Identification of novel antecedents towards generating positive electronic word of mouth: evidence from the hospitality and tourism industry

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Abstract

Purpose – Literature shows that the antecedents of eWoM have received limited attention and the present scales used for measuring eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry are outdated. Therefore, this study aims to construct a new scale for the generation of positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry.

Design/methodology/approach – This study developed a novel scale on eWoM based on the four dimensions of the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology.

Findings – The exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis confirms the factorial structure of the new scale. The exploratory factor analysis shows that “performance expectancy” has the highest impact on the constitution of positive eWoM with 8 items, followed by “social influence” and “facilitation condition” with 5 items each. The factor “effort expectancy” is found to have the lowest impact on the constitution of positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry with 3 items. The confirmatory factor analysis in terms of the construct reliability, average variance extracted and maximum shared variance tests confirmed the model validity of the new scale.

Originality/value – This study ensures measuring eWoM with the latest norms that will assist in prudent policy formulation. These results insights into policymakers from the hospitality and tourism industry for the generation of positive eWoM towards their business which will help them achieve better customer loyalty.

Keywords Electronic word of mouth (eWoM), Hospitality and tourism industry, Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT)

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The constant evolution in information technology (Web 2.0) and the emergence of new communication techniques have contributed significantly to advancements in the
actions and decision-making processes of customers (Suzuki, 2023). Such innovations have led to a change of focus in the marketing strategies and operations management of several service providers (Pelli, 2021). Electronic word of mouth (eWoM) is one of the critical factors affecting the online business preferences of customers (Wang et al., 2023). eWoM is a method of exchange of information that consumers perform online (Setyoningrum et al., 2023). It also contains any text or discussion that can be accessed online by anyone about certain programmes, goods or companies in the form of a negative or positive review (Tobon and García-Madariaga, 2021). The positive eWoM is considered a free form of advertisement for the hospitality and tourism industry (Wang et al., 2023).

The importance of eWoM is twofold:

1. From a consumer perspective, it provides a basis for the collection of vital information that supports the purchase decision process (Liang et al., 2018); and
2. From a business perspective, it serves as a basis for creating value for the firm (Nam et al., 2020).

The intangible nature of services provided by the hospitality and tourism industry makes it difficult to measure the precise quality of the services offered before entering into an actual purchasing process (Yang et al., 2018). This emphasizes the significance of collecting genuine eWoM from customers before making an online purchase (Liu and Park, 2015). This alludes to the importance of eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry more than any other business sector (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2023).

Several studies have measured the impact and constitution of eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry (Abd-Elaziz et al., 2015; Cantallops and Salvi, 2014; Roy et al., 2021; Serra-Cantallops et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2018). However, limited work has been done towards developing scales that lead to the generation of positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. Previous work also oversights the inclusion of constructs from established theories while developing new scales on eWoM. Therefore, this study is motivated to fill that gap by proposing a new scale on the four dimensions of the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT). The UTAUT presented by Venkatesh et al. (2003) remains the most prominent theory in the field of word of mouth (WOM) because it incorporates elements from eight widely used WOM models/theories which are available in the literature. In recent literature, this theory has gained significant attention because of its high predictive power (Assaker et al., 2020). Therefore, this study anticipates that the development of a new scale on the four dimensions of the UTAUT will lead to the generation of positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. This as a result will increase customer loyalty, which as a subset will improve firm performance.

Therefore, the main objectives of this study are to first propose a new eWoM scale based on the antecedents from the UTAUT theory and, secondly, to explore the impact of each antecedent in constituting positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. The achievement of these objectives will insight to policymakers from the hospitality and tourism industry for the generation of positive eWoM towards their business which will help them achieve better customer loyalty. The following section explains the literature review. The remainder of the paper is divided as follows. The next part explains the theoretical foundation, proposition development and the conceptual framework. The following part explains methods and data analysis. The last part of this provides a
discussion of the findings, and it also explains the conclusions and various implications of this study.

2. Literature review

2.1 Antecedents of electronic word of mouth in the hospitality and tourism industry

Based on the previous findings, the antecedents of eWoM may be classified into two main groups i.e. personal factors and service-related specific factors.

