The influence of eWOM credibility on visit intention: An integrative moderated mediation model
Nechoud, Lamia; Ghidouche, Faouzi; Seraphin, Hugues

The influence of eWOM credibility on visit intention: An integrative moderated mediation model

Lamia Nechoud
École Supérieure de Commerce, Algeria

Faouzi Ghidouche
École des Hautes Études Commerciales, Algeria

Hugues Seraphin
University of Winchester, United Kingdom

Abstract:

Purpose: This study examines the process by which eWOM susceptibility moderates the strength of indirect links between the perceived credibility of eWOM messages and the intention to visit a destination via the destination image and the perceived usefulness of these messages.

Methods: The research hypotheses were tested according to structural equations modelling and Hayes procedure, which made it possible to study simultaneously and rigorously the mediating and moderating effects, and to have a clear view on the model fittness.

Results: The results indicate that the mediation links of the destination image on the relationship between perceived credibility and intention to visit a destination, are moderated by the susceptibility of the eWOM (the comments generated by Internet users or the sharing of tourists' experiences on Facebook). This study also indicates that the relationship between the perceived credibility of the eWOM and the intentions to visit a destination is mediated by the usefulness of the eWOM messages and the destination image.

Implications: Tourism practitioners seeking to attract tourists can use the eWOM as a communication technique for product and/or service recommendations. Given the powerful influence of the eWOM, it should not be ignored or misused, but managed to improve the effectiveness of marketing strategies in hospitality, tourism and travel.

Keywords: *perceived credibility, eWOM susceptibility, perceived usefulness, intention to visit, destination image*

JEL Classification: *L83, M31, Z33*

Biographical note: Lamia Nechoud (etd_lnechoud@esc-alger.dz) holds a PhD from École Supérieure de Commerce, Algeria, in 2019. She is particularly interested in researching tourism economics, digital marketing and cosumer bahavior. Faouzi Ghidouche (f.ghidouche@hec.dz) is a Professor at École des Hautes Études Commerciales (HEC Algiers) and member of the Thematic Interest Group "Retailing in emergent countries" of the French Association of Marketing (AFM). His primary research subject focuses on retailing sector in Algeria, and he has served as Head of HEC Algiers for 3 years. Hugues Séraphin (hugues.Seraphin@winchester.ac.uk) is a Senior Lecturer in Event and Tourism Management Studies at the University of Winchester Business School, United Kingdom. He holds a PhD from the Université de Perpignan Via Domitia, France. He was the Programme Leader of the Event Management programme at the University of Winchester between 2015 and 2018. Corresponding author: Faouzi Ghidouche (f.ghidouche@hec.dz)

1 INTRODUCTION

Social networks have brought about a major change in marketing concepts by integrating the different virtual communities, thanks to the exchange of information and the individualization of offers and experiences, customers become actors working freely in this new scene. This exchange of information available on different social media platforms influences consumer decision-making, which has made eWOM a topic of great interest in recent years (Suh, 2017, Pandey & Sahu 2020, Anubha & Shome, 2020).

eWOM is defined as content (positive or negative) delivered by consumers through electronic channels such as social networks, blogs and forums, etc., where people can interact with each other to comment on places (destinations), experiences, products and services (Brown et al; 2007). eWOM is considered one of the most influential sources of information for consumers: for many researchers eWOM is one of the most important marketing tools (Anubha & Shome, 2020; Suh, 2017).

Tourism research has analysed the role of online resources, including eWOM, in providing travel information (Ghidouche & Nechoud 2018; Pandey & Sahu 2020). Therefore, few researchs has been done on the relationship between perceived usefulness and choice of a destination (Kim, Kim & Shin, 2009) or the moderating role of eWOM susceptibility in the relationship between the perceived credibility of an eWOM message and a tourist's behavioural intent (Mourali, Laroche & Pons, 2005; Misirlis et al., 2018). Jalilvand & Heidari (2017) showed on 678 members of the TripAdvisor.com platform that eWOM has a stronger impact on attitude and travel intention than on WOM. Similarly, on the basis of 5,090 reviews online on yelp.com, Liu & Park (2015) revealed that the majority of customers use eWOM to collect information on travel products (destinations, hotels, etc.) in order to improve purchasing decisions. Likewise, Nhon & Khuong (2015), after collecting responses from 328 Vietnamese consumers, concluded that eWOM influences travel decisions. Ladhari & Michaud (2015) found that eWOM in the form of comments generated in virtual communities on Facebook influenced the hotel reservation intentions of 800 Canadian students. A study by Abubakar & Ilkan (2016) found that eWOM has a positive impact on the travel intention of 216 medical tourists to Cyprus. After interviewing 241 tourists who visited Iran, Doosti et al. (2016) found that eWOM has a positive, direct and significant influence on their visit intention.

Mehmood et al., (2018) found that eWOM has a significant impact on the attitudes and travel intentions of 280 domestic and international tourists to China. Likewise, Dissanayake & Malkanthie (2018), after collecting responses from 384 travelers visiting Sri Lanka, found that online reviews had a positive and significant impact on their intentions to book hotels.

Furthermore, according to the literature, few studies have yet analysed the combined effects of the perceived credibility of eWOM messages, the perceived usefulness of the eWOM, the image of a destination, the susceptibility to eWOM, on the intention to visit a destination.Thus, this study provides an integrative model by investagting the moderating effect of eWOM susceptibility between perceived credibility of eWOM messages (sharing experiences, online opinions, etc.) and the tourists' behavioural intention by (mediating effect), both the perceived usefulness of the eWOM message and the image of the city of Taghit.

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

### 2.1 Perceived credibility of the source and intention to visit a destination

The credibility of the source has been extensively researched in the offline context (Walters & Mair, 2012) and increasingly in an online context (Ismagilova et al., 2020). Based on the work Seraphin et al., (2017), credibility is defined as individuals' perception of recommendations and opinions as credible, true and based on experience or facts. Thus, if the source is perceived as credible, the receiver believes the messages provided by that source (Grewal, Gotlieb & Howard,1994). Thus, consumers prefer eWOM messages because they provide complete and credible information that is not generally provided by brands on public platforms (Verma & Dewani, 2020).

