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Save the Trip to the Store: Sustainable Shopping, Electronic Word of Mouth on Instagram and the Impact on Cosmetic Purchase Intentions

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many brands to stop using cosmetic testers to avoid the risk of spreading the infection, jeopardising the future of cosmetic testing. Consequently, consumers must find alternative methods to conduct their information searches and, more importantly, the prospects of shopping online without going to the store to test the product. With the enormous prospects of social media cosmetic electronic word of mouth (eWOM), it is imperative to examine the influence of cosmetic eWOM on social media and for cosmetic marketers to understand the antecedents that result in cosmetic consumers making a purchase. The adapted information adoption model was validated through structural equation modelling based on 341 eligible surveys. The results confirmed that information quality, source credibility, information usefulness, and information adoption are the key antecedents in eWOM on Instagram when investigating purchase intentions in the colour cosmetic industry. This study is one of the pioneers in empirically testing the relationship between information quality and source credibility on information usefulness and, subsequently, the relationship between information usefulness, information adoption, and purchase intentions in a western market based on the cosmetic industry. These new insights provide practical implications for a cosmetic marketer, suggesting the key variables leading to purchase intentions in cosmetic eWOM, which can be utilised in marketing techniques.

Keywords: information quality; source credibility; information usefulness; information adoption; purchase intention; electronic word-of-mouth; Instagram

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1. Introduction

Word of mouth (WOM) is the notion of individuals sharing information regarding a brand or a product without commercial gains [1]. The development of the internet has transformed the nature of WOM into a more widespread phenomenon known as electronic word of mouth (eWOM) [2]. eWOM allows consumers to share their opinions regarding products and brands, whether positive or negative, to consumers via the internet, and, therefore, it has a much broader reach due to not being limited to physical interactions such as WOM [2]. Bahtar and Muda [3] report that consumers prefer eWOM over marketer-generated content (MGC), as the source of the information is not obtaining commercial gains and, therefore, is less biased. Thus, eWOM is a vital technique for businesses to adopt into their marketing strategies; however, Rosario et al. [2] report that marketers have not understood the value of maximising eWOM to their business. The present study identifies the value of eWOM on Instagram to increase colour cosmetic purchase intentions.

Consumers explore eWOM to aid and reduce their uncertainty towards their purchase decisions [4,5]. The following study investigates the colour cosmetic industry, which is valued at GBP 9681 million in 2019 [6]. Colour cosmetics make up 15.6% of the total cosmetic market value in 2019 [6] and is classified as decorative makeup such as foundation and eyeshadow [6,7]. Kim and Kang [8] classified cosmetics as experience goods that

are products or services that are difficult to evaluate before purchasing. Consequently, consumers are more likely to conduct a thorough information search as a result of increased uncertainty towards experience goods [9,10].; this was supported by Basu [11], who found that eWOM has a greater impact when consumers are looking for experience goods in comparison to search goods. In relation to the cosmetic industry, Khanom [12] found that 88% of consumers conduct their information search online before purchasing the colour cosmetics, further highlighting the importance of eWOM in the cosmetic industry. Coronavirus will likely increase the online information search as this health emergency has resulted in the removal of testers in-stores. Khanom [12] found that 48% of consumers report that they like to physically try the product before purchasing, and, therefore, the removal of testers will result in consumers adopting an online information search for cosmetic products. Consequently, this research will be of high value to cosmetic marketers in order to optimise their Instagram activity during and after the pandemic [13].

Social media has reformed how consumers conduct their information search [14], and Instagram particularly has seen positive growth in usage rates, with 1.08 billion worldwide users and 27 million users just in the UK [15]. Instagram receives the highest level of user engagement [16] and, consequently, is becoming more commonly used by brands and individuals who post eWOM. When analysing the current literature investigating eWOM on purchase intentions, the majority of the research focuses on social networking sites (SNSs) and online review sites as the platform for eWOM [17–20]. SNSs are very broad in their offerings, Instagram, for example, is image focused [21], whereas Twitter is text based [22]. Online review sites, i.e., reviews on company websites, also vary significantly from Instagram; these sites lack the source credibility construct investigated within the current research, as these reviews are usually anonymous, or the reviewer data are extremely limited. Consequently, the trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise of the source cannot be determined; therefore, there is a gap in the literature to investigate specific SNSs when analysing eWOM content. Teng et al. [18] and Erkan and Evans [17] highlighted that specific SNSs should be investigated to test the robustness of their findings. This is particularly relevant when investigating the colour cosmetic industry, as cosmetics are experience goods [8], and, therefore, individuals will be looking for in-depth information. The visual and profiling element of Instagram may be more insightful, particularly as cosmetics are used to enhance appearances [23]; consequently, the present research explores if eWOM on Instagram increases purchase intentions in colour cosmetics.

