



European Institute of Innovation,
Entrepreneurship, and Technology

Title: The Influence of Online Reviews and Peer Recommendations on Travel Choices

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Submission date: 30.11.2025

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Abstract

The rapid digitalisation of the tourism and hospitality industry has transformed the way consumers search for information, evaluate alternatives, and make travel decisions. Online reviews and peer recommendations—particularly through platforms such as TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, Booking.com, and social media—now play a central role in shaping tourist behaviour. This assignment critically analyses how online reviews influence travel choices by examining the psychological mechanisms behind trust formation, perceived authenticity, and information processing. The literature further highlights the impact of peer recommendations and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on consumer attitudes, perceived risk, and booking intentions. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), and Social Influence Theory, the paper explores how travellers interpret digital feedback and integrate it into the decision-making journey. The shift from traditional marketing to user-generated content (UGC) is also discussed, demonstrating how consumers increasingly rely on online communities as trusted sources of information. The study incorporates real-world trends and case examples from the global tourism industry, emphasising the growing importance of authenticity, transparency, and digital trust in shaping modern travel choices.

Introduction

The tourism and hospitality industry has undergone fundamental transformation over the past two decades, largely driven by technological advancement and the digitalisation of communication. Where travellers once relied heavily on travel agents, guidebooks, and brochures, today's consumers are empowered with real-time access to vast amounts of information shared online. Online reviews, social media posts, ratings, and peer recommendations have become critical influences on how individuals research, evaluate, and select travel products and services. In a context where risk, uncertainty, and experience quality play major roles in tourism consumption, travellers increasingly turn to fellow consumers for guidance and reassurance.

Online reviews have become so influential that they now serve as a form of social proof, shaping expectations long before travellers arrive at a destination or accommodation. Platforms such as TripAdvisor and Google Reviews have millions of contributors generating user-generated content (UGC) that tourists perceive as more authentic and trustworthy compared to traditional advertisements. At the same time, peer recommendations disseminated through social networks—Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp—extend the reach of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), further influencing destination image, perceived service quality, and overall booking intentions.

This assignment explores in depth how online reviews and peer recommendations influence consumer behaviour in tourism. Using established consumer behaviour theories, the paper

examines how digital information shapes attitudes, subjective norms, risk perception, and purchase intentions. It further analyses how trust and perceived authenticity of reviews affect the extent to which tourists rely on these sources in their decision-making process.

The assignment follows the required academic structure, presenting a detailed literature review, methodological overview, findings, discussion, and conclusion. It integrates theoretical perspectives, contemporary trends, real-world data, and multiple case studies relevant to the tourism and hospitality sectors. As consumer behaviour in tourism evolves, understanding the mechanisms behind online influence becomes not only academically important but also strategically crucial for industry practitioners seeking to engage with digitally empowered travellers.

Literature Review

Consumer Decision-Making in Tourism

Consumer decision-making in tourism is inherently complex due to the intangible, experiential, and high-risk nature of travel products. Unlike physical goods, tourism experiences cannot be tested before purchase, making information search a crucial part of the consumer journey. According to Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard's Consumer Decision Model (2001), the decision-making process involves five stages: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase evaluation. Online reviews play a role in every stage, particularly in the information search and evaluation phases.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) also provides a useful framework for understanding how travellers form intentions. Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence whether individuals choose certain destinations or services. Online reviews contribute directly to attitudes by shaping expectations; they serve as subjective norms through social approval signals; and they influence perceived behavioural control by reducing uncertainty.

With the rise of digital platforms, travellers have shifted from passive recipients of marketing information to active participants in a dynamic information ecosystem. Recent studies show that over 90% of travellers read online reviews before making bookings (PhoCusWright, 2023), highlighting the dominant role of digital peer-generated information in tourism behaviour.

Online Reviews as a Digital Information Source

Online reviews are a powerful form of user-generated content that significantly influences consumer perceptions of destinations, hotels, and attractions. According to Filieri (2015), online reviews shape tourist expectations, influence attitudes toward service providers, and reduce

perceived risks associated with travel. Reviews offer insights into service quality, staff behaviour, cleanliness, convenience, and overall experience—factors essential for tourism consumption.

