



An Exploratory Study On The Moderating Effect Of E – Wom Through Green Knowledge On Green Purchase Intention

Dr. Mayank Pant Associate Professor SOM Graphic Era Hill University Dehradun
Road Society Area, Clement Town, Dehradun, Uttarakhand 248002

Mr. Omdeep Gupta Assistant Professor SOM Graphic Era Hill University Dehradun
Road Society Area, Clement Town, Dehradun, Uttarakhand 248002

Dr. Mohit Kumar Ojha Department of Commerce, Graphic Era Deemed to be
University, dr.mohitojha@gmail.com

Abstract

The rationale behind the study was to evaluate the moderating effect of E-WOM of consumers on green purchase intention. Digital penetration increasing at an exponential pace has made E – WOM an important element in social sciences studies. Our idea was to understand its moderating impact as moderation allows a flexible way for researches to understand the effect with greater in-depth analysis. The model was built on an exploratory study done to understand the mediating effect of curiosity on green purchase intention with green knowledge as the independent variable, moderated by E – WOM. Very limited study has been done in this area especially in Uttarakhand state, and this triggered us to dwell deep into this sculpt and understand the underlying phenomena. The study revealed that there is a high correlation between green knowledge and green purchase with curiosity mediating these two constructs, later it was also observed that since these consumers are highly active in social media so any positive or negative experience after using the green product is swiftly expressed via mobile phones among their social groups, this is what E – WOM or (Electronic word of mouth) means. Our study revealed that since majority of consumers are socially active and such consumers are comparatively young between the age group of 16 to 28, so any negative experience reduces the sales drastically as information is transferred very quickly, so marketers need to be very careful while providing information to consumers which must be true and precise, as any false claims will mean marketers might lose their goodwill. The entire analysis was done using sophisticated software's which included IBM SPSS version 20 for factor analysis, IBM AMOS version 18 for carrying our mediation and Daniel S Soper Interaction software version 1.7.2211 for analysing the moderating effect.

Key words: E-WOM, Moderation, Mediation, Green purchase Intention.

Introduction

Green products have become the need of the present and if we want a safe future for our generations such products will be vital for our survival. It has been observed throughout decades that the organizations have been spending huge amounts on establishment and development of brands. Spears and Singh in 2004 found that purchase intention of the consumer is regarded as the major part of the cognitive behaviour of the consumer that greatly affects consumers plan to purchase a particular product. Shukla 2010, Wu et al. in 2011 and Lien et al. in 2015 proposed that there is remarkable relationship between purchase intention and the brand image of a particular commodity. Charo et al. in 2015 found that purchase intention is significantly influenced by the brand image and EWOM. They have a positive impact on it. Jallilvand and Samiei in 2012 and Torlak et al. in 2014 studied the effect of brand image on EWOM as well as the purchase intention. They discovered that brand image plays a sort of moderating effect on EWOM and purchase intention of the consumers. The usefulness of the reviews centered upon the testimonials during making a choice among the various options that are available online has a strong influence on the decision of the buyers. Reviews are the online portals of the quality of goods and helps in making an appropriate decision related to purchase of the right product. Chevalier and Mayzlin in 2006 conducted a research on the sale of goods and the brand name which clearly portrays that the sale of goods entirely depends on the brand name. A globally recognised brand has positive reviews and is always among the top sellers. Dellarocas et al in 2007 determined that the mean arithmetic rating of the reviews can be obtained and is known as valence. The amount of reviews given by the online consumers for a particular product facilitate in forecasting the sale of the goods. Whereas it was discovered that the reviews that are strongly positive have a greater influence on the purchase of the goods. According to Forman et al in 2008 the level of reviewers as revealed by them in the process of evaluating a particular product by posting it review online has a huge impact on the purchase intention of the consumer. It was discovered that the information that is unfavourable is better diagnostically as the occurrence in this case is normally the minimal as compared to the favourable one and laid emphasis on the concept of social judgement. The way a message is viewed by the consumer based on their previous circumstance. The image of brand in the due course of time has a great influence on the purchase intention of the consumers. Green product knowledge is a set of ideas, beliefs as well as impression that a person has of a particular brand. Aaker in 1996 referred that green product knowledge is a set of associations which are usually organised in some way that is meaningful. Whereas Keller in 2009 mentioned that green product knowledge is a set of perceptions about a particular brand which is reflected by the associations of the brand in consumer's memory. After doing a robust LR we propose the following model as shown in figure 1