In the context of tourism, the behavioral intentions of tourists include the intention to visit a destination which is defined as the willingness to visit the destination (Sigala & Christou, 2002, 2006; Chen, Shang & Li, 2014), and the intention to recommend a destination. The decision to visit a destination is interpreted as a rational calculation of the benefits of a set of alternative destinations, which have been derived from external sources of information, including websites, travellers' blogs and social networks (Chen et al., 2014).

Previous research has shown the link between the perceived credibility of information and consumer purchase intentions (Qiang et al., 2018; Daowd et al., 2020). Seraphin et al., (2018) not only corroborated this point of view, but also stated that for a message to be convincing and motivate the consumer to buy or visit, it must be credible (ethos), appeal to emotions (pathos) and finally informative (logos). The combination of these three factors (see Figure 1) has the potential not only to convince, but also to educate the potential visitor, which is extremely important because a potential visitor who has an intrinsic knowledge of the destination is less averse to external disruptive elements (political conflicts, natural disasters, terrorist attacks, etc.) that could alter his perception of the destination (Seraphin et al., 2018).

Figure 1: Dale Robinson and Anderson model (DRA)
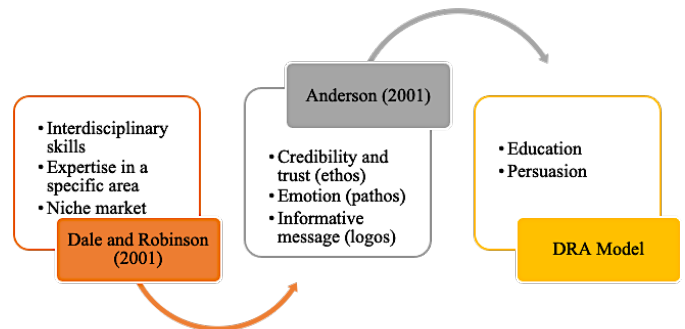
Source: Seraphin et al., 2018

The application of the DRA model is particularly important for destinations with a negative image (Seraphin et al., 2018). Seraphin et al. (2014), based on Haiti case, a tourist destination that has suffered from its negative image, explain that the educational aspect (which can be done through online educational tools) is important because it helps to develop an emotional link between the destination and the visitor (see Figure 2).

The study by Anubha and Shome, (2020) found that the perceived credibility of eWOM posted on social media influences the behavioral intentions of Indian urban millennials. These results join the results of previous studies (Doosti et al., 2016; Teng et al., 2017) which have shown that customers' perception of the credibility of reviews significantly influences their behavioral intentions. The first hypothesis is therefore proposed as follows:

H1: The perceived credibility of eWOM messages positively influences the intention to visit a destination.

Figure 2: Impact of an online educational tool (Visual Online Learning Material)

2.2 Mediating effect of perceived usefulness

Davis (1989) defined perceived usefulness as the degree to which the individual believes that using a particular system improves the performance of his task. Moreover, according to Deutsch & Gerrard (1955), when a message contains credible arguments, the receiver is more likely to consider the comments useful. On the other hand, receivers are less enthusiastic about adopting a message that lacks credible arguments.

Gefen, Karahanna & Straub (2003) reported that perceived usefulness has a significant effect on behavioural intent, as messages that appear useful lead to purchase intention. Venkatesh Morris, Davis, & Davis (2003) work in this direction shows that perceived usefulness affects the intention to purchase at a tourist site. Similarly, Kim *et al*. (2009) find that the perceived usefulness of this type of website positively affects the intention to use it again.

However, research on the perceived usefulness of online platforms and eWOM messages in making a destination decision is scarce (Kim *et al*., 2009). For this purpose, the work of Matute, Polo-Redondo & Utrillas (2016) analysed the mediating role of the perceived usefulness of eWOM messages in the relationship between the credibility and quality of eWOM messages and the intention to buy online. Ghidouche and Nechoud (2018) examined the indirect and direct effects of the perceived credibility of eWOM messages (comments generated by Internet users or sharing of tourists' experiences on Facebook) on the city of Taghit on the intention of Algerians tourists to visit this destination, through the perceived usefulness of these messages. Researchers found no studies of online travel reviews conducted in the Algerian tourism context to test the impact of mediated perceived usefulness. After collecting responses from 232 Algerian tourists, this study found that perceived usefulness mediates the relationship between the perceived credibility of eWOM messages on Facebook on a destination and the intention to visit the destination. It is therefore appropriate to focus on the mediating role of the perceived usefulness of eWOM messages, as a source of information on the intention to visit a destination. As a result, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H2: Perceived usefulness mediates the relationship between the perceived credibility of eWOM messages and the intention to visit the destination.

2.3 Mediating effect of destination image

Destination selection is defined as the process of choosing a destination from alternative competitors (Crompton, 1992). Cognitive and emotional processes involve the selection of

destinations for a final choice that best meets the needs of a tourist (Crompton, 1992).

In addition to previous studies on the credibility and image of the destination, the tourism destination-branding model created by Veasna, Wu. & Huang (2013) suggested that the perceived credibility of the source positively influences the image of the destination. Their study pays little attention to virtual communities on social networks.

The conceptual model proposed in this study also uses elements from the research models of Ponte et al., (2015) and Suh (2017), which revealed the cause-and-effect relationship between perceived credibility, destination image and tourists' behavioural intentions.

Overall, previous studies have shown that the destination image affects the intentions of tourists to visit a destination (Nechoud & Ghidouche 2017; Ghidouche & Nechoud, 2018). In addition, Bruce, Foutz, & Kolsarici (2012) and Tham, Croy & Mair (2013) observed that tourists who have positive images of a destination are more likely to recommend the destination to others.

Tourist behavioural intentions have been studied to assess the impact of a credible destination image on tourists' decision making when planning their trip (Ponte *et al.*, 2015). The study of Ponte *et al.* (2015) reveals that the behavioural intentions of tourists depend on the perceived credibility of online content.

