

EMPIRICAL REVIEW ON USER CREATED CONTENTS AND THE ONLINE REPUTATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR DESTINATION MANAGEMENT COMPANIES IN SRI LANKA AND GENERAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

**Ruwan RATNAYAKA^a, S.M. Ferdous AZAM^b, Jacqueline THAM^c, Sakinah
Mohd SHUKRI^d**

^a Managing Director, Beyond Escapes Private Limited, Sri Lanka

^b A. Prof. Dr. Ferdous Azam, Graduate School of Management (GSM), Management and Science University, Malaysia

^c A. Prof. Dr. Jacqueline Tham, Graduate School of Management (GSM), Management and Science University, Malaysia

^d A. Prof. Dr. Sakinah Mohd Shukri, Graduate School of Management (GSM), Management and Science University, Malaysia

Cite this article: Ratnayaka, R., Azam, S.M. F., Tham, J., Shukri, S.M. (2024). Empirical Review on User Created Contents and the Online Reputation: Implications for Destination Management Companies in Sri Lanka and General Conceptual Framework. *Deturope*, 16(1), XX-XX

Abstract

This paper aims to consolidate existing knowledge on User-Created Content (UCC) and its influence on the online reputation of tourism organizations, particularly Destination Management Companies (DMCs), in Sri Lanka and globally. While research on this topic is burgeoning within the tourism industry, empirical evidence continues to enrich the literature. Thus, there is a need to organize and categorize current knowledge on UCC and Online Reputation to facilitate a deeper understanding of its evolving landscape. Drawing from recent literature, this research note synthesizes insights on UCC and Online Reputation pertinent to DMCs in Sri Lanka and beyond, offering a generalized conceptual framework to guide future studies and strategic initiatives.

Keywords – User Created Contents (UCC), Electronic word of mouth (eWOM), Online Reputation, Destination Management Companies (DMCs)

INTRODUCTION

More online contents are available today on the internet and customers depend on these contents five times more than they did five years ago (Lemaić, 2019). These contents not only influence the image of the products and brands of a company but also the cognitive process of the online users during their purchasing decisions (Forsey, 2021). The development of web2.0 technology enabled the users to create their own contents on the worldwide web (Kaldeen,, 2019) and share these contents to contribute significantly for the growth of information on the web with no control (Nath & Iswary, 2015). These digital contents have become a more

powerful marketing tool for the tourism organizations (Gayetree, 2017). Owing to these new developments in digital tourism economy, the tourism industry rapidly adopting a third “T” in addition to the two “T” that represent Travel and Tourism. This third “T” represents the Technology which has been empowered through the web2.0 platforms (Gonzalo, 2017). This evolution facilitated new virtual platforms on the internet to engage more people online and converted the internet users in to information providers and players (Gayetree, 2017). Poor understanding and management of these contents can lead the companies to face major PR crisis on their products and brands (Dan, 2019).

The emergence of new technologies gave the birth to virtual reality, augmented reality, artificial intelligence and many more digital solutions for the internet users over the last 10 years (PandoraFMS, 2022). With these developments, the user participation on the web was transformed to necessity from luxury (Dan, 2019). Emergence of the mobile era with the development of the mobile applications and smart phones shifted content creation from desktop computers to smart phones (Melumad, Inman, & Pham, 2019). Evolution of worldwide web from web2.0 to web3.0 and web4.0 made the content creation easier for the internet users (Kujur & Chhetri, 2015). Kannan (2022) states that the development of web3.0 technology enabled self-learning internet with personal assistance to create knowledge within the internet whereas the web4.0 technology further improved the internet to provide virtual assistance to the users which is comparable with human brain (Smartdestination, 2022). Search functions and content creations become very easy with these new developments on the internet.

Though the internet is developing faster than ever before with the new smart technologies, adopting to these new market challenges by the Destination Management companies (DMC) in Sri Lanka have been very slow (Bandara & Silva, 2016). DMCs in Sri Lanka very often face threats in the online travel market than taking the advantage of the online market opportunities created by these new marketing trends due to the lack of understanding about the online market. DMCs in Sri Lanka are currently facing unseen waves of negative user created contents over the internet owing to the poor review management, customer sentiment analysis, lack of online monitoring and social media analysis. This is mainly due to the lack of information and limited research findings in the digital-tourism economy of Sri Lanka (Bandara & D.A.C. Silva, 2016).

LITERATURE REVIEW

User created content is regarded as the user's own materials that are uploaded to the internet. These contents have a greater influence on the purchasing decisions of the online buyer behavior (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). Most of the studies have emphasized the power of UCC in different angles (Anatoli, Ashish, & Peter, 2019; Bashir, Ayub, & Jalees, 2017; Bahtar & Muda, 2016). The UCC is a positive or negative statement about past, current or potential customers about a company or its products that are available to the public on the internet (Anatoli, Ashish, & Peter, 2019). The UCC that are shared by the users always based on their own experiences that provide useful, unbiased and trustworthy information (Bashir, Ayub, & Jalees, 2017). Users create contents based on their own experiences and those contents are not controllable or directed by the marketing people (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). Most of the online buyers often trust the contents created by the previous users when they make purchasing decisions (Grewal & Stephen, 2019).

The Evaluation of Internet & Emergence of User Created Contents

The worldwide web evolved with different functionalities at different stages (Aghaei, 2012). It started with web1.0 technology and gradually evolved to the web4.0 (Nath & Iswary, 2015). Web1.0 is a web that connects information (information connections) whereas the web2.0 connects the people (people connections) (Kujur & Chhetri, 2015). Development of social media networks and other community based online platforms have happened due to the evolution of web2.0 technology (Bashir, Ayub, & Jalees, 2017). Web3.0 evolved as knowledge connections and web4.0 as intelligent connections (Nath & Iswary, 2015). The web3.0 technology enabled the users to create, retrieve and share contents easily through transparent, robust and synergetic systems (Ivanov, 2019). This technology has been further improved by the web4.0 to facilitate virtual assistance for creating, retrieving and sharing information (PandoraFMS, 2022).