The current literature focusing on the effects of eWOM on cosmetic purchase intentions are heavily concentrated on Asian markets [24–29], and, therefore, these findings may differ due to cultural and social differences. For example, Putri and Wandebori [27], Kapitan et al. [30], and Sutanto and Aprianingsih's [31] research found source credibility to be the most significant factor to influence purchase intentions; however, this could be a result of cultural differences. Yildirim and Barutcu [32] analysed Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Model on an Asian sample to investigate what influenced their online purchase intentions and found that trust (an antecedent of source credibility) was an important concept for the sample due to the high-power distance [33]. Therefore, investigating a UK sample may provide different findings, as the UK has low power distance [34] and, as a result, may be less influenced by source credibility. Similarly, when analysing the individualism vs. collectivism dimension of Hofstede's Cultural Dimension Model in the context of eWOM and purchase intentions, previous research has indicated a difference between a UK sample and an Asian sample. For example, within collectivist cultures (i.e., Asian culture), individuals utilise social media to obtain support from peers and gain higher satisfaction in comparison to individualist cultures (i.e., UK culture) [35–37]. Therefore, this research investigating a UK sample may provide alternative findings to those studies investigating an Asian sample as a result of cultural differences.

Based on the presented information, there is a gap in the current literature to explore how UK consumers respond to cosmetic eWOM, especially since cosmetic testers have been restricted.

The research questions of this research are as follows:

- Does a higher level of perceived information quality of beauty-related Instagram content increase the usefulness of the message?
- Does a higher level of perceived source credibility of beauty-related Instagram content increase the usefulness of the message?
- If the consumer experiences a higher level of increased usefulness of beauty-related content on Instagram, will this increase the likelihood of consumers adopting the information?
- If consumers adopt the beauty-related Instagram content, will they have increased purchase intentions towards the relevant cosmetic products?

Addressing these research questions and achieving the research aim ensures that we make significant contributions to sustainability in fashion [38–41], electronic word of mouth (eWOM) [42–46], and consumer behaviour [47–50]. As cosmetics are experience goods, consumers tend to search for information online to reduce uncertainty, which makes eWOM particularly useful for the cosmetic industry. Social media platforms such as Instagram are image focused and receive high user engagement. By analysing eWOM on Instagram, the study provides insights on how cosmetic marketers can optimize their Instagram activity to increase purchase intentions. Furthermore, as the majority of previous research on the effects of eWOM on cosmetic purchase intentions has focused on Asian markets, this study aims to contribute to the literature by analysing eWOM on Instagram specifically for the UK market. Likewise, we offer managerial implications for fashion brand managers on how to engage with their consumers [48–51], even beyond social media [52–54] and exploring prospects in the metaverse [55–57], aligning with the changing consumer behaviour and their visits to physical stores.

2. Theoretical Background of the Study

2.1. Information Adoption Model and Behavioural Intention

Sussman and Siegal [28] formed the Information Adoption Model (IAM) based on various elements of three previous models: the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) [58]; the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) [59]; and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Despite the amalgamation of these models to create the IAM, Erkan and Evans [17] identified a key issue within the IAM, which was that the model did not explore the relationship between information adoption and the behavioural intention. Therefore, Erkan and Evans [17] adapted the IAM to incorporate purchase intentions known as the Information Acceptance Model (IACM) to make the model insightful from a business perspective. This study was built on IAM and IACM, as they offered to explain how people were affected by the information on computer-mediated communication platforms [17].

The ELM suggests that consumers follow one of two paths when viewing a message: central or peripheral; however, Sussman and Siegal [28] proposed that individuals experience a blend of both the central and peripheral route when aiding their decision making. The central route requires increased cognitive efforts, and this is evident when an individual is interested in the message, as they are more inclined to take the time to process the information [60]. However, the peripheral route involves significantly less involvement, as the individuals seek cues to aid their persuasion rather than analyse the content [60]. Sussman and Siegal [28] identified information quality (central route) and source credibility (peripheral route) as the precursors of information usefulness within the IAM. Both dimensions defined by Sussman and Siegal [28] as antecedents of information usefulness are adopted within this study to examine the different impact of these dimensions on information usefulness. Source credibility will be particularly interesting to examine in the context of this research, as the source of the eWOM is Instagram and, therefore, is more focused on peripheral cues in comparison to existing literature that examined other sources of eWOM [20].

2.2. Information Quality

Information quality is defined by the strength and value of the information within the content [61]. There are significant amounts of literature alluding to the dimensions of information quality that have been characterised by accuracy, timeliness, relevance, and comprehensiveness [62]. Information quality has been explored in many studies investigating the IACM and has shown a positive relationship between information quality and information usefulness and the subsequent relationship on purchase intentions [52]. Consequently, this research hypothesises that the quality of information in eWOM will positively impact information usefulness and, subsequently, influence purchase decisions.

H1: *The perceived information quality of the beauty-related eWOM on Instagram has a positive effect on the perceived information usefulness of the content.*

2.3. Source Credibility

As aforementioned, source credibility is derived from the peripheral route of the ELM. The peripheral route involves the individual having low elaboration and using peripheral cues to assess the content rather than analysing the content in-depth. Source credibility is when an individual believes the opinions and reviews are true and accurate [40,63]. Source credibility has become a more prominent antecedent when determining information usefulness since WOM has converted online as individuals can reach endless consumers and be anonymous [17]. Therefore, the use of peripheral cues is used to decode the source's opinions.

