



THE ROLE OF ONLINE REVIEWS IN SHAPING TOURIST DECISION-MAKING

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Abstract: *Online reviews have become a determining factor in tourists' decision-making process, significantly influencing the perception of service quality and the level of trust in providers within the tourism industry. This paper aims to analyze the role and impact of online reviews on tourist consumer behavior, using a theoretical approach based on specialized literature. The main mechanisms through which the opinions expressed by other users influence individual choices are highlighted, as well as the factors that contribute to their perceived credibility. At the same time, both the advantages of using online reviews, such as quick access to information and the diversity of opinions, and their limitations are analyzed, including the risk of false, exaggerated, or manipulative information. The paper also discusses how these reviews can shape the image of tourist destinations and service providers. Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of effectively managing digital reputation in the tourism sector, in the context of an increasingly competitive market.*

• Introduction

The digitalization of the tourism industry and the development of information technologies have significantly changed tourist consumer behavior. Online reviews and digital platforms have become important sources of information, influencing perceptions of service quality, destination image, and trust in tourism providers. Consumers increasingly rely on the opinions of other users to compare alternatives and reduce the uncertainty associated with the decision-making process. In this context, online reviews represent a central element of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication and an important factor in building digital reputation in tourism.



• Material and method

The research has a theoretical character and is based on the analysis of specialized literature in the fields of tourism, marketing, and consumer behavior. Scientific articles, academic books, and reference papers indexed in databases such as Google Scholar and ScienceDirect were analyzed. The study included relevant sources published between 2004 and 2025, focusing on tourist consumer behavior, electronic word-of-mouth communication (eWOM), the credibility of online reviews, and digital reputation in tourism. The research method consisted of a comparative and synthetic analysis of information from the specialized literature.



• Results and discussions

The results highlight that online reviews influence all stages of the tourist decision-making process: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase intention, final decision, and post-consumption behavior. Consumers attach great importance to reviews perceived as authentic, detailed, and credible. Positive reviews contribute to the formation of a favorable image of destinations and tourism services, while negative reviews can significantly affect consumer perceptions.

The study shows that online reviews reduce uncertainty and perceived risks by offering a form of "indirect experience." At the same time, after consumption, consumers become generators of online content, contributing to the electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) process and influencing the decisions of other tourists. Important limitations were also identified, such as fake reviews, information overload, and the influence of cognitive biases on the interpretation of information.

In addition, the research emphasizes the importance of digital reputation for the competitiveness of tourism organizations. Effective feedback management and active interaction with customers contribute to increasing trust and strengthening organizational image.



• Conclusions

Online reviews represent an essential factor in shaping tourist decision-making and significantly influence consumer behavior. They contribute to reducing uncertainty, evaluating alternatives, and supporting tourism-related choices. At the same time, digital reputation has become a strategic element for organizations operating in the tourism industry.

Despite their advantages, the use of online reviews requires a critical approach due to the risks associated with false information and content manipulation. Therefore, effective digital reputation management and the promotion of responsible online behavior are important conditions for the sustainable development of modern tourism.