WEB1.0 – This is the first edition of worldwide web which is regarded as the read only web that provides only a little interaction for the users to share the information on the internet generation (Aghaei, 2012). Nath & Iswary (2015) stated that the web1.0 is only an information web that contains information for the users to read and share. Web pages are generated by few developers but accessed by large number of users (Terra, 2023). This makes the internet browsing very slow. Majority of the companies create read only webs by using the web 1.0 technology and often they do not facilitate the users to engage with these contents that are posted in the company websites (Kaldeen, 2019).

The WEB2.0 – Though the web1.0 facilitated read only web, the web2.0 technology was able to enable read-write web (Aghaei, 2012). This is also known as people-centric web, wisdom web and participative web (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). User was powered to have more control over the web and interact freely through the web2.0 technology (Bashir, Ayub, & Jalees, 2017). The information shared through the web2.0 technology was discussed, shared and further contributed to the growth of the online content over the internet (Nath & Iswary, 2015). Emergence of social media platforms was one of the major events that occurred due to the birth of web2.0 technology (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). The web2.0 technology was able to shift the traditional online consumer in to a participant on the web (Obar and Wildman, 2015). Web2.0 has the open access to users in most of the online platforms (Bahtar & Muda, 2016) and the users can generate any kind of information which cause high risks for the companies than web1.0 websites (Nath & Iswary, 2015).

The WEB3.0 – The web2.0 technology enabled user participation on the web and it powered heavy flow of unstructured data on the internet (Bahtar & Muda, 2016; Obar and Wildman, 2015; Nath & Iswary, 2015). Web3.0 technology was born to structure these contents and build knowledge within the internet (Lyons T. , 2020). Web3.0 is a self-learning web that helps the users by suggesting solutions with easy access to the contents that the users frequently search (Resuello, 2022). This third version of web has been powered by machine learning, data mining, microformats, natural language search, and artificial intelligence to support the web to identify the user behavior and preferences (Maurya, 2019). This is a paradigm shift in the web interactions (Lyons T. , 2020). The web3.0 has created some important changes in the way the websites are designed and how the users are engaged with these websites (Kannan, 2022). These new changes will support the users to find exact information what they are searching for with the support of artificial intelligence (Ivanov, 2019).

The WEB4.0 – The modern version of the web is web4.0 technology (Smartdestination, 2022). This web does not limit to simple display of information and provides comprehensive and personalized interactions like and intelligent mirror (Nath & Iswary, 2015). PandoraFMS (2019) concluded that this new version of web has facilitated the internet to provide virtual assistance to the users. This web can understand the natural spoken and written languages. It acts as a human assistant to provide precise information to the virtual questions that are asked by the users (Peceny et al., 2019). The users can create retrieve and share messages very easily by using the web4.0 technology (Kujur & Chhetri, 2015). Smartphone and other mobile devices will play a major role for user created contents with the new development of web4.0

technology (Resuello, 2022). The web4.0 technology creates an interdependent relationship between human and the machines (Nath & Iswary, 2015). The 4.0 technology is a result of a comprehensive digital transformation that has happened during the last decade (Resuello, 2022). It has given the birth to industry4.0, web4.0 and tourism4.0 (Pencarelli, 2020). This digital revolution has been backed by the smart devices and artificial intelligence and it is a paradigm shift of the digital technology that has added many changes to the online domain (Smartdestination, 2022). Khan & Javaid (2022) concluded that the 4.0 technology is very much linked with the internet of things (IoT). The smart devices play a major role in connecting sensors and services in a common network to offer personalized services to the internet users, especially in the tourism industry (Pencarelli, 2020). Automation systems, production technologies and data exchange have powered to transform the existing business models. Internet of things, blockchain, big data, artificial intelligence, virtual reality and augmented reality are the pillars that have given the birth to tourism4.0 technology (Peceny, et al., 2019).

The evolution of web from 1.0 to 4.0 enabled a significant web involvement of the users on the internet (Peceny, et al., 2019). The user is more powerful in creating their own materials and upload them to the internet as contents which has a greater influence on purchasing behavior (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). With the evolution of web from web1.0 to web4.0, the amount of user created contents on the worldwide web have been significantly increased during the last five years (Tunçel & Yılmaz, 2020). Anatoli, Ashish, & Peter (2019) stated that the UCC shared by the customers are more useful, unbiased and trustworthy as they are based on their own experience. These user-created contents are often not controlled by the companies or directed by the marketing people (Baker, 2022). UCC influence the brand equity (Bruno et al. 2019). These contents significantly influence the online reputation of the companies (Schooley, 2023) and online buyers use these contents when they take purchasing decisions (Grewal & Stephen, 2019).

The Role of Smartphone and Mobile Applications in UCC

The mobile phone usage by people in the globe during the year of 2022 hits 6.3 billion which is 67 % of the total global population (Laricchia, 2023). The number of people connected to the internet during the year 2018 was more than 3.5 billion worldwide and mobile phone was used by many people as the only tool to access the internet (GSMA Intelligence, 2019). The new developments in the shared media have integrated mobile applications to facilitate easy to use tools for generating, editing and sharing contents directly from the mobile devices to

other available networks (Laricchia, 2023). With the development of new mobile devices that are integrated to the smartphone, the time that the smartphone users spend with these devices has gone up more than ever before (Melumad, Inman, & Pham, 2019). The mobile phone usage by 55-75 years old mobile users in 2023 will rise up to 90% in the developed countries and mobile only revolution will hit the globe (McMenemy, 2019). Creating contents and sharing them on social media platforms has become the most common activity of the mobile users (Grewal and Stephen, 2016). Smartphone is not limited to receiving and transmitting information. It is becoming a major source of information about the individual preferences and requirements (Johnston, Kelly, & Kvilhaug, 2023). The contents generated by the users through their smartphone are more emotional than the contents generated through the personal computers (Ransbotham, Lurie , & Liu, 2019). The evolution of internet has become much faster with the development of smartphone and mobile applications (Kaur & Kaur, 2022). Content has become the driving force of social media that facilitate the user engagement on the web through these mobile applications (McMenemy, 2018). The major concerns of theses contents are the trustworthiness, authenticity and quality of information published by individuals using mobiles (Bashir, Ayub, & Jalees, 2017). Generating contents as users and posting them through the online platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Amazon, TripAdvisor and Yelp is the most common activity of the mobile users (Grewal, 2016).

