Identifying Dimensions Effect of E-WOM on Consumer Preference While Using Tourism Mobile Apps

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Abstract:
Word of mouth (WOM) is a contact between customers about a specific product, service or business in which the origins are perceived to be independent of market control. Research shows that word of mouth plays an increasingly important role in shaping customer perceptions and purchasing behaviour. Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has been an important topic for business and marketing researchers in that online social communications. Recent studies have looked at the effect of Internet-based e-WOM on company performance, the global user culture, and how the WOM engagement mechanism affects customer preferences and actions in the online environment. This research was aimed to identify the theoretical arguments and hypotheses about the interrelationships between e-WOM (Electronic Word of Mouth) and consumer preference based on tourism mobile apps towards travel intentions. Researchers come up with a objective of to find out dimensions of consumer preference regarding usage of tourism mobile apps, & to determine the effect of e-WOM on consumer preference while using tourism apps. To attain these objectives, researcher used two diverse tools, i.e., SPSS & Structural equation model to test the anticipated hypothesized model.

Keywords: *e-WOM, Consumer Preference, Tourism Mobile APPs, Travel Intentions, Structural Equation Model.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Word of mouth (WOM) is a communication between people perceived to be independent of the company providing the product or service in a medium perceived to be independent of the company. Such casual contact is between people who are perceived to have little commercial interest in persuading someone else to use the product and therefore no real motivation to distort the truth in favour of the product or service (Silverman, 2001, p. 25).

Although WOM originally applied the idea of a person-to-person service exchange between consumers (Sen and Lerman, 2007), a less personal but more prevalent form of WOM, the so-called electronic WOM (e-WOM), originated from the worldwide proliferation of the Internet (e.g. Brown et al., 2007; Davis and Khazanchi, 2008; Godes and Mayzlin, 2004; Kiecker and Cowles, 2001; Xia and Bechwati, 20). e-WOM cab is defined as "any positive or negative statement made by future, current or former consumers of a product or company made available through the Internet to a wide range of people and organizations" (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The new type of WOM has become an important place for public sentiment (Mayzlin, 2006) and is projected to be even more successful than WOM in the offline world due to its improved usability and high scope (Chatterjee, 2001). The Web also allows individuals to provide input to many others via broadcast e-mails, online forums, or discussion board messages, resulting in a "printed" type of e-WOM that is more credible than the marketer's source of information on the Internet (Fong and Burton, 2008). Recent studies on e-WOM concentrate on the urge to post and read comments and consumer responses to e-WOM messages (Park and Kim, 2008). For example, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) created a user electronic articulation typology based on the effects of virtual network and conventional WOM literature studies. Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2004) derive a number of reasons that explain why consumers are collecting electronic user articulations from web-based public opinion channels. In fact, e-WOM includes a range of media forms and styles of websites, including online consumer reviews that users post on the Internet are one of the most available and widespread modes of e-WOM (Chatterjee, 2001; Sen and Lerman, 2007). Findings from previous studies suggest that online reviews may have a significant impact on the reputation and sales of certain goods (Chevalier and Mayzlin, 2006; Liu, 2006; Adjei et al., 2009; Zhang and Tran, 2009; Zhu and Zhang, 2010). Xia and Bechwati (2008) indicated that

consumers considered the online review to be more reliable and helpful when they saw a consensus between the review and their own opinion which, in turn, led to higher purchase intentions. Sen and Lerman (2007) have shown that the value of feedback (positive vs. negative) significantly affected consumer perceptions of the service under analysis. In the tourism sector, travel reports are important for decision-making on transport, as they provide indirect information to visitors (Park et al., 2007). The online review has a dual role: it offers product and service information and serves as a recommendation (Park et al., 2007). When tourists seek destination information and its advice for travel to a specific destination at the same time in order to know about it and minimize confusion (Bickart and Schindler, 2001), online travel reviews with these two positions will completely meet the needs of tourists for information. The influence of e-WOM on the tourism industry is particularly strong. Intangibles such as tourism services can not be assessed prior to consumer experience; thus, buying intangible products and services poses a higher risk, making customers more reliant on the emotional impact of e-WOM (Lewis and Chambers, 2000). In order to see how the perceived impacts and perceptions of e-WOM (destination choice) are interrelated in a tourism context, we need, first, to analyze the use of e-WOM by tourists and, secondly, to measure the impact of e-WOM on the decision of tourists to fly to a specific destination. Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (1991) has been widely adopted as one of the most powerful tools for evaluating consumer behavioral intent (Ajzen, 2001).

