

Exploring User-Generated Content In Tourism: Insights From Moroccan Travelers.

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ABSTRACT

User-Generated Content (UGC) has significantly transformed the tourism industry, reshaping destination marketing strategies and influencing tourist decision-making processes. This study explores the perceptions of UGC among Moroccan travelers, gathering responses from 265 participants through a survey. The findings highlight the significant role that UGC plays in what travelers think and how they choose their next vacation destination. Furthermore, this study shows how content created by regular people play a huge part in how travelers behave. It also shows that the use of social media and engaging content is important in specific marketing strategies to attract travelers.

KEYWORDS

User-Generated Content, Content Marketing, Tourism Industry, Social Media, Moroccan Travelers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over recent years, social media platforms have experienced a flood of User-Created Content (UCC). This surge of UGC has wielded significant influence on the hospitality and tourism sectors, functioning as a vital source of information for travelers, managers, and researchers. Ultimately, it has instigated a paradigm shift, reshaping conventional business practices within these industries. The evolution of technology presents formidable challenges to entities such as travel agencies, hotels and destination marketing companies; yet concurrently offers uncharted opportunities due to its revolutionary impact on communication & distribution channels through enhanced connectivity & efficiency.

The development of UGC has had a profound influence on tourism industry, as the rise of social media channels and online review platforms empowered people to share their travel experiences and opinions worldwide (Burgess et al., 2009; Minazzi, 2015). Consequently, there has been a fundamental transformation in the way travel planning and booking are done, as well as in how tourism destinations promote themselves on social media (Nguyen & Tong, 2023).

The digital age has brought significant changes to the ever-changing travel business. Traditional advertising strategies have been replaced by authentic, engaging and impact-driven ones (Ana & Istudor, 2019). UGC is emerging as a game-changer for travel brands and tourism boards, offering unparalleled opportunities for engagement and influence (Marine-Roig & Clavé, 2015).

This study adds to the current knowledge by examining how Moroccan travelers utilize User-Generated Content (UGC) in the tourism industry. Through studying the effects and sway of UGC on travel choices and destination promotion, the aim is to reveal valuable insights that can guide tourism stakeholders in utilizing UGC to their advantage.

2. STATE OF ART

Social media platforms and the rise of user-generated content (UGC) online have provided tourists with effortless access to a variety of information. This wealth of information allows individuals to engage with the experiences, opinions, and views of fellow travelers, thereby influencing their decision-making strategies (Marine-Roig & Clavé, 2015; Xiang, Schwartz, & Uysal, 2015).

Furthermore, the widespread adoption of the Internet and mobile technologies has enhanced the use of content (UGC), giving individuals the unparalleled ability to instantaneously create digital content (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). Several activities such as comparing airlines, recording road trips and sharing multimedia content, all participate in the expansion of user-generated content (UGC) on online platforms and, major social media platforms such as Facebook, TripAdvisor, Twitter (X currently), Yelp (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015).

Plus, as of January 2024, DataReport reported that the number of users on social media platforms will reach approximately 5.04 billion, representing almost two-thirds of the world's population (DataReport, 2024). These statistics highlight the reach and impact of social media platforms, making them important channels for distributing UGC.

Moreover, content-generated content (UGC) and its integration with social media platforms have emerged as major forces shaping the hospitality industry, having a significant impact on both travelers' decision-making processes and travel experiences (Sigala et al., 2012). Travelers often share their first-hand experiences, opinions, and recommendations on hotel forums, providing valuable insights that inform and guide others in pre- and post-trip considerations (Kitsios et al., 2023; Nguyen & Tong, 2023). Also, Aydin (2020) highlights the increased trustworthiness and authenticity of UGC by noting its superiority over traditional tourism information sources, thus reinforcing its importance in consumer decision-making (Kitsios et al., 2023).

Research has shown that travelers rely heavily on feedback from fellow travelers who have been to destinations of interest in the past. These peer recommendations play an important role in shaping tourists' perceptions and decisions, highlighting the importance of UGC in influencing consumer behavior in the tourism industry (Assaker, 2020; Lam, Ismail, & Lee, 2020).

In marketing terminology, user-generated content websites act as platforms for consumer-to-consumer e-marketing, similar to electronic word-of-mouth (WOM). It's the place where people freely share their opinions and experiences (Ahuja et al., 2007; Cox et al., 2009). A comprehensive marketing strategy for businesses in the travel and tourism sector should include both UGC and non-UGC sources (Minazzi, 2015). This integrated approach increases brand visibility, trust and credibility while fostering greater engagement with customers.

