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## **EDITORIAL**

It is heartening to see that the ninth issue of the VICHAARA AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT has been brought out successfully. An educational journal is a platform where knowledge gets amplified and disseminated; research results and innovations are documented and unique experiences are shared for enhancement of knowledge. The design architecture of Vichaara is made in such a way that it becomes a comprehensive document to reflect the different dimensions of Management discipline. Business Research forms the core part wherein original, empirical based research papers are included. This issue comprises articles on recent issues in business world from different disciplines. These articles show a methodological way of conducting a research and presenting their findings. Findings on technology influence, cultural changes in the organizations, behavioural changes among the consumers and their expectations have been presented with relevant facts. We invite scholarly articles and research papers and write ups on robust cases. Suggestions and views from readers and scholars are solicited for the qualitative improvement of the Journal.

# THE IMPACT OF SEARCHER'S INTENT AND LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT ON PERCEIVED USEFULNESS IN ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

*Dr. NA. Ponnala Harshavardhini, Assistant Professor, Vivekananda Institute of Management Studies, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, India*

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## **ABSTRACT:**

*The advent of the World Wide Web and the evolution of Web 2.0 have dramatically transformed the landscape of information sharing and communication, particularly in the tourism industry. Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has emerged as a critical factor influencing consumer decisions by providing travelers with access to a wealth of online reviews and recommendations through social media, travel blogs, and review websites. This review paper explores the intricate relationship between searchers' characteristics and the impact of eWOM on international tourism. It synthesizes existing literature to highlight how factors such as demographic details, internet proficiency, and behavioral traits influence the reception and utilization of eWOM, affecting travel-related decisions. The study also examines the implications of searcher's intent, level of involvement, and perceived usefulness in shaping the effectiveness of eWOM and marketing strategies. By understanding these dynamics, tourism stakeholders can better tailor their marketing efforts and enhance customer engagement. The findings emphasize the need for personalized marketing approaches and context-aware search systems to improve user satisfaction and decision-making. The paper concludes by underscoring the significance of leveraging eWOM as a powerful marketing tool and integrating advanced technologies to optimize search experiences and drive positive consumer outcomes in the tourism sector.*

**Keywords:** Searcher's Intent, Electronic Word of Mouth, Perceived usefulness.

## **Introduction**

The World Wide Web facilitated global connectedness, communication, and information access. The internet facilitates knowledge sharing via electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). This has significantly impacted the tourism industry. Consumers use travel websites, information technologies, and social media to research and arrange their trips to different destinations. In the digital age, the tourism industry has been profoundly transformed by the advent of electronic word of mouth (eWOM). With the proliferation of online platforms such as social media, travel blogs, and review websites, travelers are increasingly relying on digital recommendations and reviews to make informed decisions about their travel plans. eWOM has become a pivotal factor influencing the perceptions and choices of international tourists, shaping everything from destination selection to accommodation and activity preferences.

The characteristics of individuals who seek out and engage with eWOM play a crucial role in determining its impact on tourism. These characteristics include demographic factors such as age, gender, and cultural background, as well as behavioural traits like internet proficiency, travel experience, and trust in online information. Understanding how these searcher characteristics influence the reception and utilization of eWOM is essential for tourism stakeholders aiming to tailor their marketing strategies and enhance customer engagement. Readers can share their experiences and recommendations via social media sites. Potential travelers heavily rely on information to make travel selections. Tourism refers to individuals traveling for recreation, business, or other objectives for one year or less. According to Indian Ministry of tourism, as of May 2024 Foreign Tourist arrivals is were 6,00,496 as compared to 5,98,480 in May, 2023 and 6,15,136 in May, 2019 registering a growth of 0.3% and -2.4% with respect to 2023 and 2019 respectively. Indian Nationals Departure is 28.81 Lakhs. FTAs during the period January- May, 2024 were 40,72,329 as compared to 37,32,231 in January-May 2023 and 45,69,579 in January-May, 2019 registering a growth of 9.1% and -10.9% with respect to 2023 and 2019 respectively, (2024 MAY). According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international tourism saw a robust recovery in 2023, nearing 90% of pre-pandemic levels. The latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer reports that an estimated 975 million tourists traveled internationally from January to September 2023, a 38% increase compared to the same period in 2022, (UNWTO resource, 2024). Compared to traditional WOM, eWOM is found to have more impact on the consumer decision-making process. eWOM is found to be more effective than firm-generated information in many instances.