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

WOM will play a particularly important role for service organizations as the intangibility of pre-purchase evaluation of services is doubtful. WOM is particularly important when networks are complex or have a high perceived risk (Zeithaml et al., 1996) because it is seen as a highly reliable source of information as the user is usually independent of the service provider and is not seen as directly benefiting

from the selling of the service (Silverman, 2001). Murray (1991) found that service users were more knowledgeable of personal information sources and that personal information had a larger impact on the decision to buy services. WOM thus plays a particularly important role for those industries which have high-quality services, such as the tourism industry. Recent research in the tourism sector has shown the positive and negative effect of WOM on tourism products in studies in a wide range of countries. Among these, O'Neill et al. (2002) studied wine tourism in Australia and found that WOM Visitor Recommendations increase wine purchases when vacationing opinion leaders return home and tell others about their experiences; Shanka et al.'s 2002 review of destination quest strategies showed that the majority of travel decisions in Western Australia relied on WOM communications; Litvin, a US-based r. In sum, the literature suggested that acquiring WOM had an effect on receiver perception (Sheth, 1971), focus (Mikkelsen et al., 2003), concern (Grewal et al., 2003), client behaviors (Herr et al., 1991; Laczniak et al., 2001), perceptions (Grewal et al., 2003), and aspirations (Webster, 1991). With the advent of Internet technology, an increasing number of travelers use the Internet to search for destination information and to make online transactions. According to the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA, 2005), 67% of US travelers used the Internet to search for information about destinations or to check prices or timetables. Even more impressively, 41% of US travelers booked at least some aspects of their journeys through the medium. Despite the increasing importance of online communications in the tourism sector, some research focused on the role of e-WOM in the choice of tourism destination (Litvin et al., 2008; Park and Gretzel, 2007; Zhu and Lai, 2009). For example, Litvin et al. (2008) described online interpersonal influence or e-WOM as a potentially cost-effective means of promoting hospitality and tourism and discussed some of the emerging technological and ethical issues facing marketers as they attempt to exploit modern e-WOM

technologies. They described e-WOM as' any indirect contact directed at consumers by internet-based technology related to the use or characteristics of specific goods and services or their sellers.' It involves communication between producers and consumers as well as between consumers themselves–both integral parts of the WOM process and distinctly different from communications. Zhu and Lai (2009) looked at how online information influences the choice of a tourist destination. Researchers noted that the number of online comments and tourism forums corresponded significantly to the real tourist reception population, but the ratings and duration of the travel consultation did not correlate significantly with the tourist reception culture. Park and Gretzel (2007) examined the success factors of the empirical meta-analysis of the destination marketing websites. Coherence in the definition of widely used web site success factors resulted from the study and included nine criteria: consistency of content, ease of use, accessibility, security / intimacy, visual appearance, trust, interactivity, customization, and compliance. Much research has been done on the effect of e-WOM, and most of the previous literature on this topic is a survey on the basis of which respondents were asked to report on the influence of online reviews on their travel decisions (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008; Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009). For example, Vermeulen and Seegers (2009) conducted a longitudinal study of 168 participants to assess the impact of online reviews on hotel attitudes and concluded that access to online reviews increases hotel awareness and positive reviews would boost travelers ' attitudes towards hotels. In comparison, a limited number of recent reports have used indirect data collected from the internet and have made inferences from actual product output findings. Clemons et al. (2006) showed that the variation in ratings and the frequency of the most favorable quartile of feedback had a significant impact on the production of craft beers. In the sense of hospitality, Ye et al. (2009) have shown that positive reviews will greatly increase the number of hotel reservations. In

