ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov760

Digital Word-of-Mouth and Consumer Satisfaction in Online Travel Booking: Evidence from a Survey of Online Ticket Bookers in India

Arya Upadhyay[1]; Dr. Rajlaxmi Pujar[2]

[1]Student, School of Business MBA, Indira University, Pune, India
[2]Associate Professor, School of Business MBA, Indira University, Pune, India

Publication Date: 2026/11/21

Abstract: Most people do not book a train, bus or flight ticket without researching for information. They check what others have said first, in reviews, in comments and in posts from friends. This paper asks one question: how is digital word-of-mouth (eWOM) related to how satisfied travellers are with their online bookings? A short online questionnaire was shared with people who had booked at least one air, rail or bus ticket online in the previous 12 months, and 224 usable responses were collected in 2026. The findings revealed that people who said social media strongly influences them were about twice as likely to have changed a real booking decision because of it. Second, those who valued eWOM more also tended to report somewhat higher satisfaction, although the link was small. Third, satisfaction was generally high and was about the same whatever factor drove the final decision, and among people who had used AI booking tools, how helpful they found AI showed no clear link with satisfaction. The survey shows association, not cause and effect, convenience sampling was deployed so the results are indicative. For travel platforms, the findings suggest that making honest reviews and peer recommendations easy to find is a sensible first step before investing heavily in automated features.

Keywords: *Digital Word-of-Mouth; eWOM; Consumer Satisfaction; Online Travel Booking; Online Reviews; Social Media; India.*

How to Cite: Arya Upadhyay; Dr. Rajlaxmi Pujar (2026) Digital Word-of-Mouth and Consumer Satisfaction in Online Travel Booking: Evidence from a Survey of Online Ticket Bookers in India. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 11(11), 1016-1023. https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov760

I. INTRODUCTION

Booking a ticket online looks simple, but the decision usually starts well before the payment page. A traveller comparing two bus operators opens the reviews. Someone planning a family trip may scroll through a cousin's holiday photos or ask a group chat which airline to avoid. Travel cannot be tried before it is bought, so other people's accounts fill the gap. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) described this as positive or negative statements about a product or company made available to many people over the internet. This paper calls it digital word-of-mouth, or eWOM.

Research has shown that eWOM shapes opinions and buying intentions (Cheung & Thadani, 2012; Litvin et al., 2008). Far less is known about what comes afterwards. If a traveller leans heavily on eWOM when choosing, is that traveller more satisfied with the booking? The question matters because satisfied customers come back and recommend the service, while a platform that wins buyers with glowing reviews but leaves them disappointed will not keep them long.

India is a useful setting. Booking rail, bus and air tickets online is routine for many urban travellers, and the market includes a state-run railway portal, large travel agencies and small start-ups. Yet most published eWOM research in tourism deals with hotels and holiday destinations and stops at attitudes and intentions. Studies of satisfaction with everyday ticket booking are harder to find.

The paper therefore keeps to one central question: how is digital word-of-mouth related to consumer satisfaction among people who book travel tickets online? The evidence is a survey of 224 online ticket bookers, collected during a two-month internship at ticketbookkaro.com, a travel-technology start-up in Indore. The survey also asked about AI booking tools, which are used here only as a comparison. Section 2 reviews earlier work, Sections 3 and 4 set out the objectives and hypotheses, Section 5 explains the method, and Sections 6 to 10 present the results, discussion, implications, limitations and conclusion.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov760

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

➢ *eWOM and Travel Decisions*

Classic models of consumer behaviour describe buyers moving through need recognition, information search, comparison of options, purchase and evaluation after the purchase (Engel et al., 1968). eWOM enters mainly at the search and comparison stages. Cheung and Thadani (2012) reviewed the field and concluded that eWOM affects attitudes, trust and intention to buy, and Litvin et al. (2008) made the same case for hospitality and tourism. Verma and Yadav (2021) later mapped how the research has grown. In travel settings, Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) found that eWOM shaped tourists' image of a destination and their intention to visit, and Filieri and McLeay (2014) found that travellers adopt information from accommodation reviews mainly when it is accurate and relevant. A broad analysis of many studies by Ismagilova et al. (2020) points to message quality and trust, rather than sheer volume, as the stronger influences on intention to buy.