2.2 Shortcomings in the previous electronic word of mouth scales

Table 1 summarizes the past literature on the antecedents of eWoM from the hospitality and tourism industry into two main groups. It shows that most of the past research on the subject remained focused on personal factors while evaluating the motivation to generate positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. Literature suggests that the antecedents for generating positive eWoM have received limited attention in the hospitality and tourism industry (Jan et al., 2023; Serra-Cantallops et al., 2020). Furthermore, the literature alludes that the present scales for measuring eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry are outdated (Line et al., 2020). The existing scales on eWoM from the hospitality and tourism industry showed a paucity of compliance with vital social factors such as sustainability, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development goals (SDGs). Due to the propagation of SDGs, customers nowadays are looking for the element of sustainability in any business deal (Stauropoulou et al., 2023). In the same vein, ignoring sustainability in business deals with the hospitality and tourism industry may force the customer towards a negative eWoM generation. Similarly, the previous scales on eWoM also lagged in evaluating the efforts required for engaging in generating a positive eWoM. This is because complexity in the use of any system related to customer engagement may result in negative eWoM generation or no review. Furthermore, limited attention is also paid to the facilitation condition and performance expectancy such as what would be a relative advantage for engaging in an eWoM process? One of the most important shortcomings that persist in the previous eWoM scales is that the dimensions of those scales were not confined based on the theoretical dimensions, such as the four dimensions of the UTAUT theory. That resulted in a self-categorization of different dimensions which lacked theoretical prudence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping factor</th>
<th>Antecedents of eWoM</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Self-centeredness</td>
<td>Dixit et al. (2019), Park et al. (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. The output of the hotel attribute</td>
<td>Yen and Tang (2019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Below expectation services</td>
<td>Dixit et al. (2019), Sparks and Browning (2011)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** This table was created by the authors
Against that background, considering the shortcomings in the previous scales on eWoM, this study is motivated to extend the spheres of the antecedents of eWoM with the help of theoretical support. In that vein, this study is developing a new scale based on the four dimensions of the UTAUT theory. The reason for selecting the UTAUT theory is because of the reason that UTAUT theory was developed by integrating elements from eight popular models that have previously been used in the eWoM literature.

2.3 Theoretical foundation and proposition development
This study is grounded on the UTAUT theory. The theoretical foundation of this study is explained in detail below.

2.3.1 Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology theory. The UTAUT remains the most prominent theory in eWoM literature (Venkatesh et al. (2003). It integrates elements of eight widely used models in WOM literature. This theory has gained substantial attention in the recent literature due to its predictive power (Assaker et al., 2020). This study strives to explore the generation of positive eWoM based on the four dimensions of the UTAUT. The current study is grounded on the UTAUT in terms of measuring eWoM for two main reasons: firstly, the theory was developed by integrating elements from the eight popular models that have previously been used in the eWoM literature. The models are the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1977); the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985); the motivational model (Frey and Jegen, 2001); the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis, 1989); a combined TPB/TAM Venkatesh and Davis (2000); diffusion of innovation theory (Rogers, 2010); the model of personal computer utilization (Sussman and Siegal, 2003); and social cognitive theory (Homans, 1958). The formation of the UTAUT theory is depicted in Figure 1 below.

The second reason for choosing the UTAUT theory is its medium of exchange. The medium of exchange for eWoM is based on technology, and UTAUT accounts for the elements of technology while studying behaviour perspectives. Hence, based on the absolutions of limited scope (limited dimensions such as considering CSR, sustainability and social factors)

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**Figure 1.**
Theoretical foundation of unified theory of acceptance and use of technology

**Source:** This figure was created by the authors
and oversighting technological factors for the generation of positive eWoM makes UTAUT the most suitable theory for generating positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. Hence, in the context of theoretical support, this study generated items for measuring eWoM based on the four dimensions of the UTAUT theory. The four dimensions and their importance in the context of the tourism and hospitality industry are explained below.

2.4 Proposition development

The following section provides a discussion on proposition development based on the four dimensions of the UTAUT theory.