addition, researchers are interested in investigating the causes for the quest for e-WOM (e.g. Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006) and the sharing or articulation of e-WOM (e.g. Lee et al., 2006), supplying advertisers with a better understanding of electronic consumer behavior.e-WOM as a possibly cost-effective means of promoting hospitality and tourism, and discussing some of the emerging technological approaches. They defined e-WOM as' any indirect contact directed at customers by internet-based technology related to the use or characteristics of specific goods and services or their sellers.' This includes correspondence between producers and consumers as well as between consumers themselves–both integral parts of the WOM cycle and distinctly different from communications. Zhu and Lai (2009) looked at how online information influences the choice of a tourist destination. We noticed that the number of online comments and tourism forums corresponded significantly to the actual tourist reception population, but the scores and the volume of travel consultation did not correspond significantly with the tourist reception culture. Park and Gretzel (2007) examined the success factors of the empirical meta-analysis of the destination marketing websites. Coherence in the definition of widely used web site success factors resulted from the study and included nine criteria: consistency of content, ease of use, accessibility, security / intimacy, visual appearance, trust, interactivity, customization, and compliance. Much research has been done on the effect of e-WOM, and most of the previous literature on this topic is a survey on the basis of which respondents were asked to report on the influence of online reviews on their travel decisions (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008; Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009). For example, Vermeulen and Seegers (2009) conducted a longitudinal study of 168 participants to assess the impact of online reviews on hotel attitudes and concluded that access to online reviews increases hotel awareness and positive reviews would boost travelers ' attitudes towards hotels. In addition, a limited number of recent reports used indirect data

collected from the internet and drew inferences from the observations of the actual results of the drug. Clemons et al. (2006) showed that the variation in ratings and the frequency of the most favorable quartile of feedback had a significant impact on the production of craft beers. In the sense of hospitality, Ye et al. (2009) have shown that positive reviews will greatly increase the number of hotel reservations. In addition, researchers are interested in investigating the motivations for following e-WOM (e.g. Goldsmith and Horowitz, 2006) and for distributing or articulating e-WOM (e.g. Lee et al., 2006) that provide advertisers with a better understanding of online consumer behaviour. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) indicated that users are interested in sharing their experiences with products or services to others through the Internet for a number of reasons: their need for social interaction, economic incentives, compassion for other customers, and the ability to improve their self-esteem are important factors that lead to e-WOM behaviour. Stauss (2000) addressed the risks and benefits of increasing the online market linkages for businesses. A recent survey showed that most consumers regard online views as credible as company websites (ACNielson, 2007). Rowley (2001) proposed that commercial enterprises would try to organize online communities rather than simply advertise on the Internet. Such studies show how much of the potential impact e-WOM could have on the customer decision-making process. Senecal and Nantel (2004) studied how e-WOM impacts the choice of products through an experimental study of the use of electronic communication networks by consumers. The numerous e-WOM-facilitating sites, such as discussion boards and other online communication resources, are also widely recognized as having an influence on adoption.

Objectives

- To find out dimensions of consumer preference regarding usage of tourism mobile apps.

- To determine the effect of e-WOM on consumer preference while using tourism apps.

Hypothesis

- H$_1$: e-WOM has a significant relationship with timely information for using of tourism mobile app.

- H$_2$: e-WOM has a significant relationship with security for using tourism mobile app.

- H$_3$: e-WOM has a significant relationship with ensure better performance for using tourism mobile app.

- H$_4$: e-WOM has a significant relationship with highly effective technology for using tourism mobile app.

- H$_5$: e-WOM has a significant relationship with user friendliness for using tourism mobile app.

- H$_6$: e-WOM has a significant relationship with perceived monetary risk for using tourism mobile app.

- H$_7$: e-WOM has a significant relationship on intention to travel for using tourism mobile app.

Results & Discussion

Structural Equation Modeling Analaysis

Measurement model specification and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results

CFA was performing to review the uni-dimensionality, reliability, and validity of measures on the measurement model. To evaluate CFA there is two important approaches i.e Goodness of Fit indices and evaluate the validity & reliability of the measurement model.