The User Created Contents (UCC) and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)

UCC is not just regarded as an online content. It is similar to eWOM whereby the users share their experiences and opinions (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). However, they are two individual concepts (Thao & Shurong, 2020). The eWOM is also known as “word of mouse”. The electronic word of mouth is known as a special communication tool with influential power on the web (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). The eWOM has become a liability that a company can’t control (Yang, 2017). Pencarelli (2020) concluded that eWOM is a media that is enabled by ICT which has a greater influence on the purchasing behavior in the field of tourism. eWOM is the most cost-effective way of identifying the perceptions and needs of the customers and communicating with them (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). Though, most of the authors (e.g., Filieri and McLeay, 2014) have stated eWOM as the electronic form of traditional word of mouth, these two have significant differences in terms of privacy, credibility, diffusion speed and accessibility (Hussain et al., 2017). As both communicator and the receiver of information present during the WOM, it has a positive influence on credibility than eWOM (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). However, accessibility of the information is very high in eWOM as the

information is freely available on the internet whereas the information of WOM is not available if the receiver is not present (Ransbotham, Lurie , & Liu, 2019). The ITC has a greater influence on communication today than 10 years back when the WOM was a more powerful marketing tool (Yang, 2017). eWOM is regarded as the most influential pre-purchase source of information in the field of tourism (Pencarelli, 2020). Though UCC is slightly different to eWOM, it has more similarities that are extremely relevant to tourism industry as most of the experiences are shared by the tourists (Rodríguez-Díaz , Rodríguez-Díaz , & Espino-Rodríguez, 2018).

The User Created Contents in Tourism Industry

The evolution of Internet has not only converted Internet to a public virtual environment to meet and discuss about their interests and experiences but also become an online library. Therefore, online reputation is a critical subject in the tourism industry (Iglesias-Sánchez, Correia, Jambrino-Maldonado, & Heras-Pedrosa, 2020). With the development of new trends in user created contents, the internet offers many opportunities to generate contents, share experiences, make suggestions and recommendations to improve or weaken a tourist destination with significant amount of information (Iglesias-Sánchez, Correia, & Jambrino-Maldonado, 2019). The users can publish their own contents using many online tourism channels such as tourism networks, house swapping sites, videos sharing sites, general social networks, hospitality travelers' sites, blogs and map sites (Llodrà-Riera, Martinez-Ruiz, Jimenez-Zarco, & Yusta, 2015). These User Created Content has become a significant part in tourism industry (Ajanovic & Çizel, 2015). UCC is now included by many organizations in their content marketing mix (Lemaić, 2019). These user generated contents help the tourist organizations to shape their online reputation (Marchiori & Cantoni, 2011). The new technology and smartphones offer a significant control to influence the user created contents and reputation of the tourism companies (Smartdestination, 2022). The international travellers search information that are available in the social media and they give more priorities to online reviews than other information (Musanovic & Dorcic, 2016). The largest review platform in the tourism industry is TripAdvisor with 320 million reviews creates a big influence on the travellers' buying decisions. Managing the relationship in the TripAdvisor is important to make good relationship with the future travellers (Carreirão, 2019). Some of the reviews in the TripAdvisor are false and biased according to the users as they are not verified reviews based on the TripAdvisor customers. Booking.com and Expedia.com on the other hand generate only the verified reviews from their own customers. Therefore, varied reviews

in these platforms are more reliable than TripAdvisor reviews (Sauciuc, 2020). Different authors (Zimmatore , 2020; Verot, 2020; Capatina & Schin , 2017) have listed several types of UCC in their online reputation models and commonly they have mentioned online reviews and recommendations, ranking and ratings, social media contents and travel blogs as the main types of UCC in the tourism industry.

Online Customer Reviews

Positive and negatives information about a product by its past, current and potential customers are considered as the online reviews (Schuckert, Liu, & Law, 2015). Based on the product category and popularity, the level of impact of the review can vary (Moen, Havro, Bjerling, & Wright, 2017). The online reviews and recommendations are contents that can be easily accessible (Carreirão, 2019). These feedbacks have become the source of company's online reputation in the digital era. Saleh (2018) stated that more than 90% of the online customers read reviews before visiting a business. 88% of them trust these reviews. 86% of the customers refuses the businesses that are having negative reviews. Online reviews have a greater influence on the online reputation and they require zero effort (Schuckert, Liu, & Law, 2015). Online reviews provide good support for SEO and enhance the search rankings (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). Abramyk (2022) concluded that a company that ignore online reviews faces more reputation challenges and it is one of the worst things a business can do. The travel websites that have empowered the customer reviews have become hubs for potential travellers (Schuckert, Liu, & Law, 2015). As the online reputation has been a key component in online marketing, fake reviews and contents have become more frequent in the travel domain (Verot, 2020). Different algorithms have been developed by the travel community sites to identify these manipulation threats (Gössling, et al., 2018). The positive online reviews not only enable the companies to protect their online reputation but also enable the growth of the business (Kaemingk , 2020). Eddy (2015) stated that online review can have greater influence on a potential traveler before a DMC even notice it's been posted.