In addition, the study highlights the changing trust among travelers in receiving online recommendations from fellow individuals who have previously visited places of interest (Kitsios et al., 2023). This trend reflects a broader paradigm shift in the tourism industry, where UGC, especially on social networking sites, has become commonplace at every stage of the travel journey, from initial planning to on-site experience (Kitsios et al., 2023).

Moreover, in many cases where travelers have, word of mouth is the most influential factor in destination decision making (Litvin et al., 2008). Travelers tend to place greater trust in the advice of friends, family, and peer groups, especially when considering unfamiliar destinations (Litvin et al., 2008). This trust is rooted in the perceived fairness of word-of-mouth recommendations. People trust them to be honest because those offering advice usually don't receive financial rewards (Burgess et al., 2009; Litvin et al., 2008).

Recognized as an electronic form of word-of-mouth marketing (eWOM), user-generated content has a significant impact on consumer perceptions and behavior (Ahuja et al., 2007; Kim & Hardin, 2010; Zhang, Craciun, & Shin, 2010). This mirrors traditional word-of-mouth marketing, where satisfied customers share their experiences with friends, family and acquaintances, even though through electronic means (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015; Soderlund, 1998).

Thus, user-generated content (UGC) represents a paradigm shift in media and marketing, empowering consumers to create and share content outside of traditional marketing channels (Fernando, 2007; Burgess et al., 2007; 2009). With the advent of tools such as blogs and social networking sites, consumers are not only active contributors but also interested consumers of user-generated content, driving decision-making of knowledge and participation in online communities is easy (Buhler, 2006).

Defined as the posting of creative works on publicly accessible websites that have no direct connection to economic gain or commercial interests, UGC has grown exponentially since its

emergence in the 1990s (OECD, 2007; Shao, 2009; Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). The result of this growth has been the incorporation of virtual communities, consumer review forums, independent blogs, microblogging forums, social networks, media sharing tools, and wikis (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

Furthermore, the impact of UGC extends beyond just sharing information; It essentially shapes the entire tourism decision-making process, covering pre-trip, during and post-trip (Amatulli et al., 2019; Oliveira & Casais, 2019; Nezakati et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2023). This transformational impact highlights the importance of not only adoption by tourism stakeholders but also effective use of UGC to enhance marketing strategies and consumer engagement efforts.

As a result, consumers of hospitality and tourism services are increasingly reliant on User-Generated Content (UGC) for both information sharing and decision-making processes (Lu & Stepchenkova, 2015). Online consumer accounts are perceived as trustworthy sources, offering timely, informative, and detailed insights relevant to travelers' needs (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). Word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations hold significant sway over consumer behavior, with well-reasoned reviews often influencing purchase likelihood (Park, Lee & Han, 2007). However, the impact of negative WOM aimed at venting frustrations may diminish (Wetzer, Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2007). In the context of travel, sharing word-of-mouth experiences is often driven by emotional encounters, underscoring the subjective nature of consumer recommendations (Burgess et al., 2009; Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008).

The advent of big data analytics has also allowed hotel managers to gather deep insights into customer expectations, enabling them to develop targeted market segmentation strategies and optimize marketing spend (Kitsios et al., 2023). By harnessing data generated by UGC, hosting businesses can tailor their offerings to align with changing consumer preferences, thus strengthening competitiveness and granting sustainable growth in the industry. Furthermore, user-generated content is a strategic tool for businesses, allowing them to collect, analyze and explore customer research for valuable insights into customer preferences and their emotions (Kitsios et al., 2023). This approach allows companies to adapt their product offerings and services to customer expectations and needs, thus increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Criticism of the impact of UGC on tourist decision making in the travel industry is often based on concerns about the validity and reliability of such information. Burgess et al. (2009) highlight the ability of travel agents masquerading as independent reviewers to post 'fake'

information, undermining the integrity of UGC as a credible guide for traveler decision-making processes (Bray & Schetzina, 2006). This challenge poses significant obstacles to the autonomy and objectivity of UGC, the important attributes of its reliability and usefulness to consumers.

Park et al. (2007) argue that online consumer reviews are more credible than information provided by suppliers of products and services due to perceived honesty. However, this trust is not without challenges, as UGC often comes from unfamiliar sources, raising concerns about its credibility and reliability (Burgess et al., 2009; Park et al., 2007; Litvin et al., 2008). This distinction between traditional and word-of-mouth UGC highlights the importance of addressing authenticity concerns to maximize the value of user-generated content in guiding consumer decision-making.