2.4.1 Performance expectancy. Performance expectancy refers to the degree to which users perceive that using a system would help them achieve a job performance benefit (Sewandono et al., 2023). Venkatesh et al. (2003) postulated the following five constructs of performance expectancy: perceived usefulness, extrinsic motivation, job fit, relative advantage and outcome expectations. As oversighted in the previous scales, the “performance expectancy” may serve as an efficient antecedent for triggering positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. Especially the social and economic challenges posed by COVID-19 have changed the purchasing behaviour of customers. From a medical point of view, customers nowadays expect more cleanliness and hygienic products and services from the hospitality and tourism industry. It is because the hospitality and tourism industry allows people from different regions, races and religions to unite at a commonplace, which may result in transmitting diseases inside the territory. It put tremendous pressure on the hospitality and tourism industry to provide cleanliness and hygiene as per the new normal. At the same time, considering the deteriorated financial performance of customers due to the financial recession posted by COVID-19, the customers along with cleanliness and hygiene are also looking for a relative advantage and extrinsic motivation as well. Considering these changes in customers’ purchasing behaviour, the shift of emphasis by the hospitality and tourism industry is also required to meet the performance expectations of customers. Only if the hospitality and tourism industry complies with the performance expectancy level of customers would allow the customer to generate positive eWoM towards the firms. And following the COVID-19 pandemic, the value of positive eWoM will be highly considered by customers. Against that background, the following proposition is developed:

\[ P_1. \] Performance expectancy triggers positive eWoM generation in the hospitality and tourism industry.

2.4.2 Effort expectancy. Effort expectancy refers to the expectation of effort required to use any system, i.e. whether it is simple or complicated. Venkatesh et al. (2003) postulated effort expectancy by combining three constructs from past models, i.e. perceived ease of use, complexity and ease of use. Effort expectancy is the vital element that leads to the generation of positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. The customer would not engage in any product or service that is complex in use and requires more effort. It is because the hospitality and tourism industry is mostly used by tourists, businessmen or for education-related purposes such as interviews and business/research seminars, and those events are mostly scheduled and planned. Hence, the customers would expect fewer efforts to use products or services from the hospitality and tourism industry. Otherwise, the complex nature of the product and services can waste a lot of time which might affect the scheduled events of the customers. Hence, customers would prefer products and services that require less effort and are not complex. Subsequently, it will persuade them for a positive eWoM generation towards their subjected hospitality and tourism industry. Against that background, the following proposition is developed:
P2. Effort expectancy triggers positive eWoM generation in the hospitality and tourism industry.

2.4.3 Social influence. Social influence is defined as the extent to which a person perceives the importance of others believing that he/she should use the new system (Ma and Huo, 2023). Social influence is composed of the following three constructs: image, social factors and subjective norms (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Social influence is one of the most overlooked antecedents in the previous eWoM scales (Martínez et al., 2020). Due to the propagation of the United Nations’ SDGs (UN-SDGs), customers nowadays are looking for the element of sustainability (CSR) in any business deal. Ignoring the element of sustainability in the offered products and services by the hospitality and tourism industry would result in receiving negative eWoM from the customers. The hospitality and tourism industry is therefore strongly engaging in activities related to environmental and social sustainability to reduce negative eWoM about their businesses (González-Rodríguez et al., 2019). The notion of sustainability is serving as a strong marketing tool for the hospitality and tourism industry (Toelkes, 2018). The provision of information on sustainability improves corporate credibility, leading to a positive eWoM generation (Oberseder et al., 2013). The literature notices a significant relationship between sustainability practices and positive eWoM generation in the hospitality and tourism industry in recent years (Ettinger et al., 2018; Guix et al., 2018). Against that background, the following proposition is developed:

P3. Social influence triggers positive eWoM generation in the hospitality and tourism industry.

2.4.4 Facilitation conditions. Facilitation conditions refer to the extent to which a person believes that there is an organizational and technological infrastructure to facilitate the use of a new system (Toh et al., 2023). Venkatesh et al. (2003) formed the concept of facilitation conditions by combining three constructs:

1. perceived behavioural control;
2. facilitating conditions; and
3. compatibility.

Limited prior work is available on facilitation conditions such as the output of hotel attributes (Yen and Tang, 2019) and low-quality services (Dixit et al., 2019; Sparks and Browning, 2011). But, all these antecedents are now outdated. Especially, following the COVID-19 pandemic, the dynamics of facilitation conditions have changed for the hospitality and tourism industry. Customers nowadays demand special needs (such as face masks and hand sanitisers). Even if the firms are providing these facilities, still it is difficult to determine if it is compatible with the customers’ needs or not. Hence, nowadays there is a dire need in the hospitality and tourism industry to update the facilitating conditions considering the new normal. Any firm that fails to do so will attract negative eWoM towards their business, and the negative eWoM will reduce the number of customers, which as a consequence will deteriorate firm performance. And in the context of the worst economic situation, a business firm cannot afford further deterioration in its financial performance. Hence, considering this nicety, facilitation conditions will serve as an efficient antecedent for triggering positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. Against that background, the following proposition is developed:

P4. Facilitation conditions trigger positive eWoM generation in the hospitality and tourism industry.
Figure 2 shows the conceptual framework of this study. This study used the four factors of the UTAUT theory as the novel antecedents towards the generation of positive eWoM.