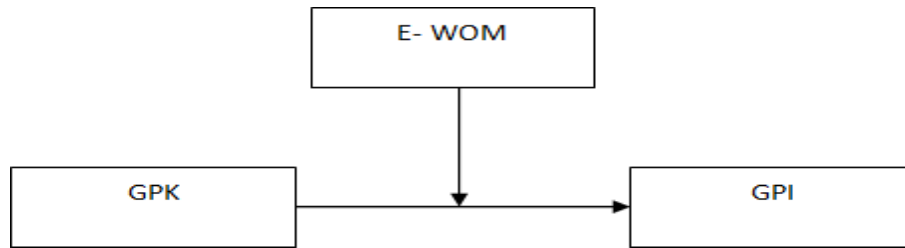


Figure 1 Proposed model

The idea was to know the moderation effect of E-WOM on green purchase intention, so an interaction effect between E- WOM and green product knowledge was done by taking a product of it and calculating its mean and standard deviation and later the standard deviation was added and subtracted from the mean to see three effects, this was achieved through Interaction software developed by Daniel S Sopher.

Review of Literature

Green product knowledge (GPK)

Keller in 1993 define green product knowledge as the perception of consumers for a particular brand and the association of their mind to that particular brand. Such a relation is based on the numerous factors like attitude or emotions associated with a particular brand. Considering all the general views and experiences of the consumers an overall emotional, behavioural as well as cognitive reaction can be assumed to be a consequence of this.

This was proposed by Padgett & Allen, 1997. Moore in 1981 held a completely different view in this regard. According to him image of a particular brand is a psychological approximation to overall satisfaction obtained by the enactment and undertaking of a firm. As per the perception of the image of the image of a firm by a consumer, the firms can easily understand the attitude of the consumers towards their organization by analyzing the expectations of the consumers and the fulfilment of the promises by the firm. Chatterjee 2001, Wang et al. in 2012 and Tsimonis and Dimitriadis in 2014 discovered that the messages through EWOM reduce the uncertainty and risk encountered by the consumers while purchasing a particular commodity. This in turn influences the decision making as well as the purchase intention of the consumer. Chevalier and Mayzlin in 2006 discovered that online reviews and communications have a huge impact on the consumer purchase intention. Berger, Sorensen and Rasmussen in 2010 discovered the relationship between the purchase intention of the consumers based on the online reviews related to a particular brand. Lee, Lee and Shin in the year 2011 found that the products having a positive review are fast selling as compared to others. If the reviews about a particular product are negative then the disadvantages of the products will be highlighted and this will show a decline in the purchase intention for that particular product. This was studies

by Park and Lee in 2008. Lee, Lee & Shin in 2011 found that the negative reviews are highly influential and have a greater impact on the purchase intention. Thus EWOM helps the consumers in their buying decisions related to a particular commodity.

Green product intention (GPI)

Liu and Park in 2015 proposed that EWOM reduces the risk factors that consumers can undergo to a considerable amount. Similar theory was proposed by Bronner and de Hoog in 2011 as well as Zhang et al in 2010. In 2013 Buying behaviour of the majority rely significantly on the views of the consumers that are available online. This is considered as the second most dependable source after of evidence after getting a feedback about the product from friends. The views of the consumers that are available online influence the choices of the buyers to a significant level. This view was proposed by Filieri & McLeay in 2014, Smith, Menon, & Sivakumar in 2005 and Senecal & Nantel in 2004. The sale of various types of products is also influenced by such online views of the consumers. This has been stated by Cui, Lui, & Guo in 2012, Zhu & Zhang in 2010, Ye, Law, & Gu in 2009, Dellarocas, Zhang, & Awad in 2007, Liu in 2006 and Godes & Mayzlin in 2004. The online consumer review given by the consumers has a huge impact on the decision making ability of the other consumers. They are greatly influenced by the reviews given by the consumers about a particular product and this in turn influences the sale of a particular brand. Aaker in 1996 and Keller in 2003 proposed that the image possessed by a brand is a form of crucial competitive advantage to a particular product by creating a name of the brand popular in the market. This in turn creates a significant value for an organization. As an outcome of this competitive edge the consumers develop expectations and feelings towards certain brands as they become accustomed towards such brands. Aaker in 1996 and Keller in 1993 discovered that the main motive of branding is to create a feeling of trust, confidence durability, strength and security in favour of a particular brand. This in turn decreases the uncertainty and provides information which facilitates the consumer in gearing up their decision making process. Erdem et al in the year 2002 and Keller in 2003 discovered that it is possible to establish a positive brand image by making a connection between the strong as well as a unique brand with memories of the consumers about the brand and this should be well Torlak et al. in 2014 studied the effect of EWOM on sale of mobile phones. It was discovered that EWOM has a great impact on the brand image which in turn affects the purchase intention of the consumers. Lien et al. 2015 discovered that the image possessed by a particular brand is the main factor influencing the purchase intention of the consumer. Jansen et al. in 2009 and Hanna et al. in 2011 proposed that social media is a common platform for expressions of consumers and it is through this platform that the consumers are actively involved in creating and enhancing the meaning of various brands considering them as shared objects.

Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM)

Park et al. in 2007 stated that the consumers are greatly influenced by consumer evaluations as well as the high volume of the comments of the consumers who have

already purchased a particular product. The research conducted by Luo and Zhong in 2015 on the impact of social relations and interactions on EWOM clearly shows that the strength of the social bonds have a great impact on the EWOM. They also discovered that the determination of choices as well as the attitude depends on the EWOM. Forman et al. in 2008 stated that consumers are highly influenced by the reviews of the consumers that have a disclosed name, photograph as well as an online recognition of a particular community that are available online. The existing literatures in this regards have emphasised on the vitality of the arithmetic assessments based on the reviews of the consumers that are given by the people who are in a phase of reading and analysing their impact towards the buying decision and this theory was proposed by Poston & Speier in 2005. Lee & Lee in 2009 conducted a study on the EWOM rating and concluded that with an increase in the EWOM rate the effect of quality on the purchase intention of the consumer decreases and in turn increases in case of preference goods. He also found that with an increase in the EWOM variance the effect of quality on the consumer purchase intention shows an increase in case of quality goods and there is no change in this for the preference goods. Park & Lee in 2009 studied the message valence effect and found that negative EWOM has a greater effect as compared to the positive EWOM. They also discovered that the effect of negative EWOM on the EWOM is greater in case of experience goods as compared to the search goods. Park & Kim in 2008 studied the purchase intention based on the type of messages which is considered to be stronger in case of experts as compared to the novices whereas the purchase intention based on the number of reviews is stronger for novices as compared to the experts. Park & Lee in 2008 discovered that the low involvement consumers primarily focussed on the perceived popularity of the products whereas the high involvement consumers focussed mainly on the perceived type of messages. Park, Lee & Han in 2007 discovered that the purchase intention is positively influenced by the quality of reviews. The purchase intention of the consumer increases with the increase in the number of reviews. The review quantity has a greater impact on the low involvement consumers as compared to the review quality. Whereas the high involvement consumers are affected by the review quality as compared to the review quantity. Sher & Lee in 2009 found that the intention of purchase in case of consumers with high level of scepticism is not influenced by the quality of the product and also on the online reviews of the products but in turn are influenced more by the quantity of the product as compared to the quality of the online reviews related to the product in case of the consumers with low level of scepticism. Xia & Bechwati in the year 2008 studied the effect of message valence on the purchase intention of the consumers. They discovered that the cognitive personalization based on the purchase intention is moderated by the message valence of the product.

Research Methodology

The entire analysis was done using IBM SPSS and IBM AMOS software, in all we had 29 questions in our questionnaire out of which 19 were retained and the rest 10 were omitted as their loadings were below 0.70, also the sample size was 205 and out of which only 189 were used and the rest 16 were omitted as there were few outliers and some

**2444 | Dr. Mayank Pant An Exploratory Study On The Moderating Effect Of
E – Wom Through Green Knowledge On Green Purchase Intention**

had issues related to multivariate outliers as indicated by mahalanobis distance.

The 19 questions produced 3 factors or constructs in AMOS terminology, the first factor had 4 items that loaded on to it followed by second factor that had 3 items and the third factor had

5 items loaded onto it. An EFA was first run which had varimax rotation and for a robust loading all items that had loading below 0.70 were omitted.

The next check was for internal consistency and Cronbach's alpha was employed, all for constructs demonstrated an alpha of above .70 indicating robust internal consistency. Later the entire model was loaded on AMOS for Confirmatory Factor Analysis CFA and the measurement model was tested for CMIN/df followed by goodness of fit and badness of fit indicators were tested. It was found that our CMIN/df was 1.89 and RMSEA was 0.32, GFI was 0.98 and TLI was 0.94, all this indicated that our model was a good fitting model basically a CMIN/df lower than 0.5 is an indication that there is very less discrepancy between our model and the saturated model which the computer thinks as the best. Since interaction is a multiple regression technique we also conducted a confirmatory factor analysis shown in figure 2 with all factor loading and their r^2 and correlations.