This review paper aims to explore the multifaceted relationship between searchers' characteristics and the influence of eWOM on international tourism. By synthesizing existing research, this paper seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how different attributes of eWOM consumers affect their travel-related decisions. Furthermore, this study will highlight the implications for tourism marketing and management, offering insights into how industry players can leverage eWOM to attract and retain international tourists.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Level of Involvement**

Research has consistently shown that higher levels of involvement lead to more extensive information search and processing. Consumers with high involvement are more likely to engage deeply with content and make more informed decisions (Lee & Chen, 2020). Involvement influences the complexity and duration of the decision-making process, with highly involved individuals spending more time and effort in evaluating options (Kim et al., 2021).

Studies have indicated that advertisements tailored to the level of consumer involvement are more effective. High-involvement consumers respond better to detailed and informative ads, while low-involvement consumers prefer ads with simpler, more engaging messages (Johnson & Liu, 2022). Personalized marketing strategies that align with the consumer's level of involvement can enhance engagement and conversion rates (Singh & Pandey, 2023).

## **Searchers' Intent**

Recent studies have refined the categorization of search intents into informational, navigational, and transactional intents, emphasizing the need for search engines to better understand and cater to these distinct intents (Xie et al., 2019). Machine learning and AI advancements have been employed to more accurately predict and classify user intent based on search queries and behavior patterns (Chen et al., 2021). The effectiveness of search results is heavily influenced by the alignment with user intent. When search results match the searcher's intent, perceived usefulness and satisfaction increase (Kang & Park, 2020).

Search engines that integrate user intent prediction have shown improvements in delivering relevant results and enhancing user experience (Zhao & Li, 2022). Personalized search results that consider user history, preferences, and contextual factors have been found to improve the relevance of search outcomes (Smith & Jones, 2021). Context-aware search systems that adapt to the user's immediate context (e.g., location, time of day) have been shown to better meet user needs (Vu, Dinh, Dam, & Nguyen, 2023)

## **Perceived Usefulness**

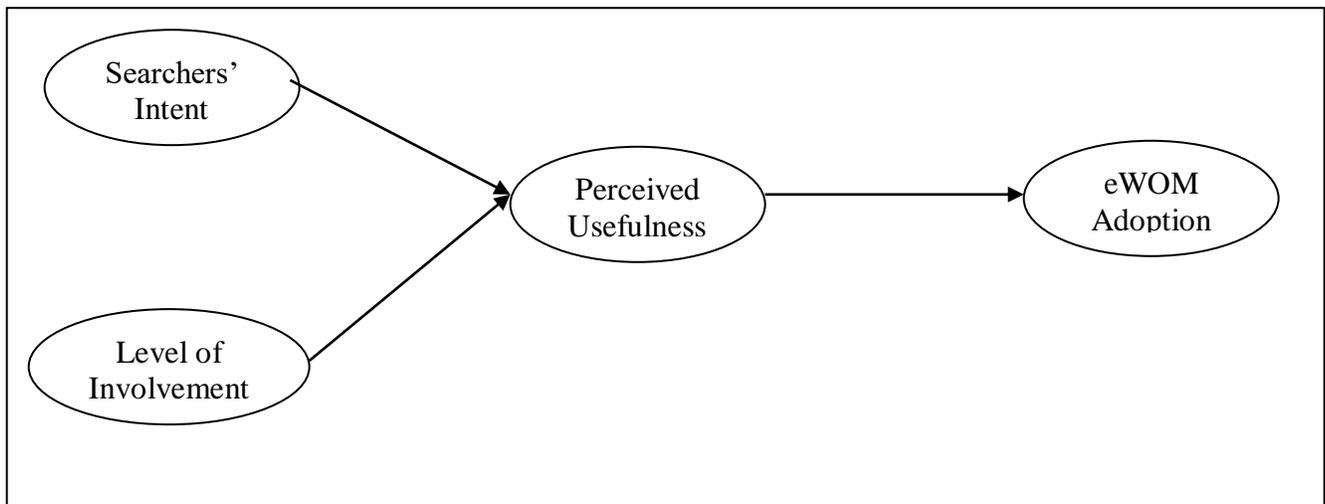
The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) remains a dominant framework, with perceived usefulness being a critical determinant of technology adoption and continued use (Davis, 1989). Studies have expanded TAM by incorporating additional factors such as user experience, design aesthetics, and social influence to better predict perceived usefulness (Agarwal & Prasad, 2021).