The main cues for source credibility identified from previous researchers are source expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness [64,65], which are used to build the measurement items within this research. Many studies have found a positive relationship between source credibility and information usefulness, reporting that message acceptance and purchase intentions increase when the viewer reports higher levels of expertise in the sender [66,67]. Therefore, this research predicts that the source credibility of the sender for beauty-related eWOM will have a positive relationship with information usefulness.

H2: *The perceived source credibility of the sender of the beauty-related eWOM on Instagram has a positive effect on the perceived information usefulness of the content.*

2.4. Information Usefulness, Information Adoption, and Purchase Intention

Information usefulness is developed from an individual's ability to process and filter information about a product or service and whether they consider it is appropriate to make an informed decision [68]. Perceived usefulness is especially applicable within this research, as the volume of content on social media results in individuals processing thousands of messages a day [69] and, therefore, information adoption will be more significant when the individual perceives the information to be useful [17,70]. Hence, this study proposes its third hypothesis:

H3: *If the consumer finds the beauty-related eWOM on Instagram to be useful this will have a positive effect on the information adoption of the content.*

As aforementioned, Erkan and Evans [17] acknowledged that the IAM neglected to implement behavioural intention; therefore, when they investigated, this variable reported significance between adopting the information and increased purchase intentions. Consequently, this study hypothesises:

H4: *If the consumer adopts the information from the beauty-related eWOM on Instagram, this will have a positive effect on the purchase intention of cosmetics.*

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework developed for this research to test the significance of hypotheses one to four.

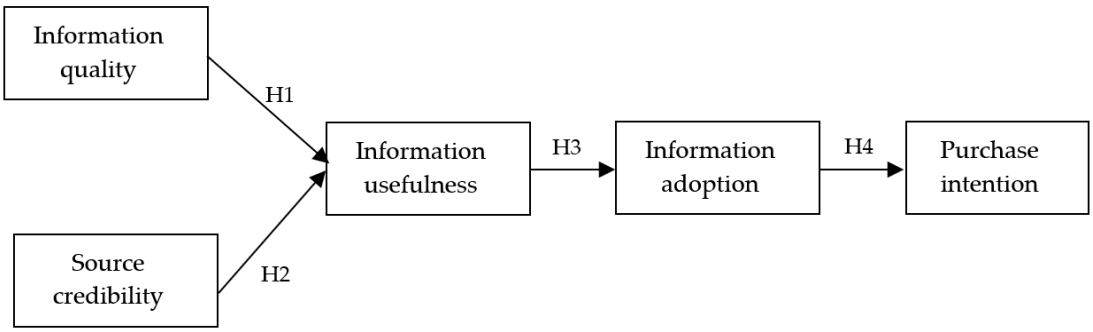

Figure 1. Information Adoption Model (IAM) (adapted from Sussman and Seigal [28]) combined with Purchase Intentions (adapted from [17]).

3. Methodology

This research adopted a deductive research approach, as it involves the testing of a theory by analysing the hypotheses, to investigate if there are any relationships between the variables [71]. Quantitative methods test and examine the relationships between variables in an objective manner [72] and, therefore, are more applicable for the presented study than qualitative methods. The majority of the previous research investigating eWOM on purchase intentions [17,25,27,73] also utilises a quantitative research approach, highlighting the relevance of this methodology when investigating this phenomenon.

The quantitative research strategy chosen for this research was an online questionnaire designed on Microsoft Forms. Adopting an online questionnaire allowed for social distancing measures to be adhered to, as the research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic [74]. Additionally, an online questionnaire allowed for the researcher to obtain a large sample quickly and cost-effectively, which increased the generalisability of the findings [75]. A five-point scale was chosen over a seven-point Likert scale for this research, as it increased response rates, due to it being less confusing [76] and produced more reliable data [63]. The five constructs investigated within this research have been derived from previous literature, and, therefore, the measurement scales have previously been validated (see Table A1). Whilst the majority of the questionnaire produced interval data to analyse, some nominal and ordinal data were produced to assess whether the respondents were suitable for this particular research and to avoid sampling errors [75].

This research focused on a UK sample of 18–29-year-olds who were exposed to electronic word of mouth (eWOM) on Instagram. To minimize sampling errors, Instagram was the primary platform for distributing the questionnaire, as all participants were Instagram users. The target population was chosen because research has shown that they are the largest consumers of colour cosmetics [77]. Although women constitute the majority of the colour cosmetic market, the study also included men, as the percentage of men wearing make-up in the UK is increasing. Waldersee [78] reports that 5% of the male population in the UK wears make up at least once a month. The demographic profiling of the sample showed (Table A2) that 100% of the respondents were from the UK and within the 18–29 age bracket. The majority of the sample were females, educated to higher secondary or further education level, who used Instagram for between 5–15 h per week. Those who answered "no" to using Instagram or not wearing colour cosmetics were excluded from the analysis.