➢ *Whom Readers Believe*

Not all word-of-mouth carries equal weight. Ayeh et al. (2013) found that travellers' attitudes towards user-generated content depended on how trustworthy and knowledgeable they judged its authors to be. Filieri et al. (2015) studied why travellers trust a review platform such as TripAdvisor and how that trust leads them to follow and share its advice, and Erkan and Evans (2016) reported that information quality and credibility explained how strongly social media posts influenced buying intentions. For ticketing, this suggests that reviews and posts from people the reader knows should count for more than content from the brand itself.

➢ *Satisfaction as the Outcome*

In Oliver's (1980) well-known model, people form expectations before buying, compare what they receive with those expectations, and feel satisfied when the experience meets or beats them. Bhattacherjee (2001) applied the same idea to online services. This offers a possible route from eWOM to satisfaction: Mauri and Minazzi (2013) found that web reviews shape what hotel guests expect, and realistic expectations make disappointment less likely. This is a theoretical possibility only, because the present survey did not measure expectations.

➢ *Evidence from India and the AI Comparison*

Tariyal et al. (2022) surveyed 338 Indian tourists and found that the usefulness of eWOM media was strongly tied to online booking decisions for tourist destinations. Their study concerns destinations and booking decisions, not ticketing or satisfaction. On AI, Zhu et al. (2023) found among customers of Chinese online travel agencies that chatbot quality raised trust and purchase intention, with the effect depending on how familiar customers were with the product. Familiarity matters for the comparison later in this paper, because many Indian bookers have little hands-on experience of AI booking tools.

➢ *Research Gap*

Three gaps emerge from the sources reviewed. Most studies end at attitude or intention and few treat post-booking satisfaction as the outcome. The evidence leans towards hotels and destinations rather than rail, bus and air tickets. And eWOM and AI tools are usually studied separately. This paper adds a small, transparent piece of evidence on each point: it uses satisfaction as the outcome, it focuses on transport ticket bookers in India, and it measures social media influence, eWOM and AI helpfulness in one survey. It is a modest contribution, since the sample is not random and each idea is measured by a single question.

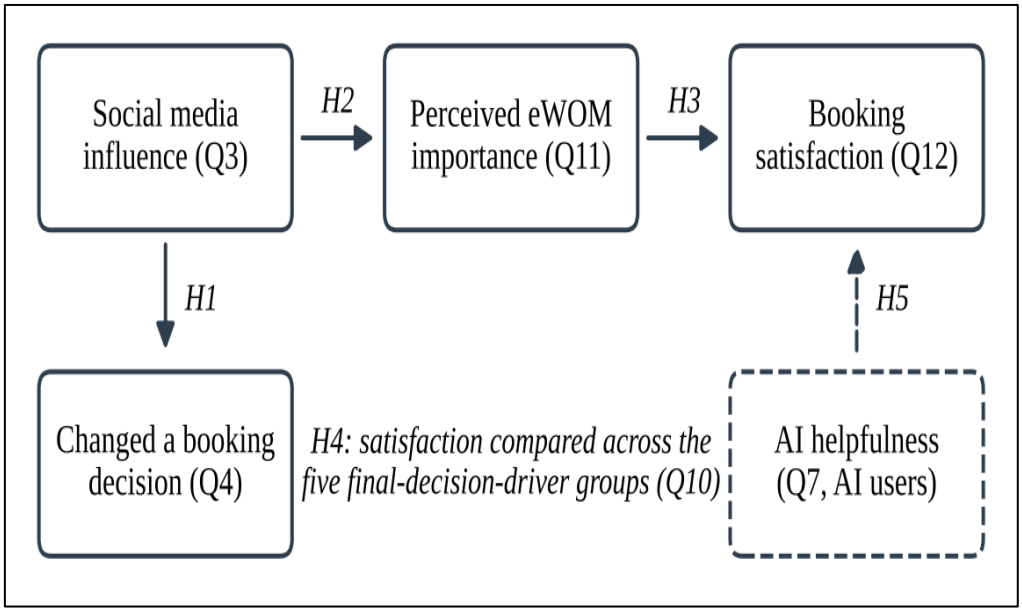


Fig 1 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Tested

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov760

- *Note.* Solid arrows show the main expected links. Dashed elements are the AI comparison and the comparison of satisfaction across decision-driver groups. Arrows show expected association, not proven cause and effect.