One of the critical advantages of online reviews is their accessibility. Platforms such as TripAdvisor, Agoda, and Booking.com allow users to filter, compare, and analyse feedback, giving travellers unprecedented control over information. The volume, valence (positive or negative), and recency of reviews further influence decision-making. A destination or hotel with a high number of recent positive reviews is more likely to be perceived as reliable and trustworthy.

Moreover, the digital environment fosters transparency. Reviews often include photos, videos, and detailed descriptions—elements that help consumers create mental imagery of potential experiences. This aligns with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), which suggests that travellers process information either through the central route (careful evaluation) or peripheral route (quick judgments based on cues such as star ratings). Online reviews cater to both processing styles, making them effective across a wide range of consumer segments.

Peer Influence and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

Electronic word-of-mouth is one of the most influential forces shaping tourism behaviour today. Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2008) define eWOM as informal communication about the characteristics of products or services via the internet. In the context of tourism, eWOM includes social media posts, travel blogs, discussion forums, WhatsApp recommendations, and digital conversations between friends.

Peer recommendations hold substantial weight because tourism experiences are subjective and emotionally driven. According to Social Influence Theory (Kelman, 1958), individuals are motivated to conform to others' opinions through compliance, identification, and internalisation. When a friend recommends a destination, travellers are more likely to imitate that behaviour to maintain social connection or trust the suggestion due to perceived similarity in preferences.

Studies show that peer recommendations are even more influential than anonymous reviews, as personal relationships enhance trust. Social media amplifies this effect: Instagram posts showcasing destinations, TikTok travel videos, and curated social feeds all contribute to shaping travel aspirations. The rise of micro-influencers further blurs the boundaries between peers and marketers, as travellers perceive relatable influencers as trustworthy sources of travel advice.

Trust, Credibility, and Perceived Authenticity

Trust is one of the most important determinants of how travellers interpret online reviews. According to Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman's (1995) Model of Trust, perceived ability, integrity, and benevolence determine whether information sources are considered reliable. Online reviews are trusted more when they are perceived as authentic, detailed, and balanced.

Authenticity cues include:

- reviewer profile transparency
- verified purchase indicators
- detailed narratives instead of vague comments
- inclusion of photos or videos
- consistency across multiple reviews

Fake reviews, however, pose a challenge. Research by Luca and Zervas (2016) estimates that up to 15% of online reviews may be fraudulent. This uncertainty heightens the importance of credibility signals, such as verified badges and platform moderation.

Peer recommendations generally receive higher trust because they come from known sources. The trust-transfer theory suggests that trust in a friend extends to trust in the information they share. This mechanism explains why many travellers rely heavily on personal recommendations when choosing destinations, activities, or accommodations.

Digital Platforms in the Tourism Ecosystem

Digital platforms are now central to tourism information search. TripAdvisor remains one of the most influential review sites, hosting hundreds of millions of reviews. Booking.com and Airbnb integrate verified guest feedback directly into their booking processes, making reviews unavoidable for modern travellers.

Social media platforms—Instagram, TikTok, Facebook—act as inspiration engines, influencing the earlier stages of the travel decision-making process. Visual content creates aspirational images that shape destination preferences, whereas review platforms support rational evaluation and comparison.

Google Reviews plays a unique role as it integrates reviews directly into maps and search, making it one of the most accessible sources during trip planning. Studies indicate that travellers increasingly use Google's aggregation of reviews, photos, and popularity ratings to make quick decisions, especially on mobile devices.

Digital platforms also influence travellers through algorithmic ranking systems. Hotels or restaurants with higher ratings and positive review sentiment often appear at the top of search results, amplifying their visibility. This creates a feedback loop where good reviews lead to more bookings, which lead to more reviews—shaping consumer behaviour at scale.

Negative Reviews and Risk Perception

Negative reviews have disproportionate influence on decision-making because travellers view tourism products as high-risk purchases. According to Prospect Theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), individuals weigh losses more heavily than gains, meaning that a few negative reviews can outweigh many positive ones.

Negative feedback signals potential service failures, poor hygiene, safety issues, or misrepresentation—factors that significantly impact perceived risk. Travellers often scrutinise negative reviews more carefully, seeking patterns or recurring issues. Hotels or destinations with unresolved negative comments may experience reduced bookings, even if the majority of reviews are positive.