This research chose to investigate Instagram as the specific source of eWOM over other SNSs and online review platforms, as visual communication is at the core of the platform. Kocak et al. [79] found that Instagram has a more diverse and thorough set of purposes rather than text-based SNSs and online review platforms. Research has also found that individuals retained 65% of the information when an image was paired with information about a product, in comparison to only 10% when the information was in isolation [80].

Therefore, as Instagram is a platform set up for visual content with a text description, it was worth exploring the impact on how consumers adopt eWOM on Instagram, as the visual element on online review sites is optional, i.e., reviews on a company website. Instagram also has a more personal element, as consumers can explore the user profile to make their own personal judgement on the reviewer such as whether they are trustworthy and their level of expertise, whereas this is not possible on company websites, as each review has to be dealt with in isolation with no background context on the reviewer.

Non-probability sampling was adopted in this study [71]. In-depth research has been undertaken to ensure that the sample will represent the target population, and the desired number of respondents for this research was at least 300. A sample size of 300 "is considered appropriate when the population constitutes millions (at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error)" [17,81]. The questionnaire was conducted from 1 February 2021 to 26 February 2021 through the Microsoft Forms application.

4. Results

The primary data collected 385 responses, of which only 341 responses were acceptable for statistical analysis. In total, 7 of the 385 respondents were not in the 18–29 age bracket, 5 did not live in the UK, 5 did not use Instagram, and, finally, 27 respondents did not wear colour cosmetics. The following data were analysed using SPSS version 27 to test the presented hypotheses.

4.1. Factor Analysis

To reduce 17 individual variables into 5 components, as identified in Table A4, factor analysis was undertaken using principal component analysis. Factor analysis is beneficial as it allows an extensive number of variables to be isolated into smaller, more-concise constructs [82]. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test was adopted to test whether the data collected was appropriate for factor analysis. Four of the five factors showed a value between 0.7 and 0.8 (see Table A4), indicating these were suitable for factor analysis [83]. The factor "Information Adoption" produced a KMO of 0.5, and this was the cut-off point whereby remedial action should take place. However, for this research, whilst 0.5 was not the most desirable KMO, it remained suitable for factor analysis [83]. Bartlett's test of sphericity was also adopted, which showed high significance within this research at 0.001 ($0 \leq p < 0.05$) for all factors (see Table A4). Therefore, this indicated that the data were appropriate for factor analysis, as there was enough covariance between the variables.

Five principal component analyses were conducted on the observed constructs using varimax rotation. All variables were orthogonal, as they were uncorrelated, and, therefore, varimax rotation was selected [82]. Factor analysis was run on all items, and it was concluded that there were four indicators for information quality, five indicators for source credibility, three for information usefulness, two for information adoption, and three indicators for purchase intentions (see Table A4). When running the factor analysis, any factor with a small co-efficient of 0.4 or below was rejected and omitted from the analysis [82].

The internal reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. Each variable in the corresponding factors was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, and the results showed adequate internal scale reliability, ranging from 0.777 to 0.897 (see Table A4). Saunders et al. [71] reported that a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.7 or above was acceptable, indicating that this study had strong internal scale consistency.

4.2. Hypothesis Testing

To provide findings with the most practical implications, regression analysis was selected due to its ability examine the effect of one or more independent variables on a dependent variable [71]. Multiple linear regression was adopted to investigate if information quality and source credibility could significantly predict information usefulness testing hypothesis H1 and H2. The regression results (see Table 1) found that 66.6% of the variation in information usefulness could be explained by the model containing information quality

and source credibility, as the R2 value was 0.666. The model was a significant predictor of information usefulness, (F(2, 338) = 339.336, p = 0.001). The predicted information usefulness of the participants increased by 0.421 (p = 0.001) for each time the information quality scores increased by 1, and they also increased by 0.445 (p = 0.001) for each time the source credibility scores increased by 1. It was noted that source credibility had a slightly larger impact on information usefulness than information quality (0.024). The final predictive model was: Information Usefulness = 0.726 + (0.421 × Information Quality) + (0.445 × Source Credibility)

Table 1. Multiple regression results.

Multiple Regression Analysis	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficients		Adjusted R Square	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	R^2	F Change
Predictors (Constant)	0.726	0.138		5.250	0.666	
Information Quality	0.421	0.052	0.338	8.112		0.001
Source Credibility	0.445	0.044	0.483	10.086		0.001

Linear regression was adopted to investigate if information usefulness could significantly predict information adoption testing hypothesis H3. The regression results (see Table 2) found that 57.0% of the variation in information adoption could be explained by the model containing information usefulness, as the R2 value was 0.570. The model was a significant predictor of information adoption, (F(1, 339) = 451.165, p = 0.001). The predicted information usefulness of the participants increased by 0.883 (p = 0.001) for each time that information usefulness increased by a score of 1. The final predictive model was: Information Adoption = 0.478 + (0.883 × Information Usefulness)

Table 2. Regression results for information usefulness and information adoption.