Although the literature on destination image has been discussed for four decades, there are only a very limited number of studies that have addressed the mediating role of destination image (Baloglu, 2000; Qu *et al.*, 2011; Nechoud & Ghidouche 2017; Ghidouche & Nechoud, 2018). The mediating effect of destination image thus remains largely unexplored in the field of tourism.

Baloglu (2000) indicated that there is a mediation effect of the destination's image on the relationship between the sources of information and the intention to visit, while Qu *et al.* (2011) found that destination image was a mediator between brand associations and future tourist behaviour. However, few studies have extended theoretical attention to the mediating effects of destination image in the relationship between perceived credibility and visit intention (Ghidouche & Nechoud, 2018).

Therefore, we predict that the perceived credibility of eWOM messages about a destination can improve tourists' perceptions of the destination's image, which in turn can have a positive impact on the likelihood of visiting the destination. Based on these justifications, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: The image of the destination mediates the relationship between the perceived credibility of the eWOM and intentions to visit the destination.

2.4 Mediating effect of eWOM susceptibility

Two types of influences have been identified in the literature: normative and informational (Bearden, Netemeyer & Teel, 1989). Normative influences refer to the tendency to conform to the expectations of others (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975). Informational influences refer to the tendency to accept information from other consumers and to be guided in the search for information and therefore in the decision to choose.

Individuals susceptible to informational influences tend to actively seek the opinions of other consumers before making decisions. eWOM messages are then perceived as an important source of information for their purchasing decision (Mavragani *et al*., 2019). From this perspective, sensitivity to interpersonal (informational) influences influences the purchasing decision. (Mourali *et al*., 2005).

The objective of this research is to explore the moderating of indirect effect of eWOM susceptibility on the relationship between the perceived credibility and intention visit a destination by (mediating effect), both the perceived usefulness of the eWOM message and the image of destination.

The direct impact of eWOM and on the behavioral intention have been demonstrated by previous studies (Mehmood et al., 2018; Malkanthie, 2018). Also, studies have statistically shown that eWOM is a predictor of the attitud and travel intention (Jalilvand & Heidari, 2017). But to the best of our knowledge and as far as the literature is concerned, no study has so far explored the moderating effect of eWOM susceptibility on the relationship between perceived credibility and the intention to visit a destination. Hence, it is the unique expected contributions of this current study which will enrich the marketin of destination and tourism literature. For Bearden *et al*. (1989), susceptibility to interpersonal sources represents "*the willingness to comply with the expectations of others in terms of purchasing decisions and/or the tendency to learn more about products and services through the observation of others or to ask others for information*". The susceptibility makes consumers prefer interpersonal sources during the information retrieval process, which suggests that they will be influenced by eWOM messages because they consider them credible (Mourali *et al*., 2005; Halkiopoulos *et al*., 2020). Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H4: eWOM susceptibility moderates the strength of indirect links between the perceived credibility of messages and the intention to visit a destination via the destination image.

H5: eWOM susceptibility moderates the strength of indirect links between the perceived credibility of messages and the intention to visit a destination via perceived usefulness.

Figure 3: The research model
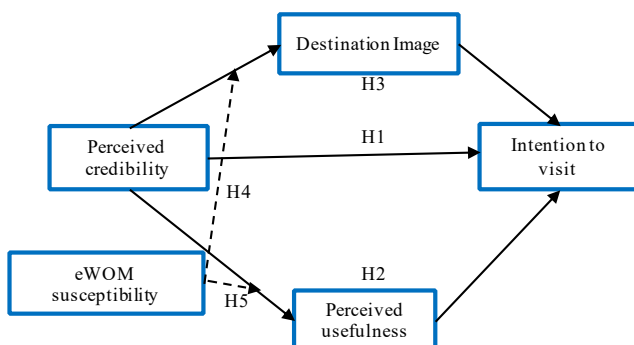
3   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The city of Taghit or "the enchantress" is one of the most beautiful oases in the entire Algerian Sahara. It draws a natural border with the great western erg (more than 600 km of dunes). Taghit is located at more than 90 Km in the South-East of Béchar (main wilaya of south-western Algeria). A very ancient settlement area, it is known for its engravings and rock paintings dating from the Neolithic period.

3.1 Sample and data collection

A survey was conducted using a questionnaire to test the proposed research model (see Figure 3). University students were considered appropriate for this survey due to the latest statistics showing that people between 18 and 34 years of age constitute the majority of social media users in Algeria (https://digitalreport.wearesocial.com). A preliminary question served to exclude respondents who had visited Taghit for leisure purposes in the past. The questionnaires were administered over a two-month period from November to December 2018.

A total of 428 students attending Algerian universities participated in the study. The sample size is considered satisfactory based on the recommendations of Sekaran & Bougie (2016) and Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson (2010). Although based on empirical sampling, the respondents provided sufficient diversity. Table 1 presents the characteristics of the surveyed population.

3.2 Survey instrument

The questionnaire was developed based on a comprehensive review of previous literature. The survey instrument was originally developed in English and then translated into Arabic and French by native speakers. The back-translation was conducted to ensure that the meanings and intent of the original instrument were retained. Likert scales ranging from 1 to 5 (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) were used to measure the variables of the proposed model. A set of items borrowed from the literature review and adapted to this study were also included. A pre-test was done to test for the reliability and validity of the questionnaire. Based on this, minor changes have been made.

The questionnaire consisted of six sections: perceived credibility, perceived usefulness, image of destination, intention to visit, eWOM susceptibility and socio-demographic information. For the perceived credibility we employed five items from Flanagin & Metzger (2000). The perceived usefulness was measured with Six items adapted from previous studies on the perceived usefulness of information technology acceptance (ITA) (McKnight & Kacmar, 2007; Davis, 1989). Based on Goodstein (1993) and Qu *et al*. (2011), five items were used to measure attitudinal objectives to interpret the perceptions and impressions generated by the image of the destination.

Four items were used to measure tourist intention to visit a destination. This scale derives from well-established studies on behavioural intention (Moon & Kim, 2001; Venkatesh *et al*., 2003). Six items were used to measure the eWOM susceptibility. These items were adapted from extant literature. The scale proposed by Jalilvand & Samiei (2012) and modified for the tourism context, was used in the current study. Finally, socio-demographic information included questions on gender, region of origin and university cycle.