➢ *Research Objectives*

- To describe how important online travel bookers consider digital word-of-mouth to be, and which forms they find most influential.
- To examine whether reliance on social media is linked with the importance given to eWOM and with actual changes in booking decisions.
- To test whether the importance of eWOM is linked with satisfaction with the booking experience.
- To compare satisfaction across people whose final decision rests on different factors, and to compare the eWOM–satisfaction link with the AI–satisfaction link.

➢ *Research Questions and Hypotheses*

- *Central Research Question*

How is digital word-of-mouth related to consumer satisfaction in online travel booking?

✓ RQ1. How important is digital word-of-mouth to online ticket bookers, and which type matters most?
✓ RQ2. Is stronger social media influence linked with greater reliance on eWOM and with real changes in booking decisions?
✓ RQ3. Is greater importance given to eWOM linked with higher booking satisfaction?
✓ RQ4. Does satisfaction differ by the main factor behind the final decision, and is AI helpfulness linked with satisfaction in the way eWOM is?

- RQ1 is answered by describing the results. RQ2 to RQ4 are examined through five hypotheses.

✓ H1. People who report stronger social media influence are more likely to have changed a booking decision because of social media.
✓ H2. People who report stronger social media influence give more importance to eWOM.
✓ H3. People who give more importance to eWOM report higher booking satisfaction.
✓ H4. Satisfaction differs between groups defined by the main factor behind the final booking decision.
✓ H5. Among people who have used AI tools, those who find AI more helpful report higher booking satisfaction.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

➢ *Design and Questionnaire*

The study is a one-time survey. Data were collected once, from different people, during the 2026 internship period, so it can show whether things go together but not which causes which. A questionnaire was chosen because the objectives call for comparing views across many people. It had twelve short questions in four sections: respondent profile, social media and eWOM, AI tools, and final decision driver, eWOM importance and satisfaction. Most questions asked respondents to rate something on a five-point scale (1 is the lowest, 5 the highest), and a few asked them to pick one option. The questions were drawn from the ideas in the literature and tried out informally on a small group of peers outside the final sample, which led to one broad question on AI being split into separate questions on use, helpfulness and trust. Each idea is measured by a single question, which keeps the form short (three to four minutes) but means that reliability could not be checked in the usual way. The full questionnaire is in Appendix A.

➢ *Sample and Data Collection*

The target group was adults in India who had booked at least one air, rail or bus ticket online in the previous 12 months. As no list of such people exists, a convenience and snowball approach was used: the online form was shared through university, professional and social networks and through contacts of ticketbookkaro.com, and respondents were asked to pass it on. Recruitment was concentrated in Indore and central India. About 240 people received the form and 224 usable responses remained, roughly 93%. Responses were removed if several answers were blank, if the answers followed a straight-line pattern, if a check question was failed, or if the person had not booked a ticket online in the past year. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and respondents were told the data were for academic use.

One feature of the sample should be stated plainly: only 13 of the 224 respondents (5.8%) named ticketbookkaro.com as the platform they use most. The survey describes online ticket bookers in general, not the customers of one company.

➢ *Analysis*

Responses were analysed in Python. The analysis is deliberately simple: percentages and average ratings describe each question, groups were compared using standard statistical tests, and a result is described as a real pattern only when it is unlikely to be due to chance. Where two ratings tend to rise and fall together, the paper calls this a link, and it never claims that one causes the other. The test results are listed in Appendix B for readers who want them.

A. Data Analysis and Interpretation

➢ *Who Responded*

The sample is young. Two in five respondents (40.2%) were aged 18–24 and 29.0% were aged 25–34, so about 69% were under 35, while only eight people (3.6%) were 55 or older (Table 1). MakeMyTrip (25.9%) and IRCTC (20.5%) were the platforms used most, followed by airline websites (13.8%), Yatra or Cleartrip (13.4%), Ixigo (8.5%), redBus (8.0%) and ticketbookkaro.com (5.8%).

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov760

Table 1 Age Profile of Respondents (N = 224)

Age group	Respondents	%
18–24	90	40.2
25–34	65	29.0
35–44	37	16.5
45–54	24	10.7
55 and above	8	3.6

- *Note.* Percentages are calculated from respondent counts.