Linear Regression Analysis	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficients		Adjusted R Square	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	R^2	F Change
Predictors (Constant)	0.478	0.172		2.775		
Information Usefulness	0.883	0.042	0.756	21.241	0.570	0.001

Linear regression was adopted to investigate if information adoption could significantly predict purchase intentions testing H4. The regression results (see Table 3) found that 57.0% of the variation in purchase intentions could be explained by the model containing information adoption, as the R^2 value was 0.570. The model was a significant predictor of purchase intentions, (F(1, 339) = 451.334, p = 0.001). The predicted information usefulness of the participants increased by 0.770 (p = 0.001) each time information adoption scores increased by 1. The final predictive model was: Purchase Intention = 0.906 + (0.770 × Information Adoption). Table 4 presents a summary of hypotheses.

Table 3. Regression results for information adoption and purchase intention.

Linear Regression Analysis	Unstandardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficients		Adjusted R Square	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	R^2	F Change
Predictors (Constant)	0.906	0.151		5.997		
Information Adoption	0.770	0.036	0.756	21.245	0.570	0.001

Table 4. Summary of hypotheses.

Hypotheses	B	t	Support for Hypotheses
H1: Information Quality ⟶ Info. Usefulness	0.421	8.112 *	Supported
H2: Source Credibility ⟶ Info. Usefulness	0.445	10.086 *	Supported
H3: Information Usefulness ⟶ Info. Adoption	0.883	21.241 *	Supported
H4: Information Adoption ⟶ Purchase Intention	0.770	21.245 *	Supported

* Significant at $p < 0.01$.

5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This research supported the hypotheses claiming that information usefulness is affected by information quality and source credibility. The results highlighted that 66% of information usefulness could be explained by information quality and source credibility. The significant relationship found between information quality and information usefulness within this research supported existing literature [17,84–87]. Information quality derives from the central route of the ELM, indicating that consumers adopt content-based cues to decide whether they think the information is useful or not; this has become more significant since the WOM converted to eWOM as the anonymity element has increased. Consequently, this research supported Li and Zahn's [10] argument that the quality of information affects how the consumer will perceive and adopt the review.

Relevance, timeliness, accuracy, and comprehensiveness were used to build the measurement items of information quality within this research, based on Cheung and Thadani's [62] empirical research, which has been proven by multiple scholars [88–90]. However, some research contradicts these items of information quality, for example, Lee and Kim [91] found in their research that timeliness did not contribute to information quality. However, Lee and Kim's [91] research investigated the hospitality industry; therefore, the different industries could explain why this research found timeliness to possess the strongest mean score of M = 4.25 (SD = 0.789) and loaded the highest for information quality (see Figure A1). The cosmetic industry is dynamic, with new products being launched frequently; therefore, this could explain why timeliness was found to have the strongest score in comparison to the research investigating the hospitality industry. Previous studies have also found similar results regarding timeliness to also be an important precursor of information quality in the cosmetic industry [24,25,27], further indicating that some antecedents of information quality could be subjective to sectoral differences [92].

The outcome from the presented study complemented existing literature indicating that source credibility significantly affected information usefulness [65,93–95]. Conversely, previous literature had found source that credibility has a weaker impact on information usefulness than information quality [28,96,97], and some research found no significant relationship between source credibility and information usefulness [85,98]; however, the mentioned authors may not have found source credibility to be significant, as their research investigated eWOM on online review sites (i.e., Openrice, Dianping, Traveloka). As a result, consumers may not have been able to distinguish as many peripheral cues to aid whether they would find the information useful, as these online review sites lack a thorough profiling element whereby users are able to distinguish whether they find the reviewer to be trustworthy, attractive, and an expert—a strong reason for exploring Instagram in isolation within this research. The presented research investigated Instagram as the platform for eWOM and found a significant relationship between source credibility and information usefulness; this was likely due to consumers being able to gain more peripheral cues on Instagram than on an online review site. This could be supported by Hussain et al.'s [93] research, as they reported that consumers use cues such as gender, age, comparable interests, and purchasing behaviour to determine source credibility; this would be much harder to determine via an online review site in comparison to Instagram, as a result of Instagram's profiling element.

Some researchers argued the significance of some antecedents of source credibility (i.e., expertise and trustworthiness) [99–101]. However, this research found that all factors for source credibility loaded highly (see Figure A1), and, therefore, these discrepancies may be as a result of the sector investigated. The mentioned authors investigated the tourism industry, which has been categorised as high risk [96,102]; consequently, these consumers may value the antecedents of information quality as more significant than source credibility due to the higher level of elaboration required within their decision process in comparison to a lower risk industry, i.e., the cosmetic industry.

As previously stated, the current literature regarding Sussman and Siegal's [28] Information Adoption Model lacked a vital aspect for marketers, which was behavioural intentions [17]. This research supported a substantial amount of current literature that proved a significant relationship between information usefulness and information adoption [17,28,70]. However, it went further to test if the information adoption converted to a behavioural intention [17].