Online Customer Rating & Ranking

The visibility of many products is determined by the rating and ranking (Da Silva C. N., 2021). Today the products need a social proof to show that it is worth buying and the rating and ranking plays an important role in that (Gordon, 2018). This social proof carries the reputation of a brand or the product (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). Li et al. (2012) concluded that user ratings are meaningful when ranking the objects in terms of the average ratings.

Companies require to manage both ranking and rating to enhance the online reputation (Rodríguez-Díaz , Rodríguez-Díaz , & Espino-Rodríguez, 2018). Most of the travellers can post their contents related to their own experience and rate the products and brands online in the sites such as TripAdvisor, HolidayCheck, DaoDao and Tourout. Based on these ratings, potential travellers make their judgements about the brands (Bahtar & Muda, 2016). Gayetree (2017) concluded that the customer rating indicates the satisfaction of the customer and it is available everywhere in the tourism domain now.

Social Media Contents

Social acceptance of the purchasing decisions made by the individuals is very important for the online customers (Barysevich, 2020). Social media platforms provide this functionality for the people to retain their brains and eyes to see real photos from real people (Lemaić, 2019). The contents that are created by users act as a social proof that decide the brand legitimacy through videos, photos, reviews, and other contents posted by consumers (Loudermilk, 2018). García-Perdomo et al. (2017) concluded that the social networking and content sharing has been the most popular activity in 2016. More than 97% of the millennials in the tourism sector post their contents in social media when travelling. Patel (2019) stated that the contents created by the users in social media enable the customers to see the brands through the eyes of the other customers and those contents often influence the reputation of the brands.

Customer Travel Blogs

Travel blogs are the e-form of customer word of mouth made out of hypertext contents to connect what others have written on a topic with no limit (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). Some blogs are like websites and often these blogs are followed by a comment button to allow feedback (Kaldeen & Mohamed, 2019). WordPress users generate 70 million blog posts and 77 million comments are generated by the readers during each month (Ouellette, 2022). The contents that are shared by the travellers include very useful information about products, brands and companies. These contents often provide valuable inputs for destination marketing (Banyai, 2016). The online travel blogs usually include contents about satisfactions, expectations, services offered and recommendations (Gonzalo, 2017). Marketers believe that the blogging has been one of the most influential factors in marketing as 52% B2B marketers and 51% B2C marketers believe that blogging will be a critical factor to achieve success (Harris, 2017).

Implications for The Destination Management Companies in Sri Lanka

Most of the DMCs need good user created contents to build a good online reputation in order to be more competitive (Musanovic & Dorcic, 2016). As the competitive advantage is an important tool in the online tourism domain, maintaining online reputation is very important (Freire, 2011). Most of the travel companies are in undesirable positions due to the online word of mouth in the travel industry (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). Destination Management companies in Sri Lanka tourism industry has failed to make use of the e-tourism opportunities and they require a comprehensive reengineering in their operations and marketing activities to adopt new strategies to enhance their online image (Bandara & Silva, 2016). Online reputation is very important in the tourism industry and social media and online reviews significantly important in online reputation management (Bruno, et al., 2019). Managing online reputation of a destination management company is not like managing the reputation of a celebrity. Destination Management Companies need to avoid the customers getting a wrong idea about the company through online reviews and ratings and use those feedback to improve the quality of the customer service proactively (Ajanovic & Çizel, 2015). Travel industry is very sensitive to service complaints, health concerns and negative reviews. Travel companies need positive reviews and ratings to build credibility and brand image as significant number of customers review the company profiles on the sites like Google, Yelp, Oyster and TripAdvisor (Zimatore, 2020), and 90% of the customers look these sites before they book a trip (Abramky, 2022). Though many traditional travel companies in Sri Lanka possess full-service websites (Bandara & Silva, 2016), they have failed to compete with online travel agents and make use of the new online travel opportunities. Most of these organizations have very little user created contents to drive the online reputation.

Implications for The Destination Management Companies Globally

The insights gleaned from the referenced studies hold significant implications for Destination Management Companies (DMCs) worldwide, particularly within the dynamic landscape of online tourism. The cultivation of a robust online reputation through user-generated content (UGC) stands as a pivotal factor in enhancing competitiveness within the tourism industry. Studies emphasize the importance of UCC in shaping online reputation, serving as a powerful tool for DMCs to distinguish themselves and attract potential tourists. Moreover, the maintenance of a positive online reputation is paramount, as it not only fosters competitiveness but also serves as a strategic compass for DMCs in their planning and decision-making processes (Iglesias-Sánchez, Correia, Jambrino-Maldonado, & Heras-

Pedrosa, 2020). Online reputation is increasingly viewed as a critical indicator of a DMC's standing within the industry, guiding strategic initiatives and resource allocation. Leveraging shared media platforms enables DMCs to harness the potential of tourists in amplifying their online presence and bolstering their reputation (Iglesias-Sánchez, Correia, & Jambrino-Maldonado, 2019). However, it necessitates significant investments of time, resources, and active involvement in reputation management endeavors. The advent of online word-of-mouth presents both opportunities and challenges for DMCs. While positive reviews and ratings can enhance credibility and brand image, negative feedback can have detrimental effects on reputation. Hence, proactive measures to address customer concerns and utilize feedback for service improvement are imperative. The influence of online reviews and ratings cannot be understated, with a significant proportion of travelers relying on platforms like Google, Yelp, TripAdvisor, and others for decision-making (Zimmatore , 2020). This underscores the criticality of maintaining a positive online presence and actively managing online reviews to foster trust and credibility among potential customers. Despite the prevalence of online travel opportunities, many DMCs globally, including those in Sri Lanka, have struggled to capitalize on these advancements fully (Abramyk, 2022). This highlights the need for comprehensive reengineering of operations and marketing activities to align with evolving digital trends and seize emerging opportunities. The implications drawn from these studies underscore the imperative for DMCs worldwide to prioritize online reputation management, embrace digital innovation, and leverage user-generated content to enhance competitiveness and thrive in the digital era of tourism.