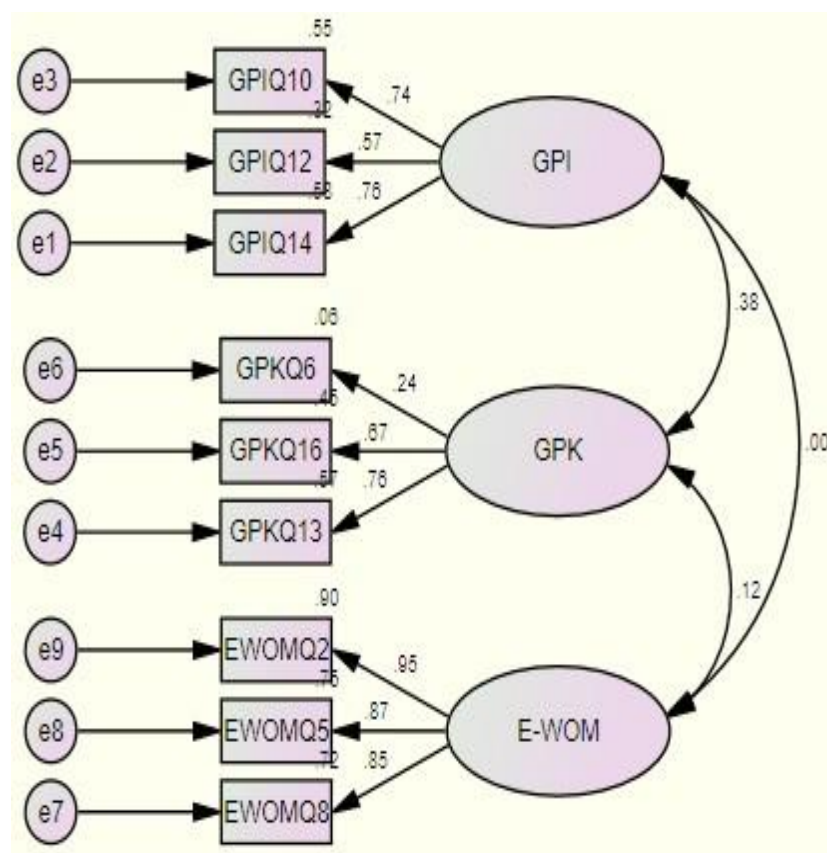


Figure 2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The model was a good fitting model, table 1 shows the average variance extracted along

with Cronbach's alpha, maximum and average shared variance and composite reliability.

Sno	Constructs	Number Of Items Converging	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	CR	MSV	ASV
1	GPI	4	0.78	0.59	0.79	0.48	0.32
2	GPK	3	0.74	0.62	0.72	0.43	0.31
3	EWOM	5	0.89	0.64	0.73	0.42	0.35

Table 1 Convergent and Discriminate validity

The above checks are done to verify that all our three constructs meet the validity and reliability issues and the rule is that AVE must be above 0.50 and CR above 0.70 and AVE must be less than CR and MSV and ASV both must be lower than AVE, if all this rule are met we can confidently say that there are no validity issues in our model.

	GPI	GPK	EWOM
GPI	1		
GPK	0.39	1	
EWOM	0.49	0.47	1

Table 2 Correlation matrix

Before going any further it is of utmost importance to know the kind of relationship with our variables both in terms of strength and direction. The most trusted and reliable method is person correlation which is shown in table 2, all constructs have positive correlation and the highest correlation is between GPI and EWOM and the least 0.39 which mean 39% between GPI and GPK.

	GPI	GPK	EWOM
GPI	0.56		
GPK	0.34	0.59	
EWOM	0.41	0.32	0.53

Table 3 Square root of AVE

The above table 3 shows the square root of AVE highlighted in yellow with regular person's moment correlation and the thumb rule is that the highlighted value must be greater than its non highlighted value both horizontally and vertically. And if we observe then this criteria is met, this indicates that all our three constructs are able to reflect three different feelings and the items loaded in them have no cross loading issues. Figure 3 is

2446 | Dr. Mayank Pant An Exploratory Study On The Moderating Effect Of E - WomThrough Green Knowledge On Green Purchase Intention

the interaction effect done through interaction software having E-WOM as our moderator variable with GPK as independent variable on x axis and GPI as dependent variable in y axis.