The presented research found an R2 value of 0.57, indicating that 57% of purchase intentions could be explained by information adoption; this supported the findings from other scholars investigating cosmetic eWOM on purchase intentions [29,84,103]. Conversely, the present research found a higher R^2 value between information adoption and purchase intentions (R^2 = 0.57) compared to the results found within Asian samples; Wajdi and Suwarsono [29] R^2 = 0.37, Quoquab et al. [103] R^2 = 0.24, and Bataineh [84] R^2 = 0.37. This difference may have been a result of cultural differences. Hamamura et al. [104] and Yoon and Lee [105] both reported that cultural differences between Asian and Western samples affected the consumers' thinking styles; Western consumers were more open to new information and, consequently, were more likely to adopt information, which led to increased purchase intentions. As a result, this could explain why the presented research investigating a Western sample reported a stronger relationship between information adoption and purchase intention.

5.2. Practical Implications

This research found that a Western sample had stronger purchase intentions when comparing to research investigating similar constructs in an Asian sample. Consequently, cosmetic marketers should be mindful that eWOM on Instagram leads to higher purchase intentions for a Western sample as a result of their willingness to accept new information more freely when launching global campaigns, and, therefore, these cultural differences on purchase intentions between markets should be considered for wider cosmetic campaigns. Whilst MGC will aid a consumer's cosmetic information research, this study highlighted the importance of eWOM on increasing purchase intentions, which ultimately is the main goal for a cosmetic marketer. Therefore, to gain the highest return on investment (ROI) and success during the pandemic, cosmetic brands should encourage eWOM, for example, through competitions on Instagram.

Influencer marketing is a common marketing technique within the cosmetic industry, due to consumers being more inclined to purchase products shown by influencers, as they prefer the authenticity of UGC over MGC content [3,106]. Cosmetic marketers should evaluate influencers perceived information quality and source credibility before agreeing to collaborate with them to gain the highest ROI, in order to ensure that they invest in campaigns that returns eWOM frequently, and, when working with influencers, they should ensure that they are trusted by their audience to create the most successful campaign with the highest return and be aware of eWOM in the post-purchase stage of the customer's journey [38,107]. Cosmetic companies invest in research and development to ensure quality products that will result in positive eWOM.

In today's fast-evolving world, fashion brands need to keep up with the latest trends to reach and engage their target audience [108–110]. With the growing popularity of the metaverse as an extension of Web 2.0, brands have a unique opportunity to showcase their products and services in a virtual world [55–57]. The Metaverse, as an emerging trend, is

gaining traction as more and more consumers are shifting to online platforms to shop for their favourite products. Therefore, fashion brands need to be aware of the possibilities offered by the metaverse and start exploring innovative methods to offer their products to consumers in the virtual world. As the world witnessed the rise of online shopping due to the COVID-19 pandemic [107,111–113], virtual events and partnerships with gaming platforms offer a new channel for fashion brands to reach consumers [114,115]. One way to tap into this trend is by partnering with gaming platforms to offer collectibles in the form of NFTs, which will attract consumers who are interested in unique and exclusive items. Additionally, organizing a fashion event in the virtual world can help brands reach a wider audience while offering a novel and exciting experience for attendees.

6. Conclusions

This research aimed to discover if cosmetic eWOM on Instagram affected 18–29-year-old consumer purchase intentions and found information quality and source credibility as positive signifiers of information usefulness. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the role of eWOM in fashion marketing, specifically in the cosmetic industry. By identifying the key factors that affect the effectiveness of eWOM on Instagram, this study provides practical insights for marketers looking to engage with younger consumers in the digital age. Additionally, this study highlights the importance of sustainability in fashion marketing and suggests that future research should investigate how eWOM can be used to promote sustainable shopping behaviour. Overall, this research serves as a foundation for further investigation into the complex relationships between eWOM, sustainability, and consumer behaviours in the fashion industry.

6.1. Limitation

It is imperative to recognise the limitations of this study and identify areas for further research. This research lacked face validity, as some of the questions the participants answered resulted in subjective interpretation, and likewise, the research is the subjective nature of "source credibility". Another limitation of this study is its focus on Instagram as the sole platform for investigating eWOM in the colour cosmetic industry. This may limit the generalizability of the findings, as different social media platforms may have different effects on purchase intentions. Additionally, the study only investigates the impact of eWOM on purchase intentions, without examining actual purchasing behaviours. Furthermore, the study only focuses on the UK market, and cultural and social differences in other regions may affect the generalizability of the findings. Lastly, the study does not consider the role of influencer marketing on eWOM and purchase intentions, which is a significant aspect of social media marketing in the cosmetic industry.

6.2. Future Research

First, investigating eWOM on social media platforms in addition to Instagram can help fashion marketers better understand the impact of eWOM in different contexts. For example, they can explore how eWOM influences purchase intentions on platforms such as Twitter, TikTok, and Facebook. This research can provide insights into which social media channels are most effective for promoting fashion products and how eWOM differs across various platforms.

Second, conducting cross-cultural studies can help fashion marketers understand the impact of eWOM on purchase intentions in different regions. Cross-cultural studies can shed light on cultural differences in how consumers perceive eWOM and how this perception affects their purchasing decisions. This research can help fashion marketers develop more effective eWOM strategies for different regions and tailor their campaigns accordingly.