3.3 Data analysis and procedure

Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure that there were no missing values and that there were no severe non-standard problems. A step-by-step analysis process was conducted to test these hypotheses. The first step was to examine the general characteristics of the variables and refine the items of the constructs by an exploratory factorial analysis (EFA) conducted on SPSS 24. The second step was a confirmatory factorial analysis (CFA) on AMOS 24. In this second step, the measurement model was validated using the new latent variables.

The structural equations modelling (SEM) is used to examine the measurement model and the structural model. Finally, in the third step, the hypotheses were tested by examining the path coefficients and their significance levels using bootstrapping.

The analysis of indirect effects (mediation analyses) was performed in AMOS 24, according to the bootstrap procedure (5,000 resamples, 95% confidence interval) based on the recommendations of Cheung & Lau (2008). The proposed partial mediation model (M1, direct and indirect effects) was compared with a model with only direct effects (M2, no indirect effects) and a total mediation model (M3, no direct effects) (Diallo, Diop-Sall, Djelassi & Godefroit-Winkel, 2018) to better understand the influence of mediator variables. For the specific mediating effects test (individual indirect effects), the Monte Carlo method was used to assess the mediation effect (Diallo *et al.*, 2018); this method can be performed using an online tool, available at http://www.quantpsy.org/medmc/medmc.htm.

Several scholars recommend the use of the Hayes method (a macro for mediation, moderation, and moderated mediation models for SPSS) (Hayes, 2015). The authors justified their choice by all the comparative advantages offered by this method. Essentially, it is the possibility of simultaneously testing indirect and conditional effects that can be obtained by this method and to produce reliable and robust results (Ribeiro Woosnam,Pinto & Silva, 2017). Also, the use of the boostrap procedure allows to generate more accurate results (Ribeiro *et al.*, 2017).

4   RESULTS

4.1 COVID-19 in Italy: A chaos theory perspective

Of the 428 responses analysed, over 58% were female and over 63% of the surveyed population resided in the North. In terms of research objectives, students from the different cycles were targeted, with a majority of master's students, representing over 68% of the surveyed population.

Table 1: Descriptive summary of sample

	N	%
Gender		
Male	176	41.11
Female	252	58.89
University cycle		
Bachelor Student	120	28.04
Master Student	292	68.22
PhD Student	16	3.74

4.1 Validation of survey instrument

First, the proposed measurement model was tested to confirm the validity of the methods used. For this purpose, an EFA was applied using the principal component analysis as an extraction method, with a Varimax rotation. All the measurement scales used were one-dimensional and reliable. The values of Cronbach's alphas were all above (α>0.7), indicating good internal consistency for each construct (Table 2).

This exploratory analysis made it possible to purge the list of initial items. Items were selected based on a sufficient correlation to their factor, without being significantly related to other factors and with satisfactory communities. In addition, during the EFA, the initial measurement scale of the variables "eWOM susceptibility", "destination image" and "perceived usefulness" were adjusted by 1 item each and eliminated because of their very low factor contribution (less than .50).

A CFA was performed on the factor structure obtained in the previous analysis phase. Table 2 shows that the results are acceptable in terms of convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 2: Validity of measurement instrument

Factors (Alpha Cronbach)	Items	Mean	AVE	CR
	Util_1	3.82		
	Util_2	3.63		
Perceived usefulness PU (.842)	Util_3	3.81	.527	.847
	Util_5	3.62		
	Util_6	3.51		
	eWOM_1	3.99		
eWOM susceptibility ES (.795)	eWOM_2	3.99	.503	.800
	eWOM_3	3.83		
	eWOM_6	3.76		
	Image_1	4.28		
Destination image DI (.826)	Image_2	4.35	.547	.828
	Image_3	4.21		
	Image_5	4.10		
	Cred_1	3.55		
	Cred_2	3.39		
Perceived credibility PC (.903)	Cred_3	3.53	.663	.907
	Cred_4	3.42		
	Cred_5	3.37		
	Intent_1	4.33		
Intention to visit IV (.812)	Intent_2	3,88	.529	.817
	Intent_3	4,04		
	Intent_4	3,88		

The convergent validity, evaluated by the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) calculation, corresponds to the explained variance of the constructs. A first CFA identified that the variable "eWOM susceptibility" indicated a value below the suggested threshold of .50 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, this scale was adjusted to reflect an item with the lowest factor contribution. All the new measurements obtained in the second analysis exceed the minimum threshold of .50, which allowed to confirm that the convergent validity of each construct in the proposed model is acceptable. Convergent validity is also verified if the CR value (Composite

Reliability) >.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2010). This is the case for all the proposed constructs.

Discriminat validity is obtained when the square root of the AVE is greater than the variance shared between latent constructs (measured by the correlations between constructs). The results indicated a satisfactory discriminant validity of the constructs (Table 3).

Table 3: Correlation matrix, discriminant validity of constructs

Latent constructs	ES	DI	PC	PU	IV
ES	**.814**				
DI	.245***	**.739**			
PC	.416***	.338***	**.726**		
PU	.348***	.418***	.468***	**.727**	
IV	.136*	.254***	.289***	.379***	**.710**

4.2 Measurement model

The adjustment of the overall model was addressed by three families of indices. Absolute indices that examine the level of correspondence between the proposed model and the observed data. Incremental indices that compare the model under test to a basic restrictive model. Finally, parsimony indices that determine the number of parameters to be estimated to achieve the specific fit level. The overall measurement model was estimated using the recommendations of Hair *et al.*, (2010). The obtained indices indicate a correct fit of the model to the data (Table 4).

4.3 Structural model

The following adjustment indices were obtained: χ^2/df = 2.127, p <.000, CFI =.948, SRMR =.052, RMSEA =.051 and GFI =.920. The proposed conceptual model fits the data correctly. Direct effects were assessed based on the value of the t-test and the p-value associated with each path. Table 4 indicates that these direct effects are positive and relevant.