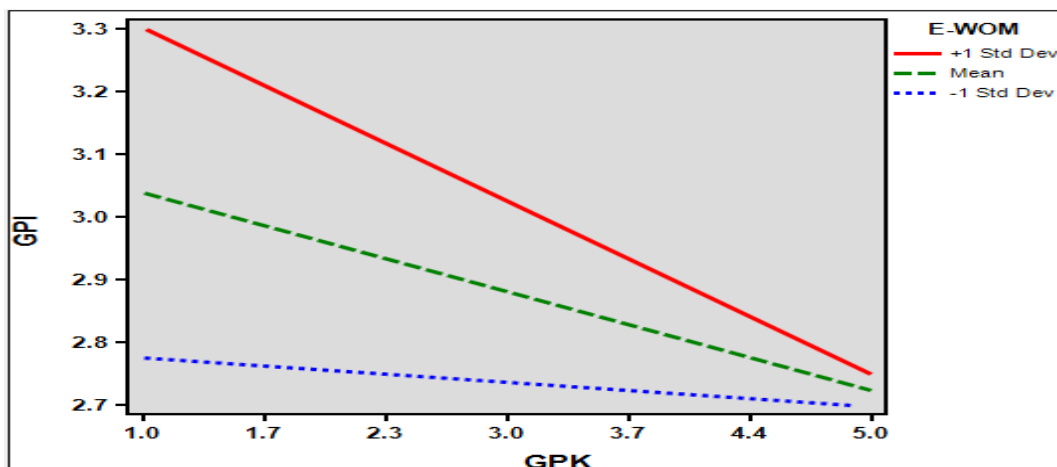


Figure 3 interaction effect of E-WOM

The result shows that as green knowledge increase and there is a negative E – WOM it will lead to lower green purchase intention and the red line is one standard deviation above its mean which is green dotted line, it shows that consumer who have been exposed to higher negative WOM will lower their purchase at a higher rate than consumers who have less exposure indicated by blue dotted line that is one standard deviation below minus its mean.

Findings and conclusion

Our findings were consistent with the findings of Gardner and Levy in 1995 that also tested positive on the fact that if there is higher negative WOM it will lead to declining intention to purchase stated that the sustainability of a brand in the market for a long run depends on the firm’s image on the targeted consumers. Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis in 1986 also had similar findings and provided their view that the image possessed by a brand is a tactical method that actually supports the complete exercise of proper brand management. Schiffman and Kanuk in 1986 emphasised that the firms should be completely focussed on creating such relations among the consumers that are optimistic and auspicious for a brand to have a positive image. From the above findings we can confidently say that marketers. The work of Aaker in 1991 and Keller in 1993 laid emphasis on the behaviour of the customer based brand equity in two ways, i.e. one is based on the awareness of the brand and the other is image of the brand. Green product knowledge mainly deals with the advantages and traits related to a particular brand that makes it different from other brands. This in turn gives a competitive advantage to that particular brand. This theory was proposed by Webster & Keller 2003. Traits are generally the form of expressive factors which define a brand appropriately. The dealing

that an organization has with the customer helps in adding inputs the image of a particular brand. Generally the brands provide an assurance to the consumers related to the quality, performance delivery consistency related to every brand. This was proposed by Webster & Keller 2003.

Managerial implication

Marketers can take a lot more decisive action from the research. As our research indicated that marketers that manufactures green products need to give a lot of importance to electronic word of mouth (E- WOM) as any positive or negative information spread rapidly, as we are no more living in an era where information is disseminated at snail's pace, with the advent of smart phone and people highly active on social media will pass on any negative or positive perception about products to their groups, and the effect of social media is very powerful, so marketers must carefully observe reaction of their existing and prospective consumers, and ensure to take corrective action where ever needed. Aaker in 1996 and Keller in 1993 conducted a study according to which the primary objective for a firm's brand is to provide a trustful outlook, assurance, safety, recognition, dependability and also sustainability to the consumers. Thus these studies portray that the green product knowledge significantly influences the relationship between the EWOM and purchase intention. Similar theory with regards to analysis of sale of goods and searching cost by Todd & Benbasat in 1992. According to researchers a strong emphasis should be laid on quantitative as well as qualitative analysis of the factors for a better illustration of the reviews that are available online. This view was proposed by Mudambi & Schuff in 2010 and Van der Heijden in 2003.

Limitations and future scope

The above study was not funded by any organisation nor with any support of higher education university hence with limited resources the findings can be not fully generalised, also with time constrains our entire focus sometimes could be deferred. Since the respondents were from three cities of Uttarakhand, so it leaves scope for other researches to explore more cities using our model can give better results.

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