3. Research methodology and data analysis
This study focuses on exploring the factors that trigger positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. The methodological flow chart of the study for proposing a new scale is presented in Figure 3.

3.1 Step 1: interviews with managers
To propose a new scale for the generation of positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry, this study in the first step conducted interviews with three executives from five-star hotels in UAE.

3.2 Step 2: identification of items
The step identification of items is the process of identifying suitable indicators for measuring any concept. In consonant with the first step, an initial pool of 76 items reflecting four dimensions of the UTAUT theory (performance expectancy, efforts expectancy, social

Source: This figure was created by the authors

Figure 2. Conceptual framework of this study

Figure 3. Methodological flow chart of the study

Source: This figure was created by the authors
influence and facilitation condition) was generated based on previous literature and in-depth interviews with three executives from five-star hotels in UAE. This helped in refining the factors affecting the successful utilization of the research theme across a broader spectrum of the hospitality industry, as well as being beneficial in effectively using the feedback provided by guests via social media. The executives were asked precisely to share their knowledge in responding to the question “What triggers positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry”. Based on the expert opinion, 16 items were eliminated in the first step.

3.3 Step 3: content and face validity
Content validity is the process which aims to measure whether the test is fully representative of what it aims to measure. While the face validity shows whether the content of the test appears to be suitable to its aims? In line with this step, four marketing professors from Abu Dhabi University were asked to review the remaining 60 items for content and face validity. In the first round of reviews, the professors recommended some changes. After complying with the said changes, a revised version of the items was resent to the professors for their final perusal. Consistent with Bearden et al. (1989) and Shamim et al. (2017), only those items retained were recommended by at least three professors out of the total four. In the process, another 15 items were eliminated, and 45 items remained for further refinement and purification.

3.4 Step 4: data collection
Data collection is the process of gathering suitable data to run the analysis, and without valid data, it is impossible to make inferential conclusions. An exploratory survey based on a questionnaire was designed and distributed to 20 (four- and five-star) hotels in the UAE. These hotels are believed to be mindful of customer feedback about their services. A questionnaire using a points Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 anchored with “strongly disagree = 1” and “strongly agree = 5”, respectively, was used for data collection. A total of 200 managers and administrators with at least ten years of experience were targeted to voice their experience in purchasing, strategy and customer service. A total of 191 complete responses were received after a follow-up email, which was assumed to be a large enough sample size (Al-Aomar and Hussain, 2017).

3.5 Step 5: refinement/purification and model development
The first four steps were related to methodology. The remaining two steps are related to data analysis. The data analysis of the study starts with the fifth step. Data refinement and purification is the process of cleaning the data, which involves identifying and removing outliers from the data. The data purification process of this study is explained in detail below.

3.5.1 Exploratory factor analysis. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is a statistical technique in multivariate statistics that is used to find the underlying structure of a large set of variables. The main objective of factor analysis’s EFA technique is to determine the underlying correlations between the variables being assessed. In the first place, the normality of the data was checked using a Normal Q-Q Plot, histogram and Stem-and-leaf plot. During the process, 41 responses marked as outliers were removed from the data collected, and the data were left with 150 responses.

In Table 2, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test was used for finding sampling adequacy. The value of KMO should be above 0.5 for the sample to be adequate (Kaiser and Rice, 1974; Malhotra et al., 2003). The KMO value of this study was found with a value of 0.898. It
alludes that the sample size is adequate for running EFA. Furthermore, the chi-square value from Bartlett’s test of sphericity was found with 9883.412 with a degree of freedom at 990 and its p-value of 0.000. It illuminates that the matrix is not an identity matrix and that the proceeding result of EFA will be reliable. Consistent with Shamim et al. (2017), this study used SPSS 21.0 for running EFA, with principal component analysis extraction method for EFA. The rotation process of EFA followed the Promax rotation technique with the kappa value at 4. The first rotated factor suggested 11 factors with eigenvalues above 1 with multiple cross-loading among various factors. Consistent with Shamim et al. (2017), all the cross-loading across various factors was deleted repeatedly until there was no cross-loading. During the process, 24 items were deleted, and the final pattern matrix was left with 21 items loaded on four factors, i.e. 8 items on Factor 1, 5 items on Factor 2, 5 items on Factor 2 and 3 items on factor 4. Details about the pattern matrix are presented in Table 3 below.