Third, exploring the relationship between eWOM and actual purchasing behaviours, as well as the factors that mediate this relationship, can help fashion marketers gain a deeper understanding of the role of eWOM in the consumer decision-making process.

This research can identify which factors, such as trust, credibility, and expertise, influence the relationship between eWOM and actual purchasing behaviours. Understanding these factors can help fashion marketers design more effective eWOM campaigns that increase conversion rates and sales.

Fourth, as more males are becoming interested in wearing cosmetics, it is important to explore if there are any gender differences in how consumers adopt electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). Investigating the impact of gender on eWOM adoption could provide valuable insights for cosmetic brands to develop effective marketing strategies that resonate with both male and female consumers. Further research could focus on the role of gender in shaping consumer attitudes towards eWOM and how it influences their purchasing behaviours in the cosmetics industry.

Fifth, while quantitative methodology provides valuable insights into consumer behaviours, it is often limited in capturing the nuances and complexities of human attitudes and beliefs. A qualitative study, such as interviews and ethnography, can provide a more in-depth understanding of how consumers perceive and engage with sustainable shopping. By gathering rich and detailed data, future research can shed light on the underlying motivations, values, and attitudes that drive sustainable consumer behaviours and provide a more comprehensive understanding of this growing trend.

Overall, these agenda items have the potential to significantly advance the understanding of eWOM in the context of fashion marketing. By investigating eWOM on different social media platforms, conducting cross-cultural studies, and exploring the relationship between eWOM and actual purchasing behaviours, researchers can help fashion marketers develop more effective eWOM strategies that drive sales and increase brand loyalties.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Questionnaire Design.

Variable	Items
Information Quality [17,85]	• I find colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram relevant. • I think beauty related eWOM on Instagram is accurate. • I think up-to-date beauty related eWOM on Instagram is important. • I think in-depth beauty related eWOM on Instagram is important.
Source Credibility [64,65]	• When thinking about the individuals posting eWOM on Instagram, I think they are: • Trustworthy. • Reliable. • Likeable. • Able to deliver sufficient information regarding colour cosmetics. • Knowledgeable when evaluating colour cosmetic products.

Table A1. *Cont.*

Variable	Items
Information Usefulness [17,28]	• When thinking about the colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram, do you think: • It is useful. • It is helpful. • It is of value.
Information Adoption [17]	• Cosmetic eWOM on Instagram helps me to make my purchase decisions. • Cosmetic eWOM on Instagram increases my knowledge to help me make a more informed decision when purchasing cosmetics.
Purchase Intention [17]	• I am more likely to purchase a colour cosmetic product I have seen on Instagram if I am pleased with the review. • I am more likely to purchase a specific cosmetic product that I have seen on Instagram next time I are am in need of that product. • Within the last 6 months, I have purchased a cosmetic product based on an Instagram review.

Table A2. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 341).

Variable	Options	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age (Years)	18–29	341	100
Gender	Female	329	96.5
	Male	12	3.5
Current UK Resident	Yes	341	100
	No	0	0
Highest Level of Education Reached	No Schooling Complete	1	0.3
	Primary Education	1	0.3
	Secondary Education (Up to 16 Years)	12	3.5
	Higher/Secondary or Further Education (A-Level, BTEC)	164	48.1
	Undergraduate Degree	131	38.4
	Postgraduate Degree	23	6.7
	PHD	6	1.8
	Prefer Not To Say	2	0.6
	Other	1	0.3

Table A3. Other Demographics.

Variable	Options	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Instagram User	Yes	341	100
	No	0	0
Colour Cosmetic User	Yes	341	100
	No	0	0
Hours Spent on Instagram	Less than 5 h	47	13.8
	5–10 h	138	40.5
	11–15 h	112	32.8
	16+ h	44	12.9
Have you been looking on "social media" more than before the pandemic in order to decide what colour cosmetics to purchase?	Yes	308	90.3
	No	33	9.7
Have you been looking on "Instagram" more than before the pandemic in order to decide what colour cosmetics to purchase?	Yes	222	65.1
	No	119	34.9

Table A4. Factor Analysis Results.