METHODOLOGY

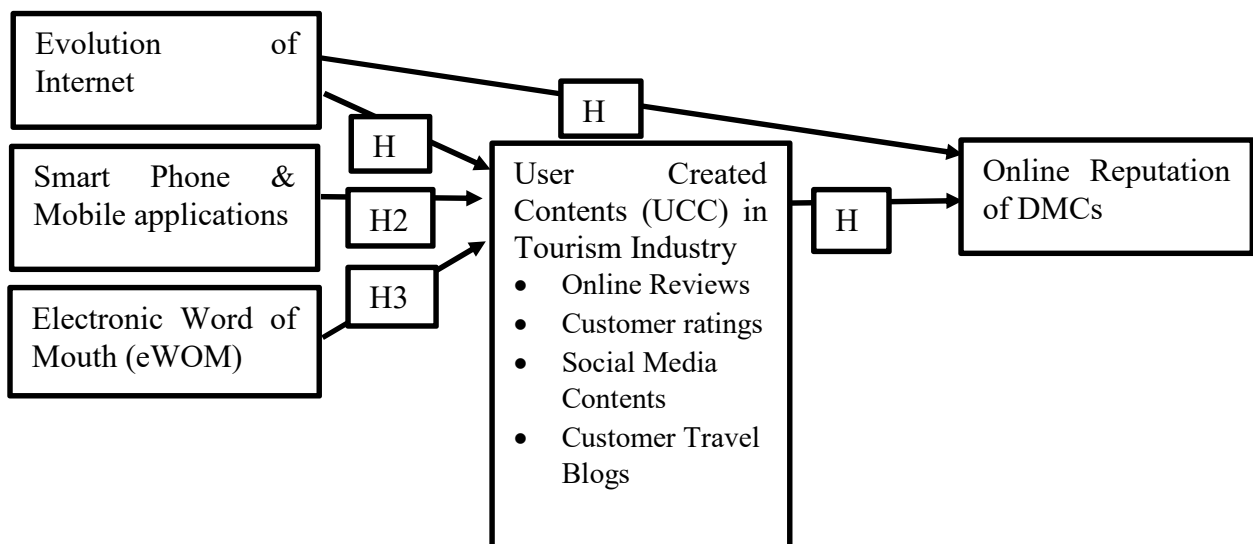
The methodological approach employed in this review paper entails a comprehensive examination of existing literature pertaining to User Created Content (UCC) and Online Reputation, with a specific focus on its implications for Destination Management Companies (DMCs) within Sri Lanka's tourism sector. The authors systematically conducted an extensive search of relevant literature concerning UCC, Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM), Online Reputation, and their intersections with the tourism industry, particularly within the Sri Lankan context. The selection of literature for inclusion in the review was conducted judiciously, considering factors such as currency, credibility, and pertinence to the research topic. Through this meticulous process, the authors identified and gathered pertinent information, theories, concepts, and empirical findings from the selected literature. This involved summarizing key insights, identifying recurrent themes, and amalgamating the

gathered information to construct a cohesive narrative. Subsequently, based on the synthesized literature, the authors developed a conceptual framework delineating the theoretical constructs and interrelationships pertinent to the study. This framework served as a guiding scaffold for comprehending the dynamics between UCC, eWOM, technological advancements, and their repercussions on DMCs' online reputation. The paper critically analyzed the findings derived from the literature review, elucidating the ramifications of UCC and eWOM on online reputation management for DMCs operating in Sri Lanka. The discussion underscored key challenges, opportunities, and strategic approaches for DMCs to adeptly navigate the digital landscape of tourism. Ultimately, the authors concluded the paper by encapsulating the key insights gleaned from the literature review and offering actionable recommendations for DMCs in Sri Lanka to fortify their online reputation management practices. These recommendations were formulated based on identified gaps, obstacles, and exemplary practices highlighted within the review. Overall, the methodological approach employed in this review paper exemplifies a systematic and rigorous process of synthesizing existing knowledge to furnish valuable insights for both industry practitioners and researchers within the realm of tourism, particularly within the Sri Lankan context.

Conceptual Framework

The online reputation has become the scoreboard for the Destination Management Companies to make their strategic decisions and the modern technology provides a significant contribution for building and influencing the online reputation through user created contents (Iglesias-Sánchez, Correia, & Jambrino-Maldonado, 2019). The below figure conceptualizes the theoretical construct of this study based on the available literature.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework



The evolution of web 2.0 technology has given birth to social media platforms, web 3.0 has helped to evolve knowledge connections and web4.0 has enabled intelligent connections (Kujur & Chhetri, 2015). These technologies have empowered content creations, retrieving and sharing easily through transparent, robust and synergetic systems (Ivanov, 2019). The integration of mobile applications and the increasing usage of smartphones have significantly contributed to the growth of user created contents (Melumad, Inman, & Pham, 2019). Frequent contributions of these type of contents by the travellers generate online reputation with a digital identity that can't be easily generated through marketing (Llodrá-Riera et al., 2015). The eWOM which has a greater influencing power on the web is a special communication tool that creates powerful user created contents (Abubakar and Ilkan, 2016). It has become a liability with no control (Yang, 2017). The empirical evidences suggest that the evolution of internet, smartphone and mobile applications, electric word of mouth (eWOM) influence the growth of user created contents in the tourism industry. These users created contents significantly influence the online reputation of the destination management companies.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of Worldwide web from web1.0 to web4.0 has created a paradigm shift in the online travel market during the last decade (Khan & Javaid, 2022). The travellers can create their own contents and share them to many others on the internet via the online tourism platforms. The recent developments of ICT, smartphone, mobile applications have empowered the users to create these contents even more conveniently and share with many others on the internet (Ransbotham, Lurie , & Liu, 2019). eWOM is becoming a more powerful tool in the online travel domain (Cantallops & Salvi, 2014). Users create contents about the products, brands and the companies and share them with others even before the organizations know it. Most of these contents are feedback of past, current and potential online buyers. More online users read these contents and see them as unbiased and trustworthy. This wave of user created contents in the tourism industry has kept most of the Destination Management Companies tested for their online reputation. This paper reviewed the literature related to User Created Content and Online Reputation with the view to provide a clear understanding about the implications that the Destination Management Companies in Sri Lanka should examine before they face an unseen wave of an online reputation crisis. The paper discussed about the contribution of the evolution of internet, smartphone and mobile

applications and eWOM for the growth of user created contents in the tourism industry. Emphatical evidences discussed under this literature survey emphasize the user-created contents about the destination management companies significantly influence their online reputation. In contrast, different authors have different viewpoints about the theatrical framework of user created content and online reputation. However, the empirical evidences depicted by the authors describe their power of influencing online reputation of the tourism products, companies and their brands and these findings give pre-signals for the Destination Management Companies in Sri Lanka.