According to Shamim et al. (2017), the item with factor loading (>0.50) is considered satisfactory while proposing a new scale. Against that background, the factor loadings of items across all four dimensions have shown factor loading (>0.50), which confirms high

### Table 2. KMO and Bartlett’s test

| Source: This table was created by the authors |

| Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin measure of sampling adequacy | 0.898 |
| Bartlett’s test of sphericity | Approx. chi-square | 9883.41 |
| | df | 990 |
| | Sig. | 0.000 |

### Table 3. Promax pattern matrix (EFA)

| Source: This table was created by the authors |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>PE1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>PE2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>PE3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PE4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>PE5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>PE6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>PE7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>PE8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>SI1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>SI2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
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</tr>
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<td>13</td>
<td>SI5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>FC1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>FC2</td>
</tr>
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<td>16</td>
<td>FC3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>FC4</td>
</tr>
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<td>18</td>
<td>FC5</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>EE2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>EE3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
commonality. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the above matrix was carried out using smart Amos.

3.6 Confirmatory factor analysis

CFA is used to determine whether measurements of a construct are compatible with a researcher’s understanding of that construct’s (or factor’s) nature. Thus, testing whether the data match a proposed measurement model is the goal of CFA. Figure 4 shows the CFA. Broadly, it shows that the measurement model is composed of four factors. It also shows a latent variable (eWoM) which is constructed of the subjected four factors. Overall, the four factors show a strong correlation with the latent variable (eWoM). It affirms that all four factors lead to positive eWoM generation. The factor loadings of all the items are satisfactory. The factor loading for performance expectancy ranged from 0.74 to 0.95, for social influence from 0.73 to 0.91, for facilitation condition from 0.60 to 0.88 and for effort expectancy from 0.74 to 0.94. Results of CFA based on the standardized coefficient values are also shown in Figure 4.

3.6.1 Model fit. According to Shamim et al. (2017), the maximum likelihood extraction shows an acceptable model fit based on SRMR value = 0.083 and NFI value = 0.9. According to Hu and Bentler (1998), for the model to fully fit, the value of SRMR should be less than 0.10 or 0.08 (Hair et al., 2014). In this case, the value of SRMR is less than 0.08. According to Lohmöller (1989), the NFI values near 1 are considered better. The ideal NFI value is above 0.90, and near the range of that is also considered acceptable. Therefore, based on the model fit measure, the results of this study are reliable. However, to achieve the master validity of the results, additional tests are conducted below.

Table 4 shows the master validity of the subjected four factors. The composite reliability (CR) of all four dimensions is above the threshold of 0.7, i.e. performance expectancy 0.962, social influence 0.894, facilitation condition 0.903 and effort expectancy 0.866. According to

![Figure 4. Second-order confirmatory factor analysis (latent variable: eWoM)](source: This figure was created by the authors)
Shamim et al. (2017), a CR value above 0.7 confirms the reliability of the scale in a model. The average variance extracted (AVE) of all four dimensions is above the threshold of 0.5, i.e. performance expectancy 0.737, social influence 0.629, facilitation condition 0.655 and effort expectancy 0.770. Based on Hair et al. (2006), the AVE values above the threshold of 0.5 confirms discriminant validity in a model. To achieve master validity for a scale, the values for maximum shared variance (MSV) should be less than AVE. In this study, the values of MSV are less than that of AVE; hence, it confirms that the proposed scale is valid. The factor loading, CR and AVE of all the items are presented in Table 5 below.

4. Discussions
In line with the objectives of this study, Table 5 shows details of the new scale. The following section provides discussions on the findings of this study. The concept of eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry is still new (Bore et al., 2017). The intangible nature of products and services provided by the hospitality and tourism industry makes eWoM even more important. This is because the customers cannot experience the quality of products and services until they make an actual purchase. This scenario lets the customers completely bank their purchasing behaviour on the previous eWoM available about the subjected firm. Subsequently, on the other hand, this situation forces the practitioners to understand those factors that can trigger positive eWoM. In the context of the high reliance on eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry and limited studies that illuminate managers about “what triggers positive eWoM”, this study made an extensive contribution by developing a new scale based on the four dimensions of the UTAUT. The steps identified by Churchill (1979) were followed during the process of scale development. The proposed scale includes four dimensions, namely, performance expectancy, social influence, facilitation condition and effort expectancy. The results of this study confirm that multiple factors must be incorporated into the business policies to generate positive eWoM. The role of each factor is explained in detail below.