Negative reviews also serve as opportunities for service recovery. Timely and professional management responses can mitigate damage and even enhance credibility by showing transparency and accountability. From a consumer behaviour perspective, such responses contribute to trust-building and help shape more balanced evaluations.

Methodology

Research Approach

This assignment adopts a qualitative, analytical research approach grounded in secondary data review. Since the objective is to understand how online reviews and peer recommendations influence consumer behaviour in tourism, the study synthesises insights from academic literature, industry reports, tourism datasets, and real-world case examples. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative approaches are appropriate when the goal is to interpret behavioural patterns and social dynamics, such as trust formation and information processing. The research therefore focuses on analysing existing studies rather than collecting primary data such as surveys or interviews. This allows for a broader understanding of trends across multiple contexts, platforms, and consumer groups.

The qualitative approach further aligns with the experiential nature of tourism. As consumer behaviour in tourism is shaped by perceptions, emotions, risk assessments, and subjective interpretations, examining narrative data—such as published case studies and review patterns—offers meaningful insights into decision-making processes. This method is also widely used in tourism behaviour research, reflecting the complexity and multi-layered nature of travel choices.

Data Collection Methods

The study relies entirely on secondary data gathered from the following sources:

- academic journals (e.g., Annals of Tourism Research, Journal of Travel Research, Tourism Management)
- industry reports (e.g., Statista, PhoCusWright, Expedia Group, TripAdvisor Insights)
- published tourism case studies
- consumer behaviour textbooks
- publicly available online review data
- governmental and tourism authority publications

These sources were selected for their relevance, credibility, and academic value. Particular emphasis was placed on research published within the last 10 years to ensure the assignment reflects contemporary digital behaviours, except in cases where foundational theories (e.g., Social Influence Theory, TPB, ELM) were necessary to build conceptual understanding.

Tourism industry statistics were also incorporated to illustrate patterns such as the percentage of travellers who rely on online reviews, the impact of star ratings on booking decisions, and the rise of social media as an inspiration tool. Including industry data strengthens the validity of the argument by contextualising theoretical insights.

Sampling Strategy

Because this assignment synthesises secondary studies, sampling refers to the process of selecting appropriate literature rather than individuals. A purposive sampling approach was used, following Palinkas et al. (2015), which involves intentionally selecting studies that are most relevant to the research topic. Criteria for inclusion included:

- studies that focus on tourism consumer behaviour
- research examining online reviews, eWOM, or peer influence
- publications using recognised theoretical frameworks
- studies with empirical relevance to travel decisions
- reports analysing digital behaviour patterns in hospitality and tourism

Studies that lacked methodological rigour, relevance, or credibility were excluded. This deliberate selection process ensures that the findings draw from recognised academic and professional sources.

Data Analysis Method

A thematic analysis method was employed to identify patterns in how online reviews influence consumer behaviour. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method for

identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. Through multiple rounds of reading and categorisation, key themes emerged:

- trust and credibility
- authenticity of review content
- perceived risk reduction
- social influence and normative pressure
- information overload and digital heuristics
- platform design and algorithmic impact
- role of visual UGC (photos, videos)

These themes informed the structure of the Findings section. The analysis also compared insights across different digital platforms to understand how travellers weigh various information sources.

Limitations

Several limitations are inherent in a secondary-data-based methodology. First, findings depend on the accuracy and validity of existing studies; biases or methodological issues in those studies may indirectly influence this analysis. Second, without primary data, this assignment cannot measure behavioural changes in real time or capture specific demographic differences within the student's target population. Third, tourism behaviour evolves rapidly due to technological advancements, meaning that some insights may become outdated as platforms change their features or algorithms.

Despite these limitations, the qualitative approach provides a comprehensive understanding of the broader mechanisms shaping traveller behaviour and remains appropriate for the assignment's learning outcomes.

Findings

Online Reviews Significantly Shape Destination and Accommodation Choices

The analysis overwhelmingly shows that online reviews play a decisive role in destination and accommodation selection. Studies report that between 85% and 95% of travellers consult online reviews before booking vacations, hotels, or activities (TripAdvisor Insights, 2023). Reviews provide travellers with concrete, experience-based information that cannot be obtained from polished marketing materials. This is especially relevant in tourism because service quality is intangible and varies significantly between providers.