Goodness of fit indices

Recommended level for regression weights of measurement items should be greater than .7.based on the results all items were above the recommended level, however, the values of TII 3&5, SEC 2,3&5, HET 2&3, IT 1,2,4&5 were having highest values i.e., (above 15) (Randall E. Schumacker & Richard G. Lomax., 2010). The measurement model was re run after correlated these problematical items and researcher got the recommended final confirmatory factor analysis model is depicted in Figure 1
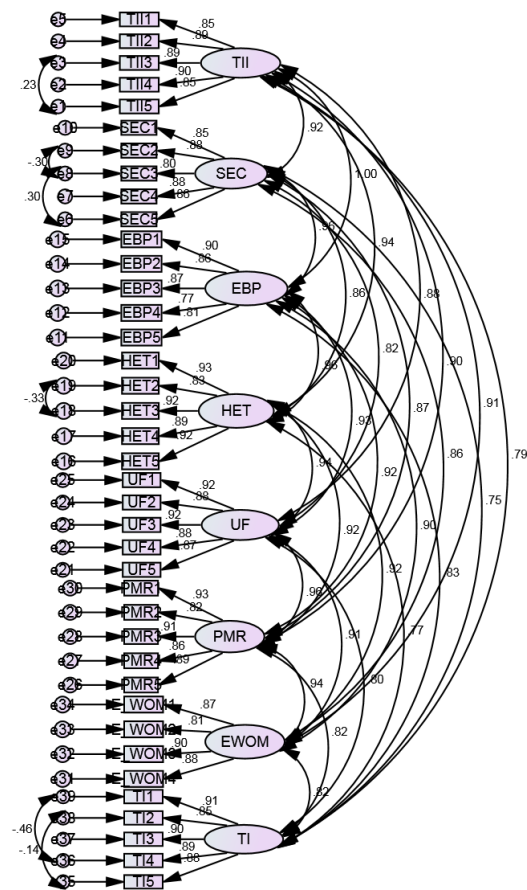

Figure 1 CFA model - Final

TII 3&5, SEC 2,3&5, HET 2&3, IT 1,2,4&5 these problematic items, after re assigning and again rerun for assess the model fit. The outcome of the model discovered that GOI were enhanced and the model revised and established a better fit to the data. outcome of the particular measurement model after correlated of superfluous items (see Table 3) indicted the i.e GFI and RMSEA (Total Fit Measures) were 0.931 and 0.034, respectively, NFI

and CFI i.e., the incremental fit measures were 0.962 and 0.918, respectively and AGFI was 0.971 i.e., the (Parsimony Fit Measure). All these measures is more than the recommended values. Apart from these indices, the ration of χ^2/df was 2.223, is the adequate verge level (i.e., $1<\chi^2$/df <3). The established GOI for the model effectively fitted the data.

	Absolute Fit Measures					Increment al Fit Measures		Parsim ony Fit Measur es
	(χ^2)	(D f)	$(\chi^2$/df)	(GF I)	(RMS EA)	(NF I)	(CF I)	(AGFI)
Criter ia			$1<\chi^2$/D f<3	$\geq 0.$ 90	≤ 0.05	$\geq 0.$ 90	$\geq 0.$ 90	≥ 0.90
Obtai ned	484 .7	21 8	2.223	0.93 1	0.034	0.9 62	0.9 18	0.971

Note : (χ^2) = Chi-square; (Df) = Degrees of freedom; (GFI) = Goodness of fit index; (RMSEA) = Root mean square error of approximation; (NFI) = Normated fit index; (CFI) = Comparative fit index; (AGFI) = Adjusted goodness of fit index

Table 1 Revised CFA model

Standard Residual values within the desired level (+2.58, -2.58) & CR values were above 1.96. In summing up, the outcome results shown in the table 3 it has been confirmed that the model was fit to the statistics, signifying no auxiliary modification required in the model. Thus the model was established based on the uni –dimensionality.

Assessment of Reliability and Validity of Constructs

Constructs - Reliability

The results mentioned in the table 3 showed that the reliability coefficient for the online shoppers' constructs i.e., Timely Information (TII) was .943, Security (SEC) .931, Ensure Better Performance (EBP) .924, Highly Effective Technology (HET) .951, User Friendly (UF) .952, Perceived Monetary Risk (PMR) .945, e-WOM (e-WOM) .922, Travel Intention (TI) .945, was above the recommended level >0.7.