4.1 Role of performance expectancy in generating positive electronic word of mouth
Results of EFA and subsequent CFA confirm that “performance expectancy” is the leading factor (with 8 items) that the customers consider while engaging in positive eWoM related to the hospitality and tourism industry. The results from the above Table 5 broadly show that cleanliness and hygiene, quality of products and services, timely response to guests, discounts and promotion, among others, are the vital factors that the customers expect from the offered products and services in the hospitality and tourism industry. Therefore, these items can serve as a base for saturating the performance expectation of customers in the process of generating positive eWoM towards the firm. The positive eWoM is considered a
Therefore, the positive eWoM may affect potential customers and their purchasing intentions in the hospitality and tourism industry (Chen and Law, 2016; Ruiz-Equihua et al., 2020). In terms of the findings based on PE2, PE4 and PE8, as shown in Table 5, this study is consistent with the study of Roy et al. (2020), which alluded that timely response and image-based review may contribute to positive eWoM. However, this study further extended the scope of their findings by integrating these items into a new broader dimension of “performance expectancy”. Furthermore, in terms of PE1 (Table 5), this study is in contrast with the study of Serra-Cantallops et al. (2020), which found that service quality does not guarantee a positive eWoM. Based on PE7 (Table 5), the results of this study are consistent with those of Jeong and Jang (2011), who argued that better employee services significantly influence the generation of positive eWoM. Based on the above findings, this study approves the following proposition:

**P1.** Performance expectancy triggers positive eWoM generation in the hospitality and tourism industry.

### 4.2 Role of social influence in generating positive electronic word of mouth

Social influence also inspires customers in the hospitality and tourism industry to positively engage in eWoM. The EFA and its subsequent CFA results show that sustainability initiatives made by the firms, online comparison of reputation and collaboration with local institutions, highlighting convenience and accessibility in the infrastructure, initiatives for sustainability, and recognizing and rewarding the loyalty of visitors significantly contribute to positive eWoM.

### Table 5. Complete model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item code</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor loading</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>AVE</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PE1</td>
<td>Consciousness for quality</td>
<td>0.954</td>
<td>0.962</td>
<td>0.737</td>
<td>Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE2</td>
<td>Timely response to guests</td>
<td>0.941</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE3</td>
<td>Compliance with governmental and cultural norms</td>
<td>0.916</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE4</td>
<td>Instant response to online comments</td>
<td>0.854</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE5</td>
<td>Seasonal discounts and promotions</td>
<td>0.842</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE6</td>
<td>Significance of cleanliness and hygiene</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE7</td>
<td>Training staff for bilingual communications</td>
<td>0.814</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PE8</td>
<td>Posting image-based reviews online</td>
<td>0.738</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI1</td>
<td>Having an online comparison of reputation</td>
<td>0.917</td>
<td>0.894</td>
<td>0.629</td>
<td>Social influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI2</td>
<td>Collaboration with local institutions for appropriate education in hospitality</td>
<td>0.882</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI3</td>
<td>Highlighting convenience and accessibility in the infrastructure</td>
<td>0.719</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI4</td>
<td>Initiatives for sustainability</td>
<td>0.704</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI5</td>
<td>Recognize and reward the loyalty of visitors</td>
<td>0.528</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC1</td>
<td>Target potential markets/customers through unique facilities</td>
<td>0.925</td>
<td>0.903</td>
<td>0.655</td>
<td>Facilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC2</td>
<td>Ways to weigh the commitment and engagement of visitors with special needs</td>
<td>0.835</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FC3</td>
<td>Flexibility for meeting the needs of visitors with special needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>FC4</td>
<td>Promoting attractive content on the website</td>
<td>0.728</td>
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<tr>
<td>FC5</td>
<td>Investing in appropriate modes of advertisement</td>
<td>0.723</td>
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<tr>
<td>EE1</td>
<td>Effectiveness of eWoM over face-to-face interactions</td>
<td>0.946</td>
<td>0.866</td>
<td>0.770</td>
<td>Efforts expectancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE2</td>
<td>The utility of online portals such as TripAdvisor</td>
<td>0.718</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE3</td>
<td>Drive for innovation</td>
<td>0.920</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: This table was created by the authors.
institutions are vital social factors that influence customers towards generating positive eWoM. According to Martinez et al. (2020), no previous research studied the role of CSR in constituting eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. The provision of new items related to CSR by this study (refer to Table 5 “social influence”) will advance the findings of Martinez et al. (2020), by practically providing items to measure the impact of CSR on the constitution of positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. In terms of the impact, the results of the study reflected by “social influence” as shown in Table 5 are consistent with the study of Mohammed and Al-Swidi (2020), which found that CSR positively influences eWoM. Therefore, the practitioners of the hospitality and tourism industry are required to incorporate the above eWoM items as categorized in “social influence” in their business strategy, as it will generate positive eWoM (Chen and Law, 2016; Ruiz-Equihua et al., 2020). Based on the item SI3 (Table 5), the results of this study are consistent with the study of Jeong and Jang (2011), which argued that a superior atmosphere triggers positive eWoM. In terms of SI4 (Table 5), this study is consistent with the study of Gerdt et al. (2019), which argued that sustainability initiatives positively influence the generation of eWoM. Against the above discussion, this study approves the following proposition:

P2. Social influence triggers positive eWoM generation in the hospitality and tourism industry.

4.3 Role facilitation condition in generating positive electronic word of mouth

The facilitation condition also inspires customers to generate positive eWoM towards business firms in the hospitality and tourism industry (Yen and Tang, 2015). Facilitation conditions refer to the extent to which customers believe that there is an organizational and technological infrastructure to facilitate and support them. The EFA and CFA results show that meeting the special needs of customers through ways to weigh commitment and engagement, strong advertisement channels, plans for targeting potential customers and true advertisement about the on-ground facilities are the facilitation conditions that inspire customers to post positive eWoM. In terms of FC3 (Table 5), the results of this study are in line with the study of Sánchez-Fernández et al. (2020), which alluded that customer satisfaction has a negative impact on eWoM generation. Results based on FC2 (Table 5) are consistent with those of Yen and Tang, 2015), which argued that reduction in dissonance results in the generation of positive eWoM. However, results based on FC4 (Table 5) are in contrast with the study of Yen and Tang (2015), which argued that promoting attractive content on a website against offering an economic incentive to the guest does not generate positive eWoM. The results based on FC5 (Table 5) are consistent with the study of Abd-Elaziz et al. (2015), which argued that the credulity of truce sources affects positive eWoM generation. Against the above discussion, this study approves the following proposition:

P3. Facilitation condition triggers positive eWoM generation in the hospitality and tourism industry.

4.4 Role efforts expectancy in generating positive electronic word of mouth

Effort expectancy is also a vital factor that influences the generation of positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. Results of this study show that the utility of online portals such as TripAdvisor; effective face-to-face interaction; and innovation in products and services that require fewer efforts by customers are the factors that lead to the generation of positive eWoM. Results of this study based on EE2 (Table 5) are consistent with the findings of Abd-Elaziz et al. (2015), which argued that the type of website that requires fewer efforts and is user-friendly leads
to the generation of positive eWoM. Based on EE1 (Table 5), the results of this study are consistent with those of Zainal et al. (2017), which argued that honesty triggers positive eWoM. Against the above discussion, this study approves the following proposition:

P4. Effort expectancy triggers positive eWoM generation in the hospitality and tourism industry.

4.5 Conclusion
This article is an extension of the problems related to estimating the generation of positive eWoM with outdated measures (Line et al., 2020). Literature suggests that the antecedents for eWoM have received limited attention in the hospitality and tourism industry (Serra-Cantallops et al., 2020). Against that background, this study proposed a new scale for promoting positive eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. The new scale is based on the four dimensions of the UTAUT theory. The four dimensions are performance expectancy, social influence, facilitation condition and effort expectancy. There are two main rationales for choosing the four dimensions of the UTAT theory in measuring eWoM. Firstly, the theory was developed by integrating elements from the eight famous models that have previously been used in the eWoM literature. Secondly, as the medium of exchange for eWoM is technology-based, the UTAUT theory accounts for the element of technology while studying behaviour perceptions/intentions. Exploratory and CFA confirms the factorial structure of the eWoM constructs used in this study. Results of the study show that the factor “performance expectancy” has the highest impact in constituting positive eWoM with 8 items, followed by “social influence” and “facilitation condition” with 5 items each, While the factor of “effort expectancy” is found to have the lowest impact in constituting positive eWoM with 3 items. This study offers managers new methods and the latest trends involved in measuring eWoM. This will eventually help them towards better policy formulation for a better customer experience. The positive eWoM is a free form of advertisement, and it has the potential of increasing customers, thus impacting the performance of a firm (Chen and Law, 2016). Thus, the positive eWoM has a significant positive impact on the purchasing behaviours and intentions of customers (Chen and Law, 2016; Ruiz-Equihua et al., 2020).