REFERENCES

- Abramky, H. (2022). Top 10 online business review websites to get more customer reviews. Retrieved from Vendasta: <https://www.vendasta.com/blog/top-10-customer-review-websites/>
- Abubakar, A. M., & Ilkan, M. (2016). Impact of online WOM on destination trust and intention to travel: A medical tourism perspective. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 5(3), 192-201. doi:10.1016/j.jdmm.2015.12.005.
- Aghaei, S. (2012). Evolution of the World Wide Web : From Web 1.0 to Web 4.0. *International Journal of Web & Semantic Technology (IJWest)*. doi:10.5121/ijwest.2012.3101
- Ajanovic, E., & Çizel, B. (2015). What Makes A Successful Hotel Reputation Management Strategy: Qualitative Research On Tripadvisor Hotel Reviews. *Sitcon 2015 - Competitiveness Factors Of Tourism Enterprises*. Belgrade Serbia.
- Anatoli, C., Ashish, K., & Peter, O. (2019). Modeling the relationship between firm and user generated content and the stages of the marketing funnel. *International Journal Of Research In Marketing*. doi:10.1016/j.ijresmar.2018.09.005
- Bahtar, A. Z., & Muda, M. (2016). The Impact of User – Generated Content (UGC) on Product Reviews towards Online Purchasing – A Conceptual Framework. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 37, 337-342. doi:10.1016/S2212-5671(16)30134-4
- Baker, K. (2022). The Ultimate Guide to Content Marketing in 2023. Retrieved from Hubspot: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/content-marketing>
- Bandara, R. I., & Silva, D. (2016). E-tourism and roles of travel agencies: a case study of promoting Japanese inbound tourism in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Marketing*, 1(1), 17-31. Retrieved from <http://ir.lib.seu.ac.lk/handle/123456789/2414>
- Banyai, M. (2016). Travel Blogs in Marketing Research: Stories of Stratford, Canada. *Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally*, 65. Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra/2011/Visual/65>
- Barysevich, A. (2020). How social media influence 71% consumer buying decisions. Retrieved from Search Engine Watch: <https://www.searchenginewatch.com/2020/11/20/how-social-media-influence-71-consumer-buying-decisions/>
- Bashir, M. A., Ayub, N., & Jalees, T. (2017). The Impact Of The Firm Generated Contents And The User Generated Contents Through Social Media On Brand Equity Elements.
- Bruno, S., Yang, C., Tian, W., Xie, Z., & Shao, Y. (2019). Exploring the characteristics of tourism industry by analyzing consumer review contents from social media: a case

- study of Bamako, Mali. *Geo-spatial Information Science*, 22(3), 214-222. doi:10.1080/10095020.2019.1649848
- Cantalalops, A. S., & Salvi, F. (2014). New consumer behavior: A review of research on eWOM and hotels. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 36, 41-51. doi:10.1016/j.ijhm.2013.08.007
- Capatina, A., & Schin , G. C. (2017). Perceptions on Online Reputation Management in Tourism Industry (The Case of a Romanian Hotel). *Journal of Management Research*, 9(2). doi:10.5296/jmr.v9i2.10754
- Carreirão, P. (2019). Tripadvisor Reviews and Online Reputation Management. Retrieved from Asksuite: <https://asksuite.com/blog/tripadvisor-reviews-and-online-reputation-management/>
- Da Silva, C. N. (2021). A Guide To Star Ratings On Google And How They Work. Retrieved from Search Engine Journal : <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-star-ratings-guide/416951/>
- Dan . (2019). Your guide to online reputation management. Retrieved from Talkwalker: <https://www.talkwalker.com/blog/online-reputation-management>
- Eddy. (2015). Travel Companies need Online Reputation Management. Retrieved from Dcsplus: <https://www.dcsplus.net/travel-companies-need-online-reputation-management>
- Forsey, C. (2021). Reputation Management: How to Protect Your Brand Online in 2022. Retrieved from Hubspot: <https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/reputation-management>
- Freire, J. (2011). Destination brands: Managing place reputation (3rd edition). *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 7(4). doi:10.1057/pb.2011.25
- Gayetree. (2017). E-reputation in the tourism industry Travel Outsourcing. Retrieved from Travel Outsourcing: <https://travel-outsourcing.com/index.php/en/component/k2/item/13-e-reputation-in-the-tourism-industry>
- Gonzalo, F. (2017). Best Practices in Travel: Online Reputation. Retrieved from Frederic Gonzalo: <https://fredericgonzalo.com/en/best-practices-in-travel-online-reputation/>
- Gordon, G. (2018). User Ratings & Reviews: How They Impact ASO – Ultimate Guide. Retrieved from The tool : <https://thetool.io/2018/user-ratings-reviews-aso-guide#:~:text=the%20App%20Store,-To%20sum%20up%20%E2%80%93%20User%20Ratings%20%26%20Reviews%20for%20ASO,you%20don't%20neglect%20them.>
- Gössling, S., Zeiss, H., Hall, M., Martin-Rios, C., Ram, Y., & Grøtte, I.-P. (2018). A cross-country comparison of accommodation manager perspectives on online review manipulation. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 22(14), 1744-1763. doi:10.1080/13683500.2018.1455171
- Grewal, L. (2016). In Mobile We Trust: How Mobile Reviews Can Overcome Consumer Distrust of User-Generated Reviews. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. doi:10.2139/ssrn.2821667
- Grewal, L., & Stephen, A. (2019). In Mobile We Trust: The Effects of Mobile Versus Nonmobile Reviews on Consumer Purchase Intentions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 56(5). doi:10.1177/0022243719834514
- GSMA. (2019). The State of Mobile Internet Connectivity Report 2019. GSMA.
- Harris, J. (2017). Blogging Trends That Bring Content Marketing Down to Business. Retrieved from Content Marketing Institute: <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/articles/ blogging-trends-content-marketing/>