Table 4: Adjustment indices of the search model

Index	χ^2/df	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	IFI	NFI
Measurement model	2.069	.951	.043	.050	.922	.901	.951	.910
Structural mode	2.127	.948	.052	.051	.920	.898	.948	.907
Acceptance threshold	<3	> .900	< .080	< .080	> .900	>.800	> .900	> .900

CFI = Comparative Fit Index, SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Residual, RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, GFI = Goodness-of-fit Index, AGFI = Adjusted Goodness-of-fit Index, IFI = Incremental Fit Index, NFI = Normed Fit Index.

4.4 Hypothesis testing: Indirect mediation effect

The proposed partial mediation model (M1, direct and indirect effects) was compared with a model with only direct effects (M2, no indirect effects) and a total mediation model (M3, no direct effects) to better understand the influence of mediator variables.

The adjustment indices obtained for the M2 and M3 models were less satisfactory compared to the M1 partial mediation model for the case of the two mediators (Image and Utility). In addition, the difference test at χ^2 ($\Delta\chi^2$) showed a significant difference between the models in terms of fit. For the mediator variable "image", the χ^2 difference test between

model M1 (χ^2= 425.723, df = 200) and M3 (χ^2= 432.723, df = 201) was significant ($\Delta\chi^2$ (Δdf=1) = 7; p<.001).

Table 5: Comparison of mediation models

Index	χ^2/df	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	IFI	NFI
M1	2.127	.948	.052	.051	.920	.898	.948	.907
DI								
M2	2.279	.940	.082	.055	.914	.894	.940	.900
M3	2.153	.946	.055	.052	.918	.897	.945	.905
PU								
M2	2.484	.931	.104	.059	.907	.884	.931	.890
M3	2.194	.944	.057	.053	.912	.890	.945	.903

Similarly, the difference between models M1 and M2 (χ^2= 460.283, df = 202) was significant ($\Delta\chi^2$ (Δdf=2) = 34.56, p<.001). However, the model of partial mediation of the destination image on the relationship between the perceived credibility of the eWOM and the intention to visit the destination presented the best fit.

Table 6: Assumptions testing of direct and indirect effects

	Hypothesized Path	B	Results
H1	PC → IV	.15**	Supported
H2	**PC → PU → IV**	**.11***[.39 x .27]**	**Supported**
H2a	PC → PU	.39***	Supported
H2b	PU → IV	.27****	Supported
H3	**PC → DI → IV**	**.05***[.22 x .24]**	**Supported**
H3a	PC → DI	.22***	Supported
H3b	DI → IV	.24***	Supported

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001

The values of the confidence intervals (H2: [.029, .079]; H3: [.069,.145]) do not include the value 0. The hypothesis was validated on the indirect effects (Cheung and Lau, 2008).

Table 7 shows that the perceived credibility of the eWOM has a significant positive effect on the intention to visit a tourist destination perceived usefulness (β=.15; p <.01), thus validating the H1 hypothesis. In addition, the link between perceived credibility and perceived usefulness is significant (β=.39; p <.001). Similarly, the latter positively influences the intention to visit a touristic destination (β=.27; p <.001). The product of these two effects is significant (β=.11; p < 0.001), which allows the H2 hypothesis to be validated.

Analyses also showed that the perceived credibility of the eWOM has a significant positive influence on the destination image (β=.22; p <.001) which in turn has a positive influence on the intention to visit a destination (β=.14; p <.001). The product of these direct effects is significant (β=.05, p<.01), thus validating the H3 hypothesis.

4.5 Hypothesis testing: Conditional indirect effect

To test the hypothesis using Hayes procedure, the recommendations proposed by Hayes (2015) were respected. Based on the conceptual model proposed in this study, "model 8" was selected from the "templates.pdf" documents and the role of each of the variables in the model was

specified. Table 7 summarises the results generated by the macro-Process.

Table 7: Indirect conditional effects test

| Variables | Mediator variable M1 | | | Mediator variable M2 | | |
| | DI | | | PU | | |
	β (SE)	t	95%CI	β (SE)	t	95%CI
X: PC	.182*** (.053)	3.428	[.078, .287]	.351*** (.051)	6.860	[.250, .451]
W: ES	.212*** (.056)	3.759	[.101, .323]	.239*** (.054)	4.402	[.132, .346]
XxW (Int 1)	-.164** (.059)	-2.761	[-.281, -.047]	-.057 (.057)	-.992	[-.169, .056]
	R²= .09, F(3, 424) = 14.064, p<.001			R²= .16, F(3, 424) = 26.505, p<.001		

| Variables | Dependent variable Y | | |
| | IV | | |
	β (SE)	t	95%CI
X: PC	.113** (.036)	3.237	[.045, .182]
W: ES	.110** (.037)	2.986	[.038, .182]
XxW (Int 1)	-.067* (.031)	2.225	[-.132, -.008]
M1: DI	.172*** (.032)	5.435	[.110, .239]
M2: PU	.181*** (.033)	5.482	[.116, .246]
	R²= .26, F(5, 422) = 29.977, p<.001		

Index for moderate mediation	Index	SE (boot)	95% CI
Mediator : DI	-.283	.016	[-.066, -.002]
Mediator : PU	-.010	.014	[-. 043, .014]

SE = Standard Error; CI = Confidence Interval (95% confidence interval for conditional direct and indirect effect using bootstrap); boot = Bootstrap. * *p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001.*

The "moderate mediation index" section provides information on the significance of the moderate mediation tests. The conditional indirect effect model is significant for the mediating variable "Destination Image", since the confidence interval excludes zero [-.066, .002]. The H4 hypothesis is therefore validated. However, for the mediating variable "Perceived Usefulness", the conditional indirect effect is not significant since the confidence interval [-.043, .014] includes the zero, which does not confirm the H5 hypothesis.

It is also possible to locate the moderating effects on the different paths as specified in the conceptual model. Thus, three conditional effects are estimated. The moderating effect of eWOM susceptibility on the first section of the mediation relationship between "perceived credibility" and "Destination Image" is significant (*β*= -.164; *p*<.001) with a confidence interval [-.281, -.047] excluding zero.