Online reviews help consumers interpret the likely quality of experiences, such as:

- cleanliness of hotel rooms
- staff friendliness
- safety of environment
- accessibility of attractions
- reliability of transportation
- authenticity of cultural experiences

Positive reviews boost confidence and inspire interest, while negative reviews often disqualify options entirely. Research shows that even a small increase in rating can increase booking likelihood by as much as 10% (Anderson, 2012). Furthermore, hotels with higher average ratings command higher prices because travellers associate high ratings with high value.

Peer Recommendations Strongly Influence Traveller Attitudes and Intentions

The findings consistently support that peer recommendations—particularly through social media—are extremely influential in the early stages of the decision-making journey. When friends, family, or perceived peers share travel experiences, travellers:

- form positive destination images
- develop aspirational motivations
- trust recommendations because of personal connection
- are more likely to imitate behaviours

Social Influence Theory explains that travellers often adopt the opinions of their peers because they seek social approval or because peer experiences seem relatable and credible. Unlike anonymous reviews, peer recommendations carry emotional weight, as they reflect shared values or lifestyles.

Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok amplify this phenomenon. For example:

- users see curated travel reels
- influencers share “hidden gems”
- friends post travel highlights that generate FOMO (fear of missing out)
- WhatsApp groups circulate planning advice

Peer-generated content often triggers the desire to visit the same location, creating destination trends. For instance, the surge in tourist interest in Bali, Iceland, or Dubai in recent years has been partially attributed to social media visibility.

Trust and Perceived Authenticity Determine Review Influence

Authenticity emerged as one of the most important themes in the findings. Travellers do not trust all online reviews equally; instead, they rely heavily on signs of credibility. Reviews that include detailed explanations, balanced perspectives, and user-generated photos are perceived as more trustworthy. Platforms with verified badges, such as Airbnb or Booking.com, further enhance credibility.

The trustworthiness of reviews affects whether travellers integrate those reviews into their decision-making process. Low-trust reviews may be ignored entirely, whereas highly trusted reviews may shape expectations, perceived risks, and overall preferences.

Peer recommendations generally have higher authenticity because they come from familiar, non-commercial sources. This trust-transfer effect makes personal recommendations more persuasive than anonymous online feedback.

eWOM Reduces Perceived Risk

Travel decisions involve financial, psychological, social, and safety risks. eWOM plays a crucial role in reducing these risks by allowing travellers to learn from the experiences of others. Risk reduction includes:

- understanding safety levels
- avoiding poor-quality hotels
- identifying scams or misleading advertisements
- anticipating service quality
- preparing expectations

Research by Park and Lee (2009) highlights that consumers rely more heavily on negative reviews to evaluate risk. Negative reviews indicate potential service failures, which travellers use to avoid disappointment. This supports Prospect Theory, which states that consumers react more strongly to potential losses than gains.

For example, a single review reporting bed bugs or hygiene problems may immediately eliminate a hotel from consideration, regardless of numerous positive comments. This shows the psychological bias toward avoiding negative outcomes.

Visual User-Generated Content Greatly Enhances Review Impact

Photos and videos included in reviews significantly increase credibility and influence. Travellers often scroll extensively through images to validate claims about service quality, room size, or destination beauty. Visual UGC helps consumers imagine themselves in the destination, which strengthens emotional engagement and intention to visit.

Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have amplified the importance of visual content, making inspiration a key part of tourism consumer behaviour. Short-form videos, in particular, create emotional excitement and curiosity that influence travellers early in the decision-making stage.

Social Media Influencers Amplify Peer Effects

Influencers play a growing role in shaping travel demand. While influencers are not traditional peers, consumers perceive them as relatable, which creates a hybrid form of peer influence. Micro-influencers with small but engaged audiences often have strong persuasive power because they appear authentic and trustworthy.

Management Responses Influence Perceived Credibility

How businesses respond to reviews also affects consumer behaviour. Professional, polite, and solution-oriented responses can restore trust and mitigate damage from negative comments. Conversely, defensive or dismissive responses reinforce negative perceptions.