- Huete-Alcocer, N. (2017). A Literature Review of Word of Mouth and Electronic Word of Mouth: Implications for Consumer Behavior. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01256
- Hussain, S., Ahmed, W., Jafar, R. M., Rabnawaz, A., & Jianzhou, Y. (2017). eWOM source credibility, perceived risk and food product customer's information adoption. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 66, 96-102. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2016.09.034
- Iglesias-Sánchez, P., Correia, M., & Jambrino-Maldonado, C. (2019). Challenges in linking destinations' online reputation with competitiveness. *Tourism & Management Studies*, 15(1). Retrieved from <https://www.tlmstudies.net/index.php/ectms/article/view/1138>
- Iglesias-Sánchez, P., Correia, M., Jambrino-Maldonado, C., & Heras-Pedrosa, C. d. (2020). How do external openness and R&D activity influence open innovation management and the potential contribution of social media in the tourism and hospitality industry? *Information Technology & Tourism*, 22(3), 1-27. doi:10.1007/s40558-019-00165-y
- Ivanov, S. (2019). Web3.0: the road ahead for Waves. Retrieved from Medium: <https://sasha35625.medium.com/web3-0-the-road-ahead-for-waves-9bd8a51f63ce>
- Johnston, M., Kelly, R., & Kvilhaug, S. (2023). How Smartphones Changed Advertising. Retrieved from Investopedia: <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/personal-finance/062315/how-smartphones-are-changing-advertising-marketing.asp#:~:text=The%20Smartphone%20Effect,-This%20shift%20towards&text=Smartphones%20have%20become%20huge%20repositories,type%20of%20groups%20or%20>
- Kaemingk , D. (2020). Online reviews statistics to know in 2022. Retrieved from Qualtrics: <https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/online-review-stats/>
- Kaldeen, M. (2019). Impact of firm-created and user-generated social media. *Journal of Information Systems & Information Technology (JISIT)*, 4(2).
- Kaldeen, M., & Mohamed , H. T. (2018). E-Tourism: The Global Online Travel and Reintermediation. *Journal of Information Systems & Information Technology (JISIT)*, 3(2). Retrieved from <https://www.seu.ac.lk/jisit/publication/v3n2/paper3.pdf>
- Kannan, S. (2022). Web 3.0. Retrieved from Techopedia: <https://www.techopedia.com/definition/4923/web-30#:~:text=Web%20C%20also%20referred%20to%20as,everyone%20will%20use%20Zero%20Trust.>
- Kaur, A., & Kaur, K. (2022). Systematic literature review of mobile application development and testing effort estimation. *Journal of King Saud University - Computer and Information Sciences*, 34(2), 1-15. doi:10.1016/j.jksuci.2018.11.002.
- Khan , I. H., & Javaid, M. (2022). Role of Internet of Things (IoT) in Adoption of Industry 4.0. *Journal of Industrial Integration and Management*, 7(4), 515-533. doi:10.1142/S2424862221500068
- Kujur , P., & Chhetri, B. (2015). Evolution of World Wide Web: Journey From Web 1.0 to Web 4.0. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280944777_Evolution_of_World_Wide_Web_Jo
- Laricchia, F. (2023, January 17). Global smartphone penetration rate as share of population from 2016 to 2021. Retrieved from Statista: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/203734/global-smartphone-penetration-per-capita-since-2005/>
- Lemaic, I. (2019). The rise of User generated content. Retrieved from Medium: <https://medium.com/digital-reflections/the-rise-of-user-generated-content-24e85428f13e>
- Li, S.-K., Guan, Z., Tang , L.-Y., & Chen, Z. (2012). Exploiting Consumer Reviews for Product Feature Ranking. *Journal of Computer Science and Technology*, 27, 635-649. doi:10.1007/s11390-012-1250-z