➢ *How Important is eWOM, and Which Kind? (RQ1)*

Most respondents take social media and eWOM seriously. Almost three in four (72.3%) rated social media's influence on their booking decision as high, and 58.9% said they had actually changed a booking decision because of something they saw there. More than half (57.1%) rated digital word-of-mouth as important or extremely important, and nobody called it "not important at all" (Table 2, Figure 2).

Table 2 Summary of Ratings on the Five-Point Questions (N = 224)

Question	Average rating (out of 5)	Rated high (4 or 5), %
Influence of social media on booking	3.89	72.3
Importance of digital word-of-mouth	3.62	57.1
Satisfaction with the booking experience	3.88	72.3
Helpfulness of AI recommendations	3.08	36.6
Trust in AI as much as a human agent	2.90	28.6

- *Note.* 1 = lowest rating, 5 = highest. The two AI questions were answered by all respondents, including those who had not used AI tools.

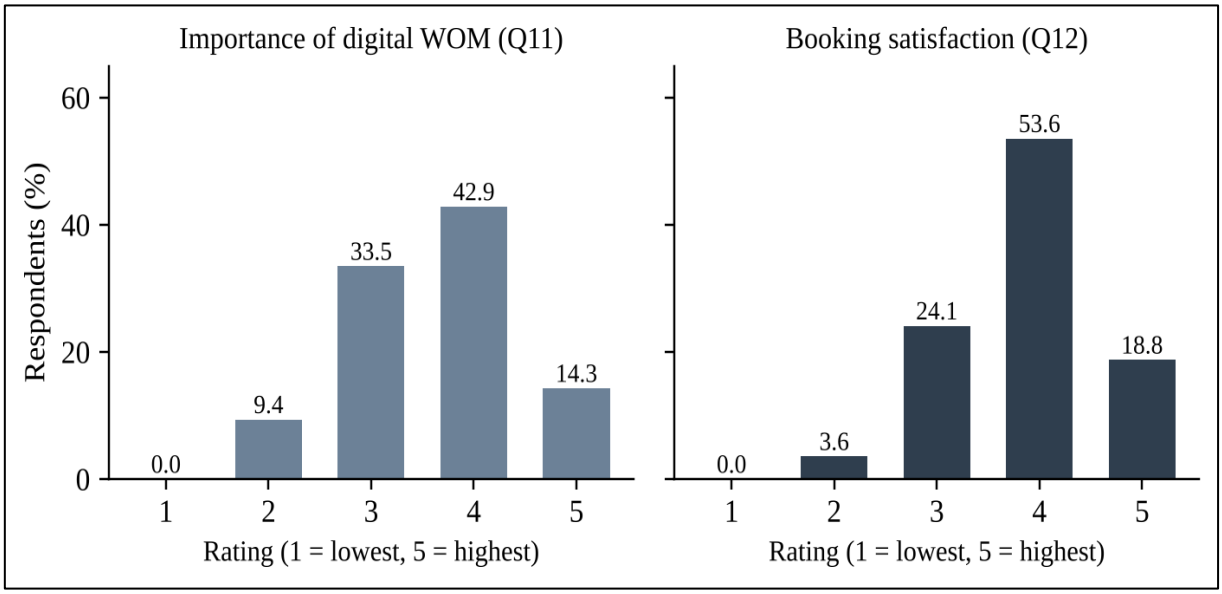


Fig 2 How Respondents Rated eWOM Importance and Booking Satisfaction

- *Note.* N = 224. Bars show the percentage of respondents giving each rating. Nobody gave a rating of 1 on either question.

The kind of eWOM people rely on is telling (Figure 3a). Online reviews and star ratings (34.8%) and posts from friends and family (31.7%) together account for two-thirds of respondents. Influencer posts came third (16.5%), comments and Q&A fourth (10.3%), and the brand's own posts last (6.7%). People trust other travellers and people they know far more than the company or an influencer.