Overall, the findings reveal that online reviews and peer recommendations profoundly shape consumer behaviour in every stage of the travel decision-making process. Trust, authenticity, and digital visibility are critical factors determining how travellers interpret and act upon review information. Peer recommendations, visual UGC, and influencer content increasingly drive travel aspirations and early interest, while review platforms support more rational evaluation and risk assessment.

Discussion

The findings reveal that online reviews and peer recommendations significantly shape tourist behaviour at multiple stages of the decision-making process. This discussion section critically interprets those findings through the lens of theoretical frameworks and real-world industry trends, linking the implications back to the wider context of consumer behaviour in tourism.

The Central Role of Social Proof in Travel Decisions

The consistent influence of online reviews and peer recommendations underscores the strength of *social proof* in shaping consumer behaviour. As Cialdini (2007) explains, social proof occurs when individuals look to others' actions to guide their own behaviour in situations of

uncertainty. Tourism is a textbook example of such uncertainty: consumers invest substantial money, time, and emotional expectations into a product they cannot test before purchase.

Online reviews act as digital social proof by providing evidence of other travellers' experiences. Platforms such as TripAdvisor make social proof highly visible through:

- star rating systems
- popularity rankings
- “traveller’s choice” awards
- counts of review volume
- highlighted keywords from review sentiment

Peer recommendations on social media function similarly but with greater personal relevance. When a friend shares travel experiences, it activates emotional trust, prompting imitation. The omnipresence of travel content on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok makes social proof unavoidable, influencing desires and expectations.

These dynamics highlight that social proof has evolved from word-of-mouth conversations to global-scale digital influence, becoming one of the defining forces of modern tourism behaviour.

Cognitive Processing and Information Overload

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) helps explain how travellers process online reviews. According to ELM, consumers evaluate information via:

- **Central route:** careful, logical evaluation of detailed arguments
- **Peripheral route:** quick judgments based on cues such as ratings or number of reviews

Tourism consumers move fluidly between both routes depending on risk level, time pressure, and personal involvement. For expensive or long-term trips, the central route dominates: travellers read lengthy reviews, compare sources, and analyse details. For low-cost or routine decisions, peripheral cues such as star ratings or “top ranked” labels may be sufficient.

However, the sheer volume of reviews available today creates *information overload*. Instead of empowering consumers, too much information may overwhelm them, leading to reliance on shortcuts such as:

- filtering by highest rated
- scanning only recent reviews
- reading the top three positive and top three negative reviews
- trusting influencers or peers instead of long review lists

This shift suggests that while online reviews provide value, consumer behaviour often relies on heuristics rather than deep analysis, especially when facing decision fatigue.

The Rise of Visual Influence and Aspirational Travel

One of the most notable changes in modern tourism behaviour is the shift from text-based reviews to visually driven peer influence. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube have transformed consumer expectations, making *visual authenticity* as important as narrative credibility.

Travelers increasingly:

- imagine themselves in influencer-shared locations
- form expectations based on aesthetic appeal
- benchmark destinations based on social media trends
- use visuals to validate claims in text reviews

This aligns with the concept of *destination image*, a psychological representation shaped by external stimuli. Visual user-generated content (UGC) accelerates the creation of powerful destination images, often elevating previously unknown destinations into global hotspots.

The trend also reflects the emotional nature of tourism consumption. Visuals evoke excitement, curiosity, and aspiration in ways that text reviews cannot. As a result, visual UGC often drives the early stages of the decision-making process, while written reviews support the later evaluation stage.

Trust Formation and Authenticity Challenges

While online reviews are powerful, authenticity concerns complicate their influence. The prevalence of fake reviews, paid recommendations, and influencer sponsorships creates scepticism. Consumers are increasingly aware of the potential for manipulation.

Yet, rather than abandoning reviews, travellers employ strategies to assess authenticity, such as:

- prioritising verified purchase reviews
- trusting platforms with strict moderation
- valuing balanced reviews over overly positive or negative ones
- relying more on peer recommendations for major decisions

This selective trust shows that travellers are active evaluators rather than passive consumers of digital information. It also highlights the importance of transparency for tourism brands. Businesses that display genuine, unfiltered reviews and respond professionally to complaints build stronger trust and credibility.