- Llodrà-Riera, I., Martínez-Ruiz, M. P., Jiménez-Zarco, A. I., & Yusta, A. I. (2015). Influence of social media on motivations for visiting a destination and image formation. *International Journal of Technology Marketing*, 10(4), 413-430. doi:10.1504/IJTMKT.2015.072173
- Lyons, T. (2020). Web 3.0 and the return of privacy. Retrieved from Juliusbaer: <https://www.juliusbaer.com/en/insights/digital-disruption/web-30-and-the-return-of-privacy/>
- Marchiori, E., & Cantoni, L. (2011). The online reputation construct: does it matter for the tourism domain? A literature review on destinations' online reputation. *Information Technology and Tourism*, 13(3), 139-159. doi:10.3727/109830512X13283928066715
- Maurya, S. (2019). Embracing Web 3.0: The New Internet Era Will Begin Soon. Retrieved from Medium: <https://medium.com/hackernoon/embracing-web-3-0-the-new-internet-era-will-begin-soon-630ff6c2e7b6>
- McMenemy, L. (2019). Does the PESO Model Still Work? How Social Media Algorithm Changes Are Affecting Distribution and Planning. Retrieved from Sky Word: <https://www.skyword.com/contentstandard/does-the-peso-model-still-work-how-social-media-algorithm-changes-are-affecting-distribution-and-planning/>
- Melumad, S., Inman, J., & Pham, M. T. (2019). Selectively Emotional: How Smartphone Use Changes User-Generated Content. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 56(2). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022243718815>
- Moen, Ø., Havro, L. J., Bjerding, E., & Wright, L. T. (2017). Online consumers reviews: Examining the moderating effects of product type and product popularity on the review impact on sales. *Cogent Business & Management*, 4(1). doi:10.1080/23311975.2017.1368114
- Musanovic, J., & Dorcic, J. (2016). Tourism destination competitiveness and online reputation: Conceptualization and literature framework analysis. 23th International Congress Tourism and Hospitality Industry - Trends and Challenges. Opatija, Croatia.
- Nath, K., & Iswary, R. (2015). What Comes after Web 3.0? Web 4.0 and the Future. Shillong: Assam University.
- Nath, K., Dhar, S., & Basishtha, S. (2014). Web 1.0 to Web 3.0 - Evolution of the Web and its various challenges. International Conference on Optimization, Reliability, and Information Technology (ICROIT). Assam University. doi:10.1109/ICROIT.2014.6798297
- Obar, J., & Wildman, S. (2015). Social Media Definition and the Governance Challenge: An Introduction to the Special Issue. *Telecommunications Policy*, 39(9), 745-750.
- Ouellette, C. (2022). Ultimate List of Blogging Statistics and Facts. Retrieved from Optinmonster : <https://optinmonster.com/blogging-statistics/>
- PandoraFMS. (2022). What is web 4.0? Retrieved from PandoraFMS: <https://pandorafms.com/blog/web-4-0/>
- Patel, N. (2019). How to Leverage User-Generated Content to Boost Sales. Retrieved from Neil Patel: <https://neilpatel.com/blog/how-to-leverage-user-generated-content-to-boost-sales/>
- Peceny, U. S., Urbančič, J., Mokorel, S., Kuralt, V., & Ilijaš, T. (2019). Tourism 4.0: Challenges in Marketing a Paradigm Shift. *Consumer Behavior and Marketing*. doi:10.5772/intechopen.84762
- Pencarelli, T. (2020). The digital revolution in the travel and tourism industry. *Inf Technol Tourism*, 22, 455-476. doi:10.1007/s40558-019-00160-3
- Ploumidou, M. (2018). 5 Reputation Management Rules Every Hotel Should Follow. Retrieved from Hotel Speak: <https://www.hotelspeak.com/2018/06/5-reputation-management-rules-every-hotel-should-follow/>

- Ransbotham, S., Lurie , N., & Liu, H. (2019). Creation and Consumption of Mobile Word of Mouth: How Are Mobile Reviews Different? Marketing Science. doi:10.1287/mksc.2018.1115
- Resuello, L. (2022). New-Age Internet: Are you ready for Web 3.0 and Web 4.0 Marketing? Retrieved from Martechasia: <https://martechasia.net/features/are-you-ready-for-web-3-0-and-web-4-0-marketing/>
- Rodríguez-Díaz , M., Rodríguez-Díaz , R., & Espino-Rodríguez, T. (2018). Analysis of the Online Reputation Based on Customer Ratings of Lodgings in Tourism Destinations. Administrative Sciences, 8(3). doi:10.3390/admsci8030051
- Saleh, K. (2019). The Importance Of Online Customer Reviews. Retrieved from Invespro: <https://www.invespro.com/blog/the-importance-of-online-customer-reviews-infographic/>
- Sauciuc, A. (2020). Brand Reputation Monitoring in Tourism – Best Practices & Case Studies. Retrieved from Brand Mentions: <https://brandmentions.com/blog/reputation-monitoring-tourism/>
- Schooley, S. (2023). The Best Online Reputation Management Providers of 2023. Retrieved from Business.com : <https://www.business.com/categories/best-online-reputation-management-services/>
- Schuckert, M., Liu, X., & Law, R. (2015). Hospitality and Tourism Online Reviews: Recent Trends and Future Directions. Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 32(5), 608-621. doi:10.1080/10548408.2014.933154
- Smartdestination. (2022). What Is Tourism 4.0 and How to Attract the ‘New Traveler’? Retrieved from Smart Destination: <https://smartdestination.travel/what-is-tourism-4-0-and-how-to-attract-the-new-traveler/>
- Somal, S. (2018). Digital Reputation Management 101. Retrieved from CFA Institute: <https://blogs.cfainstitute.org/investor/2018/03/07/digital-reputation-management-101/>
- Terra, J. (2023). What is Web 1.0, Web 2.0, and Web 3.0? Definitions, Differences & Similarities. Retrieved from Simplilearn: <https://www.simplilearn.com/what-is-web-1-0-web-2-0-and-web-3-0-with-their-difference-article>
- Thao, N. T., & Shurong, T. (2020). Is It Possible for “Electronic Word-of-Mouth” and “User-Generated Content” to be Used Interchangeably? Journal of Marketing and Consumer Research. doi:10.7176/JMCR/65-04
- Tunçel, N., & Yılmaz, N. (2020). How Does Firm- and User-Generated Content Benefit Firms and Affect Consumers?: A Literature Review. IGI Global. doi:10.4018/978-1-7998-2185-4.ch005
- Verot, B. (2020). Online Travel Agencies - an essential part of your distribution strategy. Retrieved from Hotel Minder : <https://www.hotelminder.com/online-travel-agencies-an-essential-part-of-your-distribution-strategy>
- Yang, F. (2017). Effects of Restaurant Satisfaction and Knowledge Sharing Motivation on eWOM Intentions: The Moderating Role of Technology Acceptance Factors. Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research, 41(1). doi:10.1177/109634801351591
- Zimmatore , B. (2020). How to Manage (and Monitor) Your Reputation on Social Media. Retrieved from Entrepreneur: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/science-technology/how-to-manage-and-monitor-your-reputation-on-social-media/356670>