3. CROSS-INDUSTRY INSIGHTS: HARNESSING USER-GENERATED CONTENT

User-Generated Content (UGC) has found its application in various industries. Among others, the food and beverage sector and the fashion industry stand out. Leading brands in these areas have successfully harnessed consumer-generated content to stimulate engagement, mold brand perceptions, and nurture community ties. These sectors serve as examples in this comparative analysis, which aims to draw valuable insights that can be applied to enhance UGC strategies within the tourism sector in Morocco.

- Food and Beverage Industry:

The food and beverage industry clearly demonstrates the incredible impact of User-Generated Content (UGC) in influencing consumer behavior and brand loyalty. For example, Starbucks, known for its innovative approach, engages consumers by using UGC to create immersive brand experiences (Davicik et al., 2022). Through the simple act of customers sharing their favorite Starbucks moments on Instagram with the hashtag #Starbucks, they not only become brand ambassadors but also inspire others to participate in the Starbucks experience. Similarly, Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign, which encourages consumers to personalize their bottles of Coke and share their moments on social media, illustrates how UGC enables dissemination and engagement (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2015; Vincent & Ajilore, 2019).

- **Fashion Industry:**

The fashion industry embraces UGC as a driving force behind brand recognition, trend discovery, and consumer engagement. Nike, a global leader in sportswear and footwear, uses UGC to showcase the athleticism and creativity of its customers (Geurin & Burch, 2017; O'Hern & Kahle, 2013). The Nike Run Club app encourages users to share their running achievements and photos, giving runners around the world a sense of community. Similarly, Zara invites customers to share their #ZaraStyle on social media, showcasing how individuals style their Zara clothing and accessories (Ferdows et al., 2003). Influencers and fashion enthusiasts play an important role in increasing brand visibility and product recognition by sharing user-generated content on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest (Montecchi & Nobbs, 2018).

Drawing upon lessons from various industries, the transformative potential of User-Generated Content (UGC) becomes evident. The strength of UGC lies in its authenticity, which, when harnessed in the tourism sector, serves as a powerful medium for showcasing unique attractions and experiences that any region offers. Tourists sharing their experiences generate persuasive content that can influence potential travelers. This comparative analysis underscores the strategic value of UGC in enhancing both the competitiveness and sustainability of any tourism sector.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND METHODS

In this study, we gathered data via a survey designed to explore tourists' preferences, behaviors, and attitudes regarding User-Generated Content (UGC) within the tourism sector. The survey, comprising 12 multiple-choice closed questions, was distributed using Google Forms. We opted for closed questions to streamline response collection, administration, and subsequent data analysis, thereby maintaining consistency among participants and interviewers.

To achieve a diverse and representative sample, we distributed the survey through various channels, including LinkedIn and Facebook groups dedicated to travel and tourism. Participants were randomly selected to capture a broad range of responses. Despite the random selection process, we gathered 265 responses within the allotted timeframe. Notably, the survey remains open to collect additional responses for ongoing analysis. Administering the questionnaire online offered advantages such as cost-effectiveness, rapid response times, and ease of administration.

Following data collection, we conducted univariate analysis using graphical methods to analyze responses. Each survey question was individually scrutinized to identify trends, preferences, and patterns among respondents. We also expanded our analysis to include bivariate analysis using SPSS. This includes the application of the Chi-square test and the analysis of Phi and Cramer's V indicators. This additional layer of analysis allows us to examine the relationships between different variables in our data, providing a more nuanced understanding of travelers' perceptions and behaviors regarding UGC in the tourism sector.

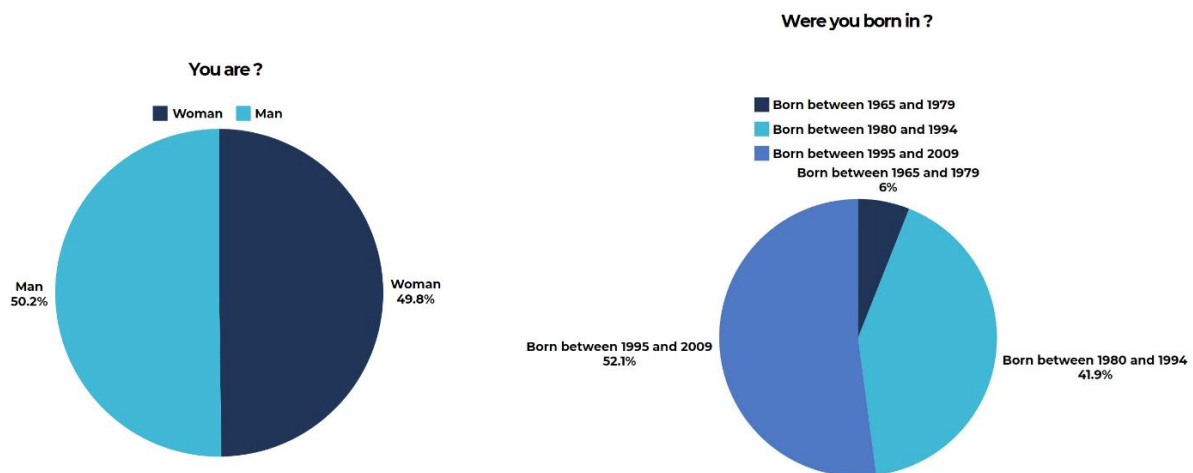
Overall, our data collection process and methods aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of travelers' perspectives on UGC.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1.GRAPHICAL UNIVARIATE ANALYSIS