Calculated results and construct reliability were shown in the table 3. Out of eight constructs the

highest reliability i.e .952 is for user friendly construct.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Number of Items
Timely Information	0.943	0.944	5
Security	0.931	0.931	5
Ensure Better Performance	0.924	0.925	5
Highly Effective Technology	0.951	0.951	5
User Friendly	0.952	0.952	5
Perceived Monetary Risk	0.945	0.945	5
E-WOM	0.922	0.923	4
Travel Intention	0.945	0.945	5

Table 2 Reliability statistics for constructs

Average Variance Extracted

"Validity"

Convergent, Discriminant and Nomological validity can be examined by assessing the each and every constructs.

"Convergent Validity"

To examine the convergent validity of each of the constructs AVE and CR will be tested. To evaluate the convergent validity, cut off criteria for loadings >0.7, AVE >0.5 and reliability >0.7. Results are shown in the following Table 3.

Constructs	CR	AVE
TII	0.943	0.767
SEC	0.937	0.728
EBP	0.924	0. 709
HET	0.954	0.804
UF	0.953	0.802
PMR	0.946	0.778
TI	0.948	0.786

Table 3 Convergent validity

Rule of Thumb: CR should be > 0.7
CR should be > AVE
AVE should be > 0.5

"Discriminant Validity"

To test the discriminant validity the rule of thumb is AVE estimates should be larger than SIC estimates for each constructs. Results were shown in the following table 4.

CONSTRUCTS	AVE	MSV	ASV
TII	0.767	0.752	0.744
SEC	0.728	0.616	0.633
EBP	0.709	0.592	0.63
HET	0.804	0.725	0.758
UF	0.802	0.631	0.755
PMR	0.778	0.531	0.652
TI	0.786	0.697	0.65

Table 4 Discriminant validity

Note: MSV should be < AVE
ASV should be < AVE

CONSTRUCTS	TII	SEC	EBP	HET	UF	PMR	TI
TII	0.906						
SEC	0.857	**0.958**					
EBP	0.902	0.957	**0.999**				
HET	0.918	0.863	0.962	**0.997**			
UF	0.913	0.82	0.928	0.941	**0.995**		
PMR	0.941	0.866	0.923	0.921	0.965	**0.982**	
TI	0.823	0.748	0.835	0.771	0.804	0.819	**0.887**

Table 5 Inter – construct correlations

Note: Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are shown diagonally & inter-construct squared correlations are shown in Off diagonally.

Structural Model Evaluation and Hypotheses Testing

The accompanying segment presents consequences of theories testing. Shows six speculation speaks to by easygoing ways (H1, H2, H3, H4 ,H5,H6,H7) that were utilized to test collaboration between the inert builds .The inactive develops were utilized in anticipated hypothetical model were grouped into two principle classes, they are exogenous and endogenous variable. Exogenous variable were the Timely information, Security, Ensure better performance , Highly effective technology , User friendly, Perceived Monetary Risk, e- WOM , Travel Intention variable are considered as endogenous variable.
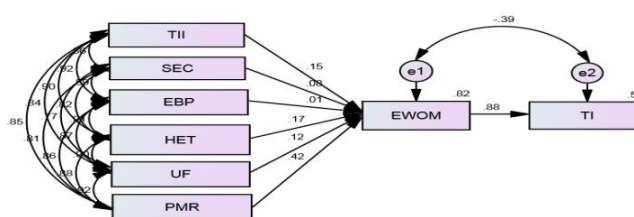

Figure 2 Final Structural Model

	Absolute fit measures					Increment al fit measures		Parsim ony fit measur es
	(χ^2)	(Df)	(χ^2/df)	(GFI)	(RMSEA)	(NFI)	(CFI)	(AGFI)
Criteria			$1<\chi^2/Df<3$	≥0.90	≤0.05	≥0.90	≥0.90	≥0.90
Obtained	9.302	5	1.86	0.995	0.05	0.99	0.99	0.95

Note : Chi-square = χ^2; Degrees of freedom = Df; Goodness of fit index=GFI; Root mean square error of approximation= RMSEA; Normated fit index =NFI; Comparative fit index=CFI; Adjusted goodness of fit index = AGFI

Table 6 Fit measure assessment of structural model

The coefficient parameter estimates is another most significant part of structural model measurement. According to Hair et. al. 2006, When the (CR or t – value) critical ration is higher than 1.96 for an estimate regression weight, then the parameter coefficient value is statistically significant at the .05 levels. For five causal paths estimates t values were above the 1.96 critical values at the significant level

$p \leq .05$. The t values for remaining two constructs were found statistically not significant (t value = .980, p = .327; t value = .074, p = .941). The overall structural model is depicted in Figure 5 and parameter estimates are presented in Table 7.