Peer Recommendations as a Psychological Shortcut

Peer influence operates not only through trust but also through deeper psychological mechanisms. Based on Social Influence Theory, peer recommendations shape behaviour through:

- **Compliance:** Consumers follow advice to maintain social harmony

- **Identification:** They imitate people they admire (e.g., influencers)
- **Internalisation:** They adopt recommendations aligned with personal values

These mechanisms make peer influence especially strong in tourism, where emotional motivations—escape, adventure, status, belonging—play major roles. Peer content often taps into identity and lifestyle aspirations, making recommendations feel personalised and relatable.

The psychological shortcut created by peer influence reduces decision effort. Rather than analysing dozens of options, travellers often choose destinations or services endorsed by peers. This explains why certain destinations suddenly surge in popularity after viral posts or influencer campaigns.

The Amplifying Effect of Platform Algorithms

Algorithmic curation further shapes consumer behaviour. Platforms boost certain reviews, rankings, or listings based on engagement metrics. This creates a digital environment where visibility is not neutral but influenced by platform logic.

Consequences include:

- highly rated businesses become increasingly dominant
- recent reviews appear more trustworthy
- negative reviews may be buried or highlighted depending on platform policies
- algorithms shape what information users see first

This means consumer behaviour is not influenced solely by review content but also by the digital architecture that structures that content. Tourists believe they are freely choosing based on information, yet their options are subtly steered by algorithmic design.

Negative Reviews and the Bias Toward Loss Avoidance

The disproportionate effect of negative reviews reflects core behavioural economics principles. According to Prospect Theory, consumers fear losses more than they value gains. In tourism, a “loss” could mean:

- money wasted on a poor hotel
- unpleasant experiences
- safety concerns
- embarrassment when travelling with companions

Therefore, negative reviews heavily influence decision-making, especially when:

- they appear recent
- they include photos
- they mention service failure
- multiple users report the same issue

The fear of disappointment drives consumers to scrutinise negative reviews thoroughly. However, when businesses respond professionally, this fear can be mitigated, which reinforces the importance of review management as part of tourism strategy.

Implications for Tourism and Hospitality Businesses

The analysis highlights crucial implications:

1. Online reputation management is essential.

Traveller choices are highly sensitive to online feedback. Hospitality businesses must prioritise consistent monitoring, professional responses, and service improvements based on review insights.

2. Visual UGC must be integrated into marketing.

Encouraging guests to share authentic visuals helps build trust and appeal, especially on image- and video-driven platforms.

3. Influencer partnerships can amplify destination visibility.

However, partnerships must appear authentic to avoid scepticism.

4. Transparency builds long-term trust.

Consumers reward brands that display genuine reviews rather than hyper-curated content.

5. Personalised and peer-driven marketing is increasingly effective.

Travelers value relatable content, making micro-influencers and peer-sharing campaigns impactful.

Conclusion

This assignment examined how online reviews and peer recommendations shape modern travel decisions. The findings demonstrate that digital information—especially user-generated content—has fundamentally transformed tourism consumer behaviour. Online reviews reduce uncertainty, guide evaluation, and shape expectations, acting as a vital form of social proof. Peer recommendations, amplified through social media, strongly influence early travel inspiration and destination image formation.

The theoretical frameworks explored in this paper—including the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Social Influence Theory, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, Prospect Theory, and trust formation models—explain the psychological mechanisms underlying digital influence. Together, these frameworks highlight that consumers rely heavily on both rational and emotional cues when making travel choices.

Visual user-generated content, influencer marketing, and algorithmic ranking systems further enhance the power of online reviews, making digital platforms central to the tourism decision-making ecosystem. Negative reviews play a disproportionately strong role due to risk aversion, while authenticity remains a critical determinant of trust.

For tourism and hospitality businesses, the implications are clear: managing online reputation, promoting authentic UGC, engaging responsibly with influencers, and ensuring transparency are essential strategies for attracting the digitally empowered traveller.

As digital platforms continue to evolve, their influence on travel behaviour will only intensify. Understanding these dynamics is therefore crucial not only for academic insight but for practitioners seeking to meet the expectations of modern global travellers.

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