This subsection delves into the outcomes of our univariate analysis. We scrutinize the graphical interpretations of each survey question, aiming to discern patterns, trends, and preferences that emerge from the respondents' data.

Figure 1: Profile of Survey Respondents: Gender and Age Distribution



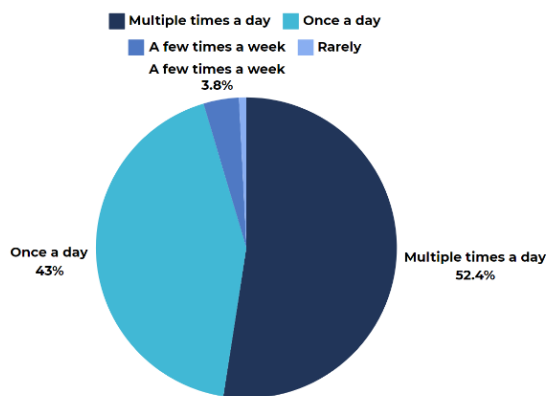
Source: Authors

Survey respondent profiles (Figure 1) show a balanced gender, with 49.8% females and 50.2% males. The majority of them belong to Generation Z, typically born between 1995 and 2009, constituting 52.1% of the total sample. Close behind were millennials, or Generation Y, born

between 1980 and 1994, at 41.9%. A minority of 6% born between 1965 and 1979 belong to Generation X. Notably, there were no respondents born before 1965 or after 2010. This division primarily reflects young populations, with individuals born in the late 20th and early 21st centuries represented more. This demographic pattern suggests potential influences on preferences and behaviors related to user-generated content in tourism marketing strategies. Since both generations Y and Z are digital natives or immigrants, who frequently engage with user-generated content online, these data suggest a strong tendency towards consuming and creating such content within the context of tourism marketing.

Figure 2: Frequency of Encountering User-Generated Content in Online Tourism Browsing

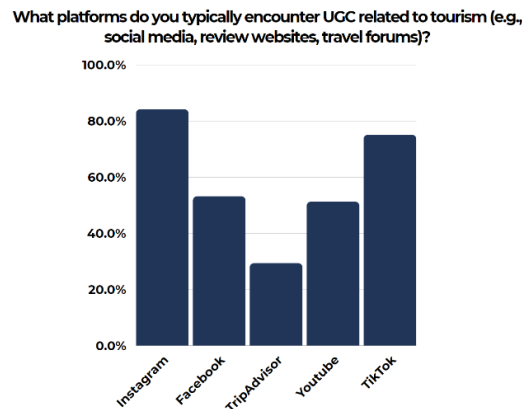
How often do you come across user-generated content related to tourism (e.g., photos, reviews, videos) while browsing online?



Source: Authors

The graph above (Figure 2) illustrates the frequency at which respondents encounter user-generated content related to tourism while browsing online. A majority of respondents, comprising 52.5%, indicated encountering such content multiple times a day. Additionally, 43% reported encountering user-generated tourism content once a day. A smaller proportion, 3.8%, stated they come across such content a few times a week. Notably, only 0.8% of respondents reported encountering user-generated tourism content rarely, while none indicated never coming across such content. This data underscores the prevalence of user-generated content in the online tourism sphere, with a significant portion of respondents encountering it daily.