4.6 Theoretical implications/contributions
This study extended the scope of the UTAUT theory in measuring eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. Literature suggests that the antecedents for eWoM have received limited attention in the hospitality and tourism industry (Serra-Cantallops et al., 2020). The present scales for measuring eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry are outdated (Line et al., 2020). The present eWoM scales paid limited attention to the vital emerging factors such as social influence (sustainability – CSR) and revised performance expectancy following the COVID-19 pandemic. It also paid limited attention to the factors related to the degree of effort required for engaging in positive eWoM generation. Similarly, the present eWoM scales are also outdated based on the fact that they overshadowed the new facilitation conditions required by the customers following the COVID-19. Against that background, the development of a new scale on the four dimensions of the UTAUT will allow a theoretical foundation for future studies in developing new scales for measuring the generation of positive eWoM based on the four dimensions of the UTAUT. It on the one side will extend the scope of the UTAUT theory, while on the other hand, it will address the problems related to measuring eWoM with outdated measures in the hospitality and tourism industry.
4.7 Managerial implications
This study offers valuable insights to practitioners and managers in the hospitality and tourism industry. Considering the intangible nature of the products and services offered by the hospitality and tourism industry, the customer’s purchasing process heavily relies on the past eWoM. Hence, those seeking to achieve positive eWoM through managerial prudence will achieve competitive advantage and subsequent better firm performance. However, their methods and measures have been outdated. That left the managers to build their policy regarding eWoM on outdated methods. This study will provide them with a novel and broader framework for micro-policy formulation.

This study alludes that the behaviour of customers while engaging in positive eWoM heavily relies on the element of performance expectancy (Roy et al., 2021). The results of this study illuminate vital elements (refer to Table 5) to the managers that will help them in achieving the expected performance expectancy level of potential customers for generating positive eWoM for their business.

This study alludes that social influence affects a customer’s perception while engaging in eWoM. This behaviour is based on social contract theory. Secondly, due to the consistent efforts of the UN-SDGs, customers nowadays are looking for the element of sustainability in any business deal (Martínez et al., 2020). This situation urges managers to consider the element of sustainable business practices while engaging with customers through their products and services. The provision of the sustainability element ultimately influences customers to write positive eWoM (Mohammed and Al-Swidi, 2020). The positive eWoM helps managers in securing better firm performance (Chen and Law, 2016; Ruiz-Equihua et al., 2020). In the same vein, this study offers prudent elements related to the social influence that would assist managers in achieving positive eWoM.

The facilitation condition is also considered an important antecedent for generating positive eWoM. Facilitation conditions refer to the extent to which customers believe that there is an organizational and technological infrastructure to facilitate and support them. As a policy for managers, this study suggests they provide true information about their products and services to avoid negative eWoM. Furthermore, accommodating customers with special needs may also serve as a business strategy for generating positive eWoM. Previous studies also confirmed that facilitation conditions result in generating positive eWoM (Abd-Elaziz et al., 2015; Sánchez-Fernández et al., 2020; Yen and Tang, 2015). This study provides vital elements (refer to Table 5) to the managers in terms of facilitation conditions for generating positive eWoM.

This study also identified effort expectancy as one of the vital antecedents for the generation of positive eWoM. For policy formulation, this study suggests that managers must bring innovation in their products and services which requires less effort by customers. Reducing the efforts, expectation will lead customers to generate positive eWoM about their experience, thus impacting the organizational performance of a firm (Ye et al., 2011). This study provides vital elements (refer to Table 5) to the managers in terms of effort expectancy towards generating positive eWoM.

4.8 Limitations and future research directions
The scope of this study is limited to proposing a new scale for measuring eWoM in the hospitality and tourism industry. This study anticipates future research in two streams. Firstly, validating and expanding the list of antecedents to broaden the scope of UTAUT in the hospitality and tourism industry. Secondly, linking the suggested measures of eWoM to other performance measures such as servitization, circularity, resilience and value co-creation.
References


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