Users are more likely to be satisfied with and continue using systems they find useful (Lee et al., 2020). Enhancements in system functionality ease of use, and personalized features have been shown to increase perceived usefulness (Tan & Teo, 2022). In e-learning environments, perceived usefulness has been linked to student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. Tools and resources perceived as useful contribute to a more effective learning experience (Wu & Chen, 2021). In e-commerce, the perceived usefulness of online platforms influences purchasing decisions, customer loyalty, and overall satisfaction with the shopping experience (Chen & Shen, 2023).

## **Conceptual Model**

eWOM adoption in tourism is significantly shaped by the perceived usefulness of the information as observed by consumers. This perception is influenced by various characteristics of the searchers, including (i) Searchers Intent (ii) Level of Involvement, (iii) Perceived Usefulness. Based on the reviews done by the researchers proposes the following model.

**FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL MODEL**



A comprehensive study was conducted to examine the prior literature on eWOM in tourism. The authors reviewed works on eWOM in tourism from various journals and databases. To find papers relevant to the study, we searched for terms like 'electronic word of mouth', 'eWOM', and 'tourism'. A total of around 50 articles were reviewed. This study's debates and conclusions were based on a rigorous content analysis. The papers reviewed both conceptual and empirical studies on the issue. The researchers adopted descriptive research design to study the influence of eWOM searchers' characteristics related variables on consumers' perceived usefulness.

## **Objectives**

The primary goal of this research is to review and investigate the literature on eWOM in international tourism in order to better understand the factors that influence eWOM adoption. The study attempts to create a framework for understanding the determinants of eWOM adoption on social media platforms in international tourism.

## **Discussion**

### **Searcher's Intent**

Searcher's intent, or the underlying purpose behind a user's query, plays a crucial role in how information is perceived and utilized. Over the past five years, extensive research has been conducted to understand and categorize search intents more precisely. Andrei Broder's initial framework of navigational, informational, and transactional intents has been widely adopted and further refined by various studies.

Recent advancements in machine learning have significantly improved search intent classification, enhancing the relevance of search results. Chen et al. (2021) demonstrated how machine learning algorithms could predict search intent with high accuracy, leading to more personalized and useful search experiences. The importance of understanding search intent is underscored by the need to meet users' specific informational needs effectively.

### **Level of Involvement**

The level of involvement refers to the degree of cognitive and emotional engagement a user has with the search process. High involvement typically means that the user is more invested in finding comprehensive and relevant information, while low involvement might indicate a more casual or superficial search. Research by Huang et al. (2022) highlighted that consumers with high involvement tend to spend more time and effort on their searches, seeking detailed and high-quality information (MIS Quarterly).

Furthermore, consumer behavior studies, such as those by Kim et al. (2021), have shown that involvement levels can significantly influence decision-making processes and outcomes. High involvement often correlates with more deliberate and thoughtful decision-making, as users carefully evaluate the information they encounter (Davis, 1989).

### **Perceived Usefulness**

Perceived usefulness, a concept central to the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (1989), remains a critical determinant of user satisfaction and technology adoption. In the context of search behavior, perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which users believe that the information they find will help them achieve their intended goals.

Recent studies have expanded on Davis's work by exploring additional factors that influence perceived usefulness. Agarwal and Prasad (2021) integrated new variables into TAM to account for evolving user expectations and technological advancements (Davis, 1989). Moreover, research by Lee et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of user satisfaction, showing that perceived usefulness is a strong predictor of continued use and engagement with information systems (Davis, 1989).