Asked for the single biggest factor behind the final decision (Figure 3b), 32.1% named price and offers. Reviews and ratings (26.8%) and social media content (17.9%) together came to 44.6%, which is more than price alone. Brand trust or past experience was named by 16.5% and AI recommendations by 6.7%. Because this adds two categories together, it is best read as a sign that digital influence as a whole rivals price, not that it beats it.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov760

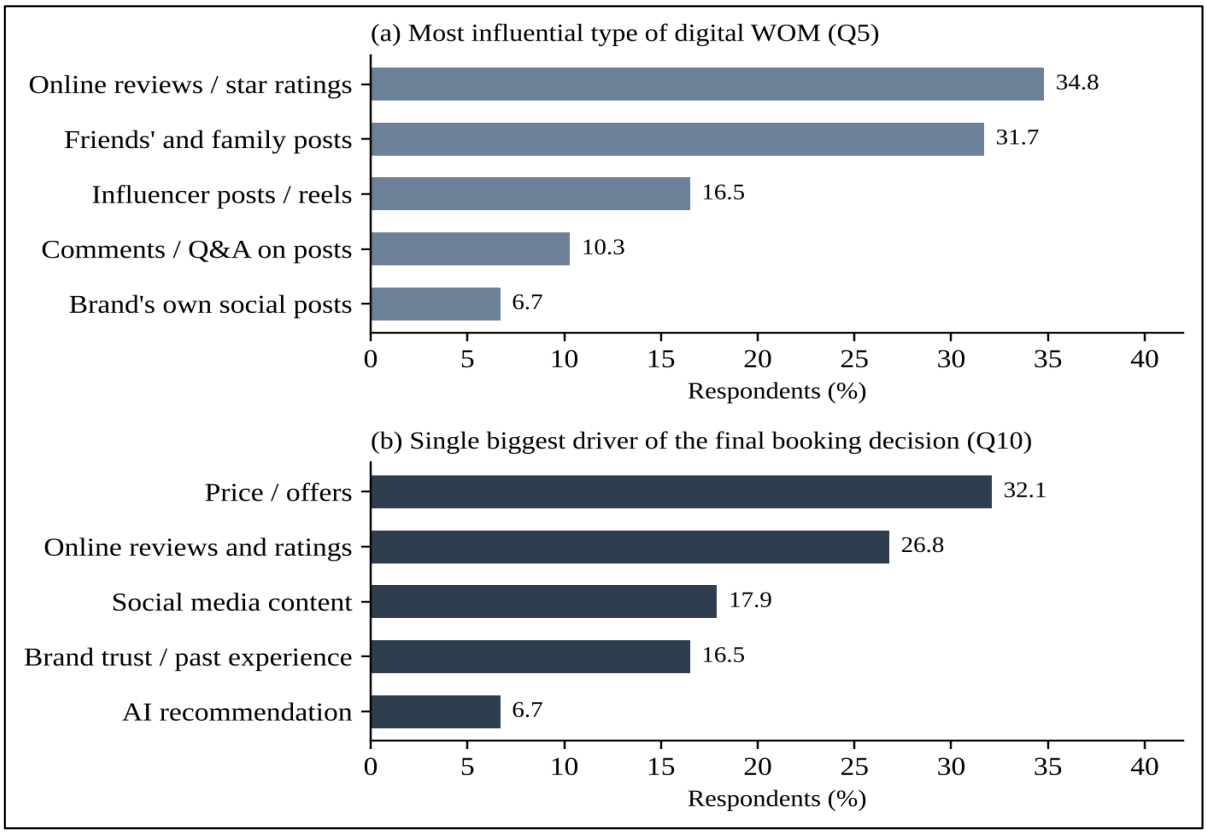


Fig 3 Most Influential Type of eWOM and Main Driver of the Final Booking Decision

- *Note.* N = 224 for both panels. Percentages are calculated from respondent counts.

➢ *Satisfaction and what it is Linked with (RQ2 to RQ4)*

Satisfaction was high. Almost three in four respondents (72.3%) rated their digitally influenced booking experience as satisfying, 24.1% were neutral, and only 3.6% were somewhat dissatisfied. Because so many answers sit in the upper-middle of the scale, there is not much variation for anything else to explain, which should be kept in mind below. Table 3 summarises each hypothesis in plain terms.