Factors and Variables	Mean	St. Deviation	Factor Loadings
Information Quality [a]	4.01	0.696	
I think that colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram is relevant.	4.11	0.795	0.796
I think that colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram is accurate.	3.47	0.956	0.762
I think that up-to-date colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram is important.	4.25	0.789	0.867
I think that in-depth colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram is important.	4.19	0.862	0.851
Eigenvalue	2.691		
% of Variance explained	67.274		
Cronbach's α	0.832		
Source Credibility [b]	3.75	0.819	
When thinking about the individuals posting colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram, I think they are trustworthy.	3.53	1.019	0.871
When thinking about the individuals posting colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram, I think they are reliable.	3.57	985	0.870
When thinking about the individuals posting colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram, I think they are likeable.	4.04	0.816	0.766
When thinking about the individuals posting colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram, I think they are able to deliver sufficient information regarding colour cosmetics.	3.79	1.009	0.855
When thinking about the individuals posting colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram, I think they are knowledgeable when evaluating colour cosmetic products.	3.81	1.002	0.842
Eigenvalue	3.543		
% of Variance explained	70.869		
Cronbach's α	0.897		
Information Usefulness [c]	4.07	0.754	
I think that colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram is useful.	4.15	0.825	0.903
I think that colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram is helpful.	4.14	0.815	0.906
I think that colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram is of value.	3.94	0.871	0.894
Eigenvalue	2.434		
% of Variance explained	81.138		
Cronbach's α	0.883		
Information Adoption [d]	4.08	0.880	
I think that colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram helps me to make my purchase decisions.	4.03	0.994	0.904
I think that colour cosmetic eWOM on Instagram increases my knowledge to help me make a more informed decision when purchasing cosmetics.	4.12	0.953	0.904
Eigenvalue	1.636		
% of Variance explained	81.798		
Cronbach's α	0.777		
Purchase Intention [e]	4.04	0.897	
I am more likely to purchase a colour cosmetic product I have seen on Instagram if I am pleased with the review.	4.32	0.845	0.869
I am more likely to purchase a specific colour cosmetic product that I have seen on Instagram next time I are am in need of that product.	4.10	0.925	0.879
Within the last 6 months, I have purchased a colour cosmetic product based on an Instagram review.	3.71	1.322	0.857
Eigenvalue	2.263		
% of Variance explained	75.429		
Cronbach's α	0.813		

[a] KMO = 0.785; Bartlett Test Sphericity = 548.697; sig = 0.001. [b] KMO = 0.797; Bartlett Test Sphericity = 1138.879; sig = 0.001. [c] KMO = 0.746; Bartlett Test Sphericity = 554.289; sig = 0.001. [d] KMO = 0.500; Bartlett Test Sphericity = 175.427; sig = 0.001. [e] KMO = 0.725; Bartlett Test Sphericity = 400.778; sig = 0.001.

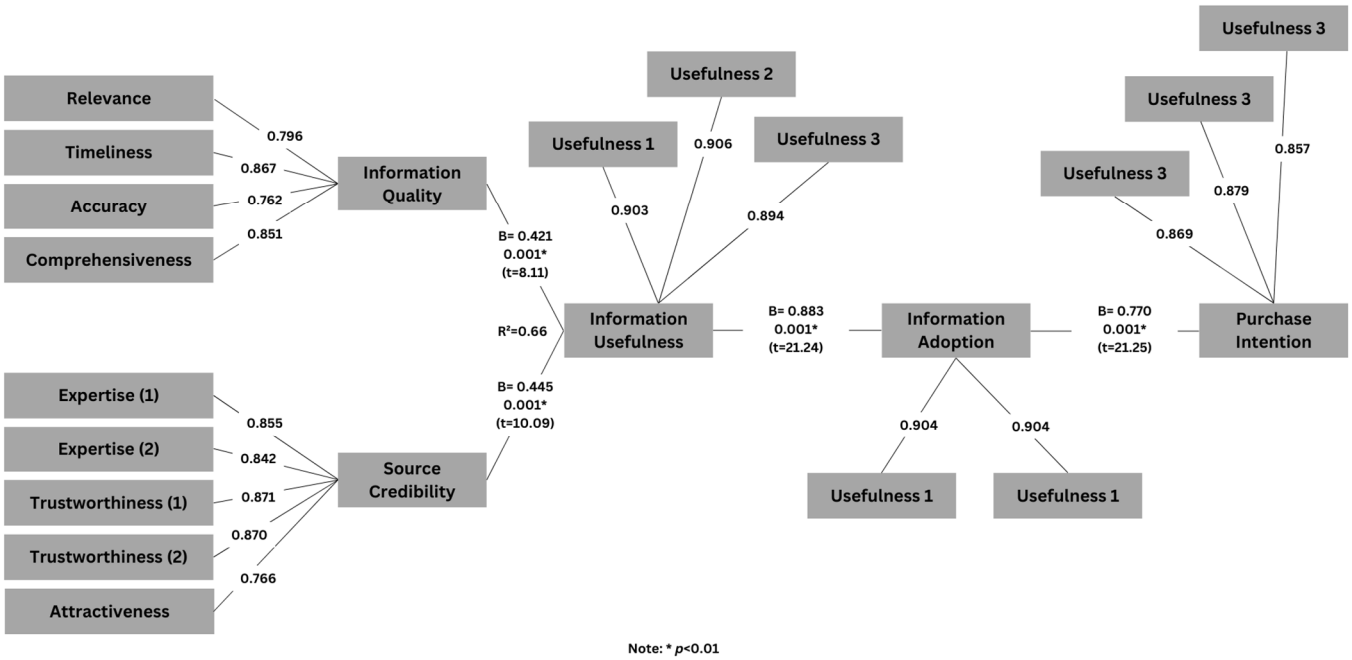

Figure A1. Research Model Results.

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