On the other hand, the moderating effect of eWOM susceptibility on the section of the mediation relationship between "perceived credibility" and "perceived usefulness " is not significant (*β*= -.057; *p*>.05) with a confidence interval [-.169,.056] including zero. Finally, the moderating effect of eWOM susceptibility on the "direct" relationship between the Perceived credibility of messages and the Intention to visit a destination (direct conditional effect) is significant because the confidence interval does not include zero [-.132, -.008].

5   DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study demonstrated the importance of the perceived credibility of the eWOM on the intention to visit a touristic destination. Empirical findings indicate that when perceptions of credibility lead to a negative formulation of the destination image, this reduces intentions to visit the destination. We contribute to existing research by revealing the specific indirect effects of destination image between perceived credibility and visiting intention.

The results also indicate that the effect of eWOM susceptibility plays a moderating role in the relationship between perceived credibility and the intention to visit via the image of the destination. This study develops the research stream of social networks in destination marketing (Christou, 2010; Christou & Nella, 2012; Ayeh, Au & Law, 2013; Veasna *et al.,* 2013; Ponte *et al.*, 2015; Chatzigeorgiou, 2017) and has led to empirical validations that will help enrich the existing literature on the implications of eWOM on social networks.

This paper also draws implications for how a destination can better leverage this tool as a competitive advantage. Tourism practitioners seeking to attract tourists can use the eWOM as a communication technique for product and/or service recommendations.

However, only a few social media managers are currently aware that the value derived from the eWOM could be used to influence users' travel planning decisions (Ayeh *et al.,* 2013; Chatzigeorgiou & Christou, 2020) or to reinforce the image of their destination by creating positive eWOM. Moreover, consumer behaviour on social networks is influenced by interpersonal factors, particularly by shared comments and opinions about destinations, hotels, restaurants etc. An eWOM message perceived as useful reduces information asymmetry, facilitates decision-making and positively influences the intention to visit.

Thus, it is imperative to respect certain rules to ensure the credibility of the information in order to stand out from the competition. One way is to include testimonials from third parties, contact sections for information and quick responses. These results are particularly interesting because they are in accordance with the work of Suh (2017).

These results suggest that tourism industry stakeholders are expected to set up a "Social Media Manager" to monitor their online presence and follow comments and opinions that can influence tourists' behavioural intentions. Moreover, the impact of eWOM messages is judged on the basis of their perceived credibility and consumers consider the credibility of messages to be a problem of reliability, especially in a context where the sender is anonymous, such as in the case of eWOM, which allows companies or brand ambassadors to disseminate false opinions to promote their products (fake news). Given the powerful influence of the eWOM, it should not be ignored or misused, but managed to improve the effectiveness of marketing strategies in hospitality, tourism and travel.

The findings of this research also highlighted the important role of eWOM messages as a real source of information for companies. Indeed, they allow consumers' opinions on their offers to be known and thus improve the quality of services and customer relations in near real time. Travel stories online

(blog, VLOG, eWOM) or offline (books) also have a strong potential to influence opinions because they are the result of personal experiences of the authors (Seraphin, 2015; Seraphin, 2014).

In conclusion, the important criterion for tourists is not only the analysis of the eWOM messages, but also the responses to them by destination managers. The latter are an opportunity to show the effectiveness of the customer relationship but also the attention paid to these tourists.

6   CONCLUSIONS

The current study found that the perceived credibility of eWOM (the comments generated by Internet users or the sharing of tourists' experiences on Facebook) influences the behavioral intentions of Algerian tourists. These results join the results of previous studies (Revilla Hernández et al., 2016; Doosti et al., 2016; Teng et al., 2017; Anubha and Shome, 2020) which have shown that customers' perception of the credibility of reviews significantly influences their behavioral intentions.

This study also indicates that the relationship between the perceived credibility of the eWOM and the intentions to visit a destination is mediated by the usefulness of the eWOM messages and the destination image. The study by Suh (2017) and Ghidouche & Nechoud, (2018) also confirms these results.

This study is subject to a number of limitations, both in terms of the selection of model variables and the methodology used. There are several possible approaches to research. The conceptual model of this study is based on the interactions between the concepts of perceived credibility, perceived usefulness, image of the destination and intention to visit a destination. In addition, the moderator variable of the proposed model, eWOM susceptibility, was treated using a one-dimensional approach. However, it needs to be addressed in a multidimensional way (volume, valence, content) to refine the conceptual model and better assess the effects of the other dimensions.

Second, it would have been more interesting to replicate the study on more diversified samples, with, for example, different professions, young professionals over 30 years of age, because the latter represent an important target for tourism professionals. In addition, this research focused on a sample of Algerian students, while an international comparison would have made it possible to take into account the influence of culture on the tourist's behavioural intention as part of the proposed research model.

Finally, it would still be interesting in the case of this conceptual model to study the role of e-influencers rather than consumers, which is a promising area of research to explore in the future.

REFERENCES

Abubakar, A.M. & Ilkan, M. (2016), Impact of online WOM on destination trust and intention to travel: a medical tourism perspective. Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 5 (3), pp. 192-201.

Anubha, & Shome, S. (2020). Intentions to use travel eWOM: mediating role of Indian urban millennials' attitude.

International Journal of Tourism Cities. https://www.emerald.com/ insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJTC-04-2020-0073/full/html

Ayeh, J.K., Au, N. & Law, R. (2013). Predicting the intention to use consumer-generated media for travel planning. Tourism Management, 39, 132–143.

Baloglu, S. (2000). A path analytic model of visitation intention involving information sources, socio-psychological motivations, and destination image. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 8 (3), pp. 81-90.

Bearden, W.O., Netemeyer, R.G. & Teel, R.J. (1989). Measurement of Consumer Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence. Journal Consumer Research, 15 (4), pp. 473-481.

Brown, J., Broderick, A.J. & Lee, N. (2007). Word of mouth communication within online communities: Conceptualizing the online social network. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 21 (3), pp. 2-20.