- H1 is supported. Among people who said social media influences them only a little, 33.3% had changed a booking decision because of it. Among those who said it influences them strongly, the share was 65.4%. This gap is too large to be put down to chance.
- H2 is supported. People who rated social media influence higher also tended to give more importance to eWOM, though the link was modest.
- H3 is supported, but the link is small. People who valued eWOM more tended to be somewhat more satisfied, but eWOM importance explains only a small part of why satisfaction differs from person to person.
- H4 is not supported. Satisfaction was practically the same whether people chose mainly on price, reviews, social media, brand trust or AI recommendations.
- H5 is not supported. Among the 104 respondents who had used AI tools, those who found AI more helpful were slightly more satisfied, but the difference was too weak to count as a clear pattern. With only 104 people, this cannot rule out a small real link, so it should be read as no clear evidence, not as proof of no effect.

Table 3 Summary of Findings for Each Hypothesis

	What was compared	**What the survey showed**	**Outcome**
H1	Social media influence and changing a booking decision	Changed decision: 33.3% (low influence) vs. 65.4% (high influence)	Supported
H2	Social media influence and importance of eWOM	Higher together; modest link	Supported
H3	Importance of eWOM and satisfaction	Higher together; small link	Supported
H4	Satisfaction across five decision-driver groups	Practically no difference	Not supported
H5	AI helpfulness and satisfaction (AI users only)	No clear pattern	Not supported

- *Note.* N = 224, except H5 (104 AI users). These are links, not proof of cause and effect. Test values are in Appendix B.

➢ *Differences by Age*

Table 4 gives average ratings by age group. These are descriptive only and were not tested. Social media influence falls steeply with age, from 4.27 among 18–24-year-olds to

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov760

2.38 among those aged 55 and over. The importance given to eWOM varies far less, and satisfaction is almost the same in every group (3.83 to 3.93). The oldest group has only eight people, so its figures are unstable.

Table 4 Average Ratings by Age Group (Scale of 1 to 5)

Age group	Respondents	Social media influence	eWOM importance	Satisfaction
18–24	90	4.27	3.58	3.93
25–34	65	4.23	3.83	3.83
35–44	37	3.43	3.65	3.84
45–54	24	2.75	3.17	3.83
55 and above	8	2.38	3.62	3.88

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

➢ *RQ1: eWOM Matters, and the Credible Kinds Matter Most*

A clear majority see social media and eWOM as important, and the most influential forms are online reviews and posts from friends and family. This fits earlier research showing that readers give more weight to sources they judge trustworthy (Ayeh et al., 2013; Erkan & Evans, 2016; Filieri et al., 2015). The weak showing of brand posts (6.7%) is consistent with that, although the survey did not ask why people trust one source more than another.

➢ *RQ2: Social Media and Behaviour Move Together*

People who said social media influences them strongly were about twice as likely to report having changed a real booking decision, and they also valued eWOM more. This moves beyond opinion to a reported action. It still rests on memory, and the direction cannot be established: people open to social content may notice it more, and people who changed a decision may rate its influence higher in hindsight.

➢ *RQ3: a Real but Small Link Between eWOM and Satisfaction*

This is the central result. The direction agrees with the expectation idea of Oliver (1980) and Bhattacherjee (2001): reviews and peer accounts may help travellers set realistic expectations, so disappointment is less likely (Mauri & Minazzi, 2013). This is a possibility the data cannot confirm, because expectations were not measured. The small size of the link deserves equal weight. Satisfaction scores bunch at the upper end, each idea rests on one question, and satisfaction depends on much that the survey did not ask about, such as the price paid, delays, refunds and how well the app works.

➢ *RQ4: Satisfaction is Similar Whatever Drives the Decision, and AI is Not Yet Clearly Linked to it*

One reading is that a smooth booking produces similar satisfaction however the person got there. Another is that a single question with a high average is not sensitive enough to pick up group differences. For AI, the lack of a clear link sits alongside lower scores for AI helpfulness and for trusting AI as much as a human agent. It also fits the point made by Zhu et al. (2023) that familiarity shapes responses to chatbots: only 46.4% of this sample had used an AI tool, so many rated tools they had not tried.

➢ *Relation to Earlier Work*

The results agree in direction with Tariyal et al. (2022), who found eWOM usefulness closely tied to booking decisions among Indian tourists. This study adds satisfaction as the outcome and everyday ticketing as the setting. The link with satisfaction is much weaker than the link with decision-related behaviour, which may mean that eWOM does more to help people choose than to make them happier with what they chose. That is worth testing in future work.

➢ *Managerial Implications*

These suggestions are cautious, because the sample is not representative and the links are modest. They are aimed at ticketing platforms in general, especially smaller firms that cannot match the marketing budgets of large travel agencies.

