hand, also has shown a fair association with the acceptance of information from E-WoM. This result again is on similar lines to what Filieri & McLeay (2014) have proposed for this factor. Customers browsing reviews online adopt recent reviews first. This may be because of a fast changing technological environment and consumers' preference to avoid old posts and suggestions. The significant level of study also suggests that acceptance of the latest E-WoM does not always exclude the chances of acceptance of E-WoM which is old.

Information completeness has shown a very mild significance as an influencer in information acceptance by customers. Many customers look for different kinds of information which they may get in any other review anyway. Hence, the importance of complete information gets a lower score (Filieri & McLeay, 2014). Information accuracy also holds place in terms of influencing customers as they may believe that the information or reviews are provided by genuine users. The experiences written over the internet might also suggest that they are there on the basis of actual uses of products.

Information understandability did not affect the acceptance of information by customers. This is because anything that is written with a small amount of error or not in appropriate language, customers may draw their own inferences with those opinions or may outright reject those and not take them into their decision making process. Value added information also had no influence on consumers as they did not show any interest in adopting these kinds of E-WoM.

Limitations of the Study

Each academic research study is subject to various limitations. The first limitation that should be a part of consideration before interpretation of the results of the study is the model applied. The model referred to in the study is tested for electronics and digital equipment. The model was further refined and intentionally simplified. The eight constructs in the theoretical model account for only 51% of the variance. This is understandable as the topic covered in the study is largely unexplored in India.

Second, the study was not done in a controlled environment. An open survey was floated to selected individuals and a hard copy was filled manually by some respondents. Respondents were free to choose their options given in the questionnaire as per their understanding. We believe this particular factor might have affected the responses. Third, like every survey, this study also has a scope of response bias. The study does not hold any instrument to assess whether the responses were true or not. Fourth, the sample size considered for this study was relatively small. A larger sample size could bring a clearer picture for the academic community. Fifth, the respondents included both online and offline buyers who may search for products online but prefer to buy offline, and vice versa. This particular behaviour may also affect the acceptance of information as traditional WoM also comes into play which was not a part of this study. Sixth, this study is based on a single questionnaire which measures all constructs at the same time. This may lead to the presence of common method bias in the study.

Managerial Applications

The study contributes to the existing literature available on E-WoM and its impact on consumers worldwide. Although being a relatively unexplored field in India, it is very useful text for both academics

and industry to understand the online consumer community. The experience customers have with online buying or online information search varies from consumer to consumer. It is also subjected to product and services bought or searched. In the Indian context, the online market is still at its teenage phase. A lot of work needs to be done to understand both consumers and suppliers. For eg., customer engagement is one of the areas which has not got much focus and it directly affects consumer experiences. Whether bad or good, consumers are sharing their opinions online to spread their opinions. From an industry point of view, it is more than important to understand what, when and how consumers are posting online and how it is accessed and used by others in online forums. This research study, partially though, attempts to address this issue.

The growth of online retail in India has attracted more businesses which use it as a selling or communication platform. In such a scenario, many unfamiliar brands have found their place in the online space. The understanding of how E-WoM is adopted and taken into consideration from the prospective customer is vitally important for businesses engaged online. The outcome of this research has direct implications for both non-branded or unfamiliar brands (Zhu & Zhang, 2010) and the popular and well-known ones. Marketers of less familiar brands can invest more resources in managing online reviews. They may promote their consumers to get active online and share their post-purchase experiences. As results suggest, more engagement leads to increase in information adoption; the shared experience may attract new consumers. Positive consumer feedback in terms of rating and more and timely feedback for these brands can contribute in generating revenues as E-WoM influences sales (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Zhang & Dellarocas, 2006). For big brands in the market, E-WoM can act as a marketing tool. It is very similar to the 'Word of Mouth' in the offline space.

Consumers can make or break brands. Big brands can always access first hand information of consumers' perception and their experiences if they keep track of all communication in the online community. Many brands nowadays have their own pages on social networking sites where they keep consumers engaged at large and promote them to talk about their products and services. Brands with high budgets may also trace what, where, when and who is holding what kind of opinion about them.

To extend the implication further in practice, an e-retailer may support its marketing strategies with adequately managing the reviews. E-WoM can be both informative as well as suggestion-oriented, which can be used as a communication channel if managed well by e-retailers (Park, Lee & Han, 2007). This research study suggests that in practice, an online seller may showcase higher rated products which also have a greater number of reviews first. He may also like to rearrange his merchandise, especially in terms of displaying the products on the basis of reviews and ranks he gets. The most recent review should always come at the top of all online reviews. With the help of adequate technology, online retailers may also find what kind of information customers are looking for and which information holds more importance. Accordingly, the same information can also be dispensed by the seller himself in order to facilitate transactions. Marketers can also take cues from the ratings provided and remove poorly rated products from their catalogue.

This research study also reveals a mild relationship between information completeness and acceptance of information by others. While managing E-WoM, an online seller must provide detailed information about the products or services he is endorsing. Past research studies also suggest that different online communities or third party websites also play a vital role via E-WoM in generating sales (Zhou & Duan, 2015). In India and

elsewhere, people try to pass and share their opinions as experts and would like others to follow their reviews. Retailers online may provide complete information as and when required on such portals while tracking the conversations about their products or services. Consumers or experts may or may not share complete information while writing a review. Sellers online can track and fill the gap wherever demanded.

The explanatory power of the research model remains fair and also promotes other scholars to explore the subject further. We have identified four dimensions which significantly affect customers in acceptance of information from E-WoM. In our model, two dimensions have shown a fair impact on information acceptance. The model itself was subjected to various limitations discussed above. This study has focused on acceptance of information from E-WoM but there are ample opportunities to explore why users generate online content. The mix of the two would bring more clarity to the literature and practice. Also, the acceptance of information from E-WoM is subject to the product category. This research has focused on electronics and digital equipment but other categories may not follow a similar conclusion. A multi-category research study would provide more insights on understanding consumers generating and using online content.

Information quantity, relevance, timeliness and product ranking are the most vital dimensions found in this study. Companies should actively get involved with online consumer communities on various platforms as well as on marketplaces or websites where their products are sold, and provide all relevant information. Companies should promote communication regarding their products online to engage more customers and generate enough E-WoM content to support their other marketing efforts. Companies also need to focus on the quality of their products as the product ranking reflects the same for online customers or online information seekers.

Potential Future work

To further explore the subject, future research scholars should focus on the effect of E-WoM on the purchase intention. The direct effect of online reviews on buying behaviour is an important area to be explored. Further, one can also explore the effects of social networks or websites, where reviews are posted or shared, on the acceptance of E-WoM. A similar study measuring the effect of reviewers on the acceptance of E-WoM can be carried out. The effect of reviewer websites or social network would be insightful as many portals and social networks are operating online where hundreds of experts and consumers are posting 24/7. To address this issue in future, research scholars may explore other variables which could possibly explain the fundamentals better. This may include factors like information usefulness, information reliability, information format etc.

One of the most important factors that can be a part of future research studies is traditional 'Word of Mouth'. As buyers search for information both offline and online, it would provide good insights to know how the two opinions, if different or similar, affect buyers and their buying behaviour. Scholars in future may also study the relationship between the user and seller or marketer generated content with the actual sales of the product or service.

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