Bruce, N. I., Foutz, N.Z. & Kolsarici, C. (2012). Dynamic Effectiveness of Advertising and Word of Mouth in Sequential Distribution of New Products. Journal of Marketing Research, 49 (4), pp. 469-486.

Burnkrant, R.E. & Cousineau, A. (1975). Informational and Normative Social Influence in Buyer Behavior. Journal of Consumer Research, 2 (3), pp. 206-214.

Chatzigeorgiou, C. (2017). Modelling the impact of social media influencers on behavioural intentions of millennials: The case of tourism in rural areas in Greece. Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing, 3(2), 25-29. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1209125

Chatzigeorgiou, C. & Christou, E. (2020). Adoption of social media as distribution channels in tourism marketing: a qualitative analysis of consumers' experiences. Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing, 6(1), 25-32. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3603355

Chen, Y.C., Shang, R.A. & Li, M.J. (2014). The effects of perceived relevance of travel blogs' content on the behavioral intention to visit a tourist destination. Computers in Human Behavior, 30, pp. 787-799.

Chen, Y.F. & Law, R. (2016). A review of research on electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration, 17 (4), pp. 347-372.

Cheung, G.W. & Lau, R.S. (2008). Testing mediation and suppression effects of latent variables: bootstrapping with structural equation models. Organizational Research Methods, 11 (2), pp. 296-325.

Christou, E. (2010). Investigating attitudes towards mobile commerce for travel products. Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal, 58(1), 7-18.

Christou, E. and Nella, A. (2012). Web 2.0 and networks in wine tourism: The case studies of greatwinecapitals.com and wineandhospitalitynetwork.com. In Social Media in Travel, Tourism and Hospitality: Theory, Practice and Cases. M. Sigala, E. Christou and Gretzel, U. (Eds). Surrey, UK: Ashgate Publishing, pp.11-24.

Crompton, J. (1992). Structure of vacation destination choice sets. Annals of Tourism Research, 19 (3), pp. 420-434.

Dale, C. & Robinson, N. (2001). The theming of tourism ed¬ucation: A three-domain approach. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 13 (1), pp. 30-34.

Daowd, A., Hasan, R., Eldabi, T., Rafi-ul-Shan, P. M., Cao, D., & Kasemsarn, N. (2020). Factors affecting eWOM credibility, information adoption and purchase intention on Generation Y: a case from Thailand. Journal of Enterprise Information Management. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JEIM-04-2019-0118/full/html

Davis, F.D. (1989). Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and user acceptance of information technology. MIS Quarterly, 13 (3), pp. 319-340.

Deutsch, M. & Gerard, H.B. (1955). A study of Normative and Informational Social Influence upon Individual Judgment. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 51 (3), pp. 629-636.

Diallo, M.F, Diop-Sall F., Djelassi, S. & Godefroit-Winkel, D. (2018). How Shopping Mall Service Quality Affects Customer Loyalty across Developing Countries: The Moderation of the Cultural Context. Journal of International Marketing, 26 (4), pp. 69-84.

Dissanayake, D.M.M.I. & Malkanthie, A. (2018), The impact of content characteristics of online reviews on travellers' hotel booking intention. Journal of Management and Tourism Research, 1(1), pp. 41-56.

Doosti, S., Jalilvand, M.R., Asadi, A., Khazaei Pool, J. & Mehrani Adl, P. (2016), Analyzing the influence of electronic word of mouth on visit intention: the mediating role of tourists' attitude and city image. International Journal of Tourism Cities, 2 (2), pp. 137-148.

Flanagin, A.J. & Metzger, M.J. (2000). Perceptions of Internet information credibility. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 77 (3), pp. 515-540.

Gefen, D., Karahanna, E. & Straub, D.W. (2003). Trust and Tam in Online Shoping: An Integrated Model. MIS quarterly, 24 (1), pp. 51-90.

Ghidouche., F, Nechoud., L. & Salaoutchi, H. (2018). Analyse des effets de médiation modérée de l'e-wom et de l'utilité perçue sur le choix d'une destination touristique. Cas de Taghit, Les Cahier du MECAS, 16, pp. 126-140.

Goodstein, R.C. (1993). Category-Based Applications and Extensions in Advertising: Motivating More Extensive Ad Processing. Journal of Consumer Research, 20(1), pp. 87-99.

Grewal, D., Gotlieb, J. & Howard, M. (1994). The Moderating Effects of Message Framing and Source Credibility on the Price-perceived Risk Relationsship. Journal of Consumer Research, 21 (1), pp. 145-153.

Hair, J.F., Black, W.C., Babin, B.J. & Anderson, R.E. (2010). Multivariate Data Analysis, 7th Edition, Pearson, New York, NY.

Halkiopoulos, C., Antonopoulou, H., Papadopoulos, D., Giannoukou, I. & Gkintoni, E. (2020). Online reservation systems in e-Business: analyzing decision making in e-Tourism. Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing, 6(1), 9-16. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3603312

Hayes, A.F. (2015). An index and test of linear moderated mediation. Multivariate Behavioral Research, 50 (1), pp. 1-22.

Ismagilova, E., Slade, E., Rana, N.P. & Dwivedi, Y.K. (2020), The effect of characteristics of source credibility on consumer behaviour: a meta-analysis. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 53. doi: 10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.005.

Jalilvand, M.R. & Samiei, N. (2012). The impact of electronic word of mouth on a tourism destination choice: Testing the theory of planned behavior (TPB)". Internet Research: Electronic Networking Applications and Policy, 22 (5), pp. 591-612.

Jalilvand, M.R. & Heidari, A. (2017), Comparing face-to-face and electronic word-of-mouth in destination image formation. Information Technology & People, 30 (4), pp. 710-735.

Kim, H.B., Kim, T. & Shin S.W. (2009). Modeling roles of subjective norms and e-Trust in customers' acceptance of airline B2C e Commerce websites. Tourism Management, 30 (1), pp. 266-277.

Ladhari, R. & Michaud, M. (2015), eWOM effects on hotel booking intentions, attitudes, trust, and website perceptions. International Journal of Hospitality Management, 46, pp. 36-45.