- Make credible peer content easy to find. Reviews and posts from friends and family were the most influential forms of eWOM. Platforms can encourage verified, post-journey ratings and show them where people book, instead of relying mainly on their own social posts.
- Use social media mainly to reach younger users. Its influence falls steeply with age, while the importance of eWOM falls much less, so reviews and recommendations may still reach older customers.
- Do not expect eWOM alone to raise satisfaction. The link is small, and basics such as reliability, refunds and support probably matter at least as much.
- Add AI features selectively. The AI features respondents most wanted were personalised fare or itinerary suggestions (33.0%) and price-drop alerts (29.0%), ahead of 24-hour chatbot support (21.0%). With trust in AI below trust in human agents, one narrow feature that people ask for is a safer start than a broad automated service.

➢ *Limitations and Future Scope*

- Sample. The sample was not randomly chosen, was concentrated in Indore and central India, and leaned young, so the percentages describe these respondents and not all Indian bookers.
- Self-reported, one-time data. The survey shows links only, and answers about past decisions depend on memory.
- Single questions. Each idea was measured by one question. The satisfaction question asks about the "digitally influenced" experience, so it overlaps with eWOM and may exaggerate the link between them.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov760

- Scope. The survey did not separate air, rail and bus bookings, did not record gender, occupation or booking frequency, and did not test age differences. Only 13 respondents used the host organisation's platform most, so nothing here describes its own customers.

Future studies could use a proper multi-question satisfaction scale kept separate from the influence questions, a larger and more varied sample with air, rail and bus analysed separately, and methods that test whether expectations explain the link. Positive and negative eWOM could be separated, platform records could replace self-reported behaviour, and interviews could explain why some sources are trusted more than others.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper asked how digital word-of-mouth relates to satisfaction among people who book travel tickets online in India. In a sample of 224 bookers, eWOM was widely seen as important, online reviews and posts from friends and family were the most influential forms, and heavier reliance on social media went with more reported changes of booking decision. Valuing eWOM was linked with somewhat higher satisfaction, but the link was small, satisfaction was about the same whatever drove the decision, and AI helpfulness showed no clear link with it. In plain terms, eWOM seems to matter more for how people choose than for how pleased they are afterwards, though the two are not unrelated.

The study is limited by a non-random sample, single-question measures and a one-time design, so its findings are indicative only. It still offers a documented set of results on an under-studied outcome in an under-studied setting, and it points to questions that a larger, better-measured study could settle.

REFERENCES

[1.] Ayeh, J. K., Au, N., & Law, R. (2013). "Do we believe in TripAdvisor?" Examining credibility perceptions and online travelers' attitude toward using user-generated content. *Journal of Travel Research, 52*(4), 437–452. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287512475217

[2.] Bhattacherjee, A. (2001). Understanding information systems continuance: An expectation-confirmation model. *MIS Quarterly, 25*(3), 351–370. https://doi.org/10.2307/3250921

[3.] Cheung, C. M. K., & Thadani, D. R. (2012). The impact of electronic word-of-mouth communication: A literature analysis and integrative model. *Decision Support Systems, 54*(1), 461–470. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2012.06.008

[4.] Engel, J. F., Kollat, D. T., & Blackwell, R. D. (1968). *Consumer behavior*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

[5.] Erkan, I., & Evans, C. (2016). The influence of eWOM in social media on consumers' purchase intentions: An extended approach to information adoption. *Computers in Human Behavior, 61*, 47–55. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.03.003

[6.] Filieri, R., Alguezaui, S., & McLeay, F. (2015). Why do travelers trust TripAdvisor? Antecedents of trust towards consumer-generated media and its influence on recommendation adoption and word of mouth. *Tourism Management, 51*, 174–185. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2015.05.007

[7.] Filieri, R., & McLeay, F. (2014). E-WOM and accommodation: An analysis of the factors that influence travelers' adoption of information from online reviews. *Journal of Travel Research, 53*(1), 44–57. https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287513481274

[8.] Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K. P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, D. D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: What motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet? *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 18*(1), 38–52. https://doi.org/10.1002/dir.10073