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
E_WOM	<---	Timely Information	0.141	0.1	1.972	0.028
E_WOM	<---	Security	0.079	0.08	0.98	0.327
E_WOM	<---	Ensure Better Performance	0.009	0.123	0.074	0.941
E_WOM	<---	Highly Effective Technology	0.16	0.101	1.996	0.011
E_WOM	<---	User Friendly	0.114	0.104	1.1	0.041
E_WOM	<---	Perceived Monitory Risk	0.407	0.103	3.954	0.002
E_WOM	<---	Travel Intention	0.932	0.071	13.092	0.039

NOTE : Estimate = regression weight , S.E = standard error , C.R = Critical ration , P = Significant values.

Outcomes existing in the table 9 indicates that the five out of seven hypothesis paths between independent (exogenous) and dependent (Endogenous) variables were significant. For example, the speculation way among e-WOM and Timely Information (TII) with CR estimation of 1.972 , Similarly, e-WOM and Highly Effective Technology with CR estimation of 1.996, e-WOM and User Friendly with CR estimation of 1.100, E-WOM and Perceived Monitory Risk with CR estimates of 3.954, e-WOM and Travel Intention with CR estimates of 13.092. Security (SEC) and e-WOM with CR estimation of 0.980, e-WOM and Ensure Better Performance (EBP) with CR estimation of 0.074 shows that their t-values did not surpass the cut – off point (>1.96) mandatory for statistical significance. Thus, these two paths were not statistically significant.

Constructs	(Codes for Constructs)	Hypothesis	Standardized regression weights (β)	Hypotheses Supported
Timely Information	TII	H_1	0.841	YES
Security	SEC	H_2	0.061	NO
Ensure better performance	EBP	H_3	0.003	NO
Highly effective technology	HET	H_4	0.218	YES
User friendly	UF	H_5	0.172	YES
Perceived Monetary Risk	PMR	H_6	0.239	YES
Travel Intention	TI	H_7	0.118	YES

Table 8 Hypotheses testing

The results revealed that H_1, H_4, H_5, H_6, and H_7 were statistically significant and positive. The standardized estimates for six hypothesis is (β = 0.841, 0.218, 0.172, 0.239, 0.118, respectively) and thus showing support for these hypotheses, indicate statistical significance. Out of seven two hypotheses i.e. H_2, and H_3 having standardized estimates (β = 0.061, 0.003 respectively) were found not significant. Hence, these two hypotheses were rejected.

Conclusion

Word of Mouth will create huge impact in the minds of customer rather than WOM; Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) will reach very fast to the customer due to its technological advancement and usage. e-WOM is extensively used by all technical related apps. Tourism related apps are extensively depending on e-WOM to reach its customers and attract tourists to their travel apps. Tourism related apps need to concentrate on timely information, they need to use highly effective technology to reach each and every traveler, & it should be user friendly, then only the travelers may prefer tourism apps while they were travelling in various countries or various places situated in domestically. Tourism related apps need to focus and take measures on security related features and they need to ensure that provide better performance through the apps. Due to technological advancement each and every traveler

mostly depending upon tourism related apps to find the tourist spots in unknown places and enjoy the beauty of those particular locations. While visiting various places situated at various tourist destination spots majority of the tourists depending upon electronic payments only. Keeping in view of this tourism apps developers need to focus more on security related features. Tourism apps need to focus on all dimensions to cater the needs of various customers and to bring the attention towards their services then only customers may prefer to use their services otherwise they may find one more alternative which can suitable to their needs and provide faster, safer, and security related services provided by the competitors in the present cut throat competitive technological era. The present study is mainly focused and concentrated on identifying dimensions effect of e-WOM on consumer preference while using tourism mobile apps. But there is a lot of scope to concentrate on each dimensional effect on e-WOM and its impact on consumer preferences. There may be lot of scope on to work out on perceived monetary risk and security related issues while travelling.

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