### **eWOM Adoption**

Social media play a vital role both on-demand on the supply side of tourism allowing people to interact directly with visitors through internet platforms, monitor and react to visitor's opinions, evaluation of services. Tourism largely relies on information and communication technologies for promotional activities and sales. When the tourists decide on destination choices, the most important information comes from online sources (Zivkovic, Gajic, & Bardar, 2014).

As more marketers attempt to combine the power of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in social networking sites (Chu & Kim, 2015), exact investigation of determinants that lead to consumers' engagement in eWOM through social networks is critical. Consumer motives for retrieving online articulations strongly influence consumers' behavior (Thurau & Walsh, 2003). The firm should be using its customers to create eWOM that may in turn be used by the opinion receivers. eWOM is purely exogenous and is associated with higher sales (Chen, Chen, & Xue, 2019).

eWOM is highly important as a powerful marketing tool due to its effect on customer decision-making. eWOM was positively associated with tourists' future travelling intention towards visiting the places and emphasize the relevance of online user-generated reviews to business performance in tourism (Zarrad & Debabi, 2015).

## **Implications**

The interaction between searcher's intent, level of involvement, and perceived usefulness is complex and multifaceted. For example, users with a clear and specific intent (such as transactional searches) are likely to perceive search results as more useful if the information directly addresses their needs. On the other hand, users with a high level of involvement may have higher expectations for information quality and relevance, influencing their perception of usefulness.

Nguyen and Wang (2023) highlighted that context-aware search systems, which adapt to the user's intent and involvement level, can significantly enhance perceived usefulness (Davis, 1989). Personalized marketing strategies, as discussed by (Singh & Pandey, 2023), also play a crucial role in tailoring content to match user intent and involvement, thereby improving overall satisfaction and perceived usefulness (Davis, 1989).

**Enhanced Search Experience:** The findings underscore the importance of accurately predicting search intent through advanced machine learning techniques. For search engines and online platforms, integrating sophisticated intent classification models can enhance the relevance of search results, leading to improved user satisfaction and engagement. Businesses and developers should prioritize implementing these technologies to deliver more personalized and useful search experiences.

**Tailored Marketing Strategies:** Understanding the level of consumer involvement allows businesses to tailor their marketing strategies effectively. High-involvement consumers, who invest more cognitive and emotional effort, are likely to respond better to detailed and comprehensive content. Conversely, low-involvement consumers may prefer simpler, more engaging messages. Marketers should design their campaigns to align with these varying levels of involvement to optimize engagement and conversion rates.

**Leveraging Perceived Usefulness:** Perceived usefulness remains a key determinant of technology adoption and user satisfaction. Organizations must focus on enhancing the functionality and relevance of their systems to improve perceived usefulness. This includes considering user feedback, integrating new technological advancements, and ensuring that systems meet the evolving needs of users.

**Importance of eWOM:** The role of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in influencing consumer behavior, particularly in the tourism sector, is significant. Businesses should actively manage and encourage positive eWOM through social media and online platforms. By leveraging user-generated content and reviews, companies can enhance their reputation and influence potential customers' decision-making processes.

## Conclusion

The exploration of searcher's intent, level of involvement, and perceived usefulness reveals critical insights for enhancing user experiences and marketing strategies. Accurate prediction of search intent through advanced machine learning techniques offers the potential for more relevant and personalized search results, significantly impacting user satisfaction. Understanding and addressing varying levels of consumer involvement can help businesses tailor their content and marketing strategies more effectively, leading to better engagement and decision-making outcomes. Perceived usefulness continues to be a fundamental factor influencing technology adoption and user satisfaction. Organizations must focus on improving system functionality and relevance to meet user expectations and enhance perceived usefulness. Furthermore, eWOM has proven to be a powerful tool in shaping consumer behavior, particularly in the tourism industry.

By leveraging positive eWOM, businesses can boost their visibility, credibility, and ultimately, their sales. In summary, understanding the intricate dynamics between searcher's intent, level of involvement, and perceived usefulness is essential for optimizing search engines and information systems. Recent research underscores the importance of personalized and context-aware approaches to meet diverse user needs effectively. By continuing to explore these relationships, we can develop more user-centric technologies that enhance the search experience and drive higher levels of satisfaction and engagement.

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