[9.] Ismagilova, E., Slade, E. L., Rana, N. P., & Dwivedi, Y. K. (2020). The effect of electronic word of mouth communications on intention to buy: A meta-analysis. *Information Systems Frontiers, 22*(5), 1203–1226. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10796-019-09924-y

[10.] 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, 22*(5), 591–612. https://doi.org/10.1108/10662241211271563

[11.] Litvin, S. W., Goldsmith, R. E., & Pan, B. (2008). Electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *Tourism Management, 29*(3), 458–468. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2007.05.011

[12.] Mauri, A. G., & Minazzi, R. (2013). Web reviews influence on expectations and purchasing intentions of hotel potential customers. *International Journal of Hospitality Management, 34*, 99–107. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2013.02.012

[13.] Oliver, R. L. (1980). A cognitive model of the antecedents and consequences of satisfaction decisions. *Journal of Marketing Research, 17*(4), 460–469. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378001700405

[14.] Tariyal, A., Bisht, S., Rana, V., Roy, S., & Pratap, S. (2022). Utilitarian and hedonic values of eWOM media and online booking decisions for tourist destinations in India. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity, 8*(3), Article 137. https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc8030137

[15.] Verma, S., & Yadav, N. (2021). Past, present, and future of electronic word of mouth (EWOM). *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 53*, 111–128. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2020.07.001

[16.] Zhu, Y., Zhang, R., Zou, Y., & Jin, D. (2023). Investigating customers' responses to artificial intelligence chatbots in online travel agencies: The moderating role of product familiarity. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology, 14*(2), 208–224. https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTT-02-2022-0041

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26nov760

APPENDIX

➢ *Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire*

- *Section A. Respondent Profile.*

Q1. What is your age group? (18–24 / 25–34 / 35–44 / 45–54 / 55 and above). Q2. Which platform do you use most often to book travel tickets? (MakeMyTrip / IRCTC / ticketbookkaro.com / Yatra or Cleartrip / redBus / Ixigo / Airline or direct site / Other).

- *Section B. Social Media and Digital Word-of-Mouth.*

Q3. To what extent does social media influence your travel-ticket booking decision? (1 = Not at all to 5 = To a very great extent). Q4. Have you ever changed a travel-booking decision because of something you saw on social media? (Yes / No). Q5. Which type of digital word-of-mouth influences you the most? (Online reviews or star ratings / Influencer posts or reels / Friends' and family posts / Brand's own social posts / Comments or Q&A on posts)

- *Section C. AI Tools in Travel Booking.*

Q6. Have you used an AI-based chatbot or recommendation tool while booking a travel ticket? (Yes / No). Q7. How helpful do you find (or would you expect to find) AI-powered recommendations or chatbots? (1 = Not helpful at all to 5 = Very helpful). Q8. Do you trust AI-generated travel suggestions as much as suggestions from a human travel agent? (1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree). Q9. Which AI-enabled feature would you most like online travel platforms to add? (Personalised fare or itinerary suggestions / 24x7 chatbot support / Price-drop or fare-prediction alerts / Voice-based booking / AI travel-plan summarisation)

- *Section D. Decision Driver, eWOM Importance and Satisfaction.*

Q10. What single factor influences your final travel-ticket booking decision the most? (Price or offers / Online reviews and ratings / Social media content / Brand trust or past experience / AI recommendation). Q11. Overall, how important is digital word-of-mouth to your travel-ticket booking decisions? (1 = Not important at all to 5 = Extremely important). Q12. Overall, how satisfied are you with your digitally influenced travel-booking experience? (1 = Very dissatisfied to 5 = Very satisfied)

➢ *Appendix B: Statistical Results Behind the Findings*

For readers who want the technical detail, Table B1 lists the tests used. Each was run at the conventional 5% level.

Table B1 Statistical Test Results

	Comparison	**Test and result**	**Value of p**
H1	Influence level × changed a decision	Chi-square = 11.20, df = 2	.004
H2	Social media influence and eWOM importance	Pearson r = .28	< .001
H3	eWOM importance and satisfaction	Pearson r = .22	.001
H4	Satisfaction across five driver groups	ANOVA $F(4, 219) = 0.03$	.999
H5	AI helpfulness and satisfaction (n = 104)	Pearson r = .13	.199

- *Note.* The first three results are statistically significant; the last two are not. Average ratings were computed from the full response counts.