Liu, Z. & Park, S. (2015), What makes a useful online review? Implication for travel product websites. Tourism Management, 47, pp. 140-151.

Matute, J., Polo-Redondo, Y. & Utrillas, A. (2016). The influence of EWOM characteristics on online repurchase intention: Mediating roles of trust and perceived usefulness. Online Information Review, Vol. 40 No. 7, pp. 1090-1110.

Mavragani, E., Nikolaidou, P. & Theodoraki, E. (2019). Traveler segmentation through social media for intercultural marketing purposes: the case of Halkidiki. Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing, 5(1), 15-23. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.2641011

McKnight, D.H. & Kacmar C.J. (2007). Factors and effects of information credibility, in Proceedings of the ninth international conference on electronic commerce, pp. 423-432.

Mehmood, S., Liang, C. & Gu, D. (2018), Heritage image and attitudes toward a heritage site: do they really mediate the relationship between user-generated content and travel intentions toward a heritage site? Sustainability, 10 (12), 4403.

Misirlis, M., Lekakos, G. & Vlachopoulou, M. (2018). Associating Facebook Measurable Activities with Personality Traits: A Fuzzy Sets Approach. Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing, 4(2), pp. 10-16. http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1490360

Moon, J.W. & Kim, Y.G. (2001). Extending the TAM for a World-Wide-Web Context. Information and Management, 38 (4), pp. 217-230.

Mourali, M., Laroche, M. & Pons, F. (2005). Antecedents of consumer relative preference for interpersonal information sources in prepurchase search. Journal of Consumer Behaviour, 4 (5), pp. 307-318.

Nechoud, L. & Ghidouche, F. (2017). Médias sociaux et choix d'une destination touristique en Algérie. Revue des Sciences Commerciales, 24, pp. 15-25.

Nhon, H.T. & Khuong, M.N. (2015), The effects of consumer-generated media on Vietnamese travelers' decision making–mediation analysis of perceived credibility and trust. International Journal of Electronic Commerce Studies, 6 (2), pp. 315-330.

Pandey, A. & Sahu, R. (2020). Modeling the relationship between service quality, destination attachment and eWOM intention in heritage tourism. International Journal of Tourism Cities, 6 (4), pp. 769-784.

Ponte, E.B., Carvajal-Trujillo, E. & Escobar-Rodríguez, T. (2015). Influence of trust and perceived value on the intention to purchase travel online: Integrating the effects of assurance on trust antecedents. Tourism Management, 47, pp. 286–302.

Qiang, Yan., Shuang, Wu., Yiqun, Zhou. & Lin, Zhang. (2018), How differences in eWOM platforms impact consumers' perceptions and decision-making, Journal of Organizational Computing and Electronic Commerce, 28(4), pp. 315-333.

Revilla Hernández, M., Santana Talavera, A. & Parra López, E. (2016). Effects of co-creation in a tourism destination brand image through twitter. Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing, 2(2), 3-10. https://doi.org/10.5281/ zenodo.376341

Ribeiro, M.A., Woosnam, K.M., Pinto, P. & Silva, J.A. (2017). Tourists' Destination Loyalty through Emotional Solidarity with Residents: An Integrative Moderated Mediation Model. Journal of Travel Research, 57 (3), pp. 279-295.

Sekaran, U. & Bougie R. (2016). Research methods for business: A skill building approach, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, UK.

Séraphin, H. (2014). Bonjour blanc a Journey through Haiti, as an original form of travel writing, in Roselé Chim, P. and Raboteur, J. (Ed.), Les Défis du développement du tourisme et l 'intelligence économique des territoires. Villes sur mer et en terre, Publibook, Paris.

Séraphin, H. (2015). Impacts of travel writing on post-conflict and post-disaster destinations: The case of Haiti. Paper presented at

River Tourism: The Pedagogy and Practice of Place Writing. 3rd June. Plymouth University. Plymouth, UK.

Séraphin, H., Butcher, J. & Korstanje, M. (2017). Challenging the negative images of Haiti at a pre-visit stage using Visual Online Learning Materials. Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events, 9 (2), pp. 169-181.

Séraphin, H., Dosquet, F., Ambaye, M. & Capatina, A. (2018). DRA model and VOLM in Tourism. International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Systems, 11 (1), pp. 1-13.

Sigala, M. & Christou, E. (2002). The transformative power of e-commerce on hotel brands. Proceedings of the Annual European Council for Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education (Euro-CHRIE) Conference, Cross-cultural Challenges in the Tourism Industry, Barcelona, Spain.

Sigala, M. & Christou, E. (2006). Investigating the impact of e-customer relationship management on hotels ́website service quality. ECIS 2006 Proceedings. 118. https://aisel.aisnet.org/ecis2006/118

Suh, J.H. (2017). The effects of e-word-of-mouth via social media on destination branding: An empirical investigation on the influences of customer reviews and management responses. Thesis submitted for the degree of doctor of philosophy, Michigan State University, Michigan.

Teng, S., Khong, K.W., Chong, A.Y.-L. & Lin, B. (2017), Examining the impacts of electronic word-ofmouth message on consumers, attitude. Journal of Computer Information Systems, 57(3), pp. 238-251.

Tham, A., Croy, G. & Mair, J. (2013). Social Media in Destination Choice: Distinctive Electronic Word-of-Mouth Dimensions. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 30 (1-2), pp. 144–155.

Veasna, S., Wu, W.Y. & Huang, C.H. (2013). The impact of destination source credibility on destination satisfaction: The mediating effects of destination attachment and destination image. Tourism Management, 36, pp. 511–526.

Venkatesh, V., Morris, M.G., Davis, G.B. & Davis, F.D. (2003). User Acceptance of Information Technology: Toward a Unified View. MIS Quarterly, 27 (3), pp. 425-478.

Verma, D., & Dewani, P. P. (2020). eWOM credibility: a comprehensive framework and literature review. Online Information Review. https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/ 10.1108/OIR-06-2020-0263/full/html

Walters, G. & Mair, J. (2012). The effectiveness of Post-disaster recovery marketing messages. The case of the 2009 Australian bushfires. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 29 (1), pp. 87-103.