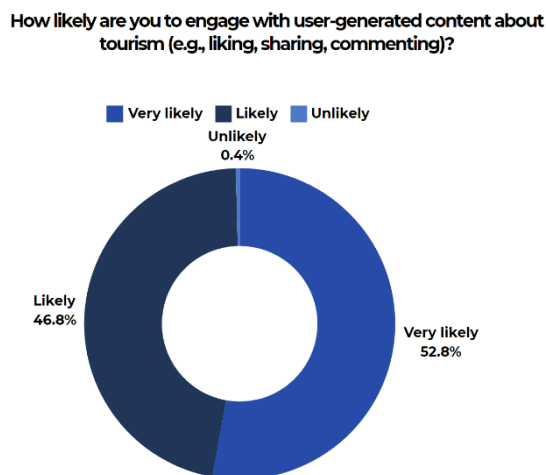
Figure 3: Platforms for Tourism-Related User-Generated Content



Source: Authors

When considering the platforms where respondents typically come across user-generated content related to tourism (Figure 3), Instagram emerges as the primary platform, with 84.2% of respondents reporting encountering such content. TikTok closely follows at 75.1%. Additionally, Facebook and YouTube play significant roles, with 53.2% and 51.3% of respondents encountering user-generated content on these platforms, respectively. TripAdvisor is also noteworthy, with 29.4% of respondents encountering such content there. This data highlights the widespread presence of user-generated content across various online platforms in the tourism sphere. The frequent encounters, particularly on Instagram and TikTok, suggest a deep integration of user-generated content into individuals' online browsing habits, indicating its influential role in shaping perceptions and decision-making processes in tourism.

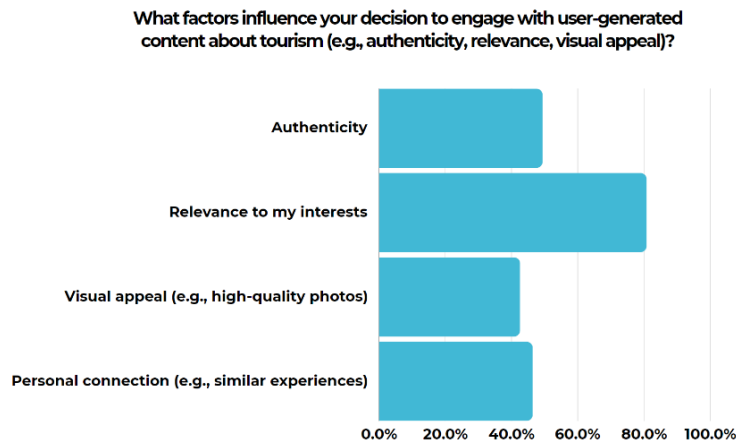
Figure 4: Engagement with Tourism-Related User-Generated Content



Source: Authors

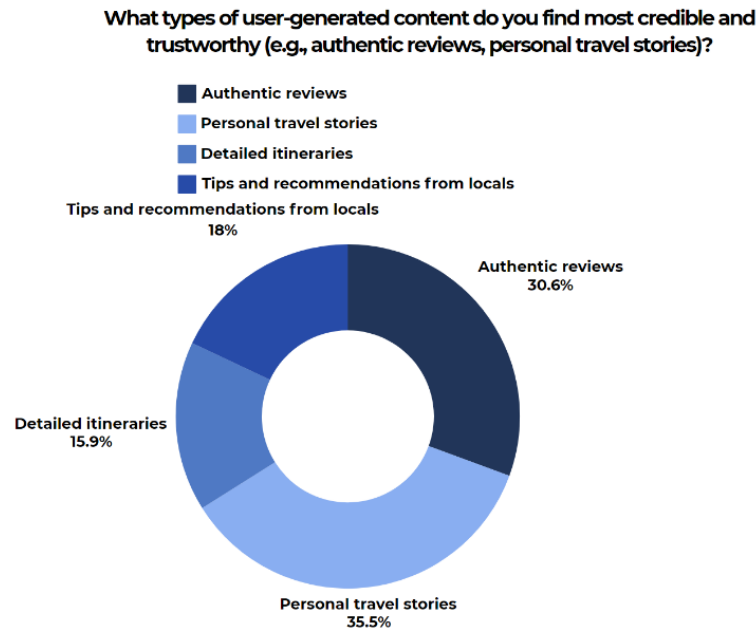
The graph (Figure 4) illustrates respondents' inclination to engage with user-generated tourism-related content, such as liking, sharing, and commenting. A majority of respondents, totaling 52.8%, expressed a strong likelihood of participating in such content. In addition, 46.8% said they could participate in user-generated tourism profiles. Notably, none of the the respondents indicated that it was unlikely unlikely that they would be involved with this type of content, while none expressed a neutral opinion. These findings reveal a greater tendency among respondents to actively interact with user-generated tourism content, indicating a willingness to participate in online tourism content through liking, sharing and commenting on user content.

Figure 5: Factors Affecting Engagement with Tourism User-Generated Content



Source: Authors

Figure 6: Perceived Credibility of User-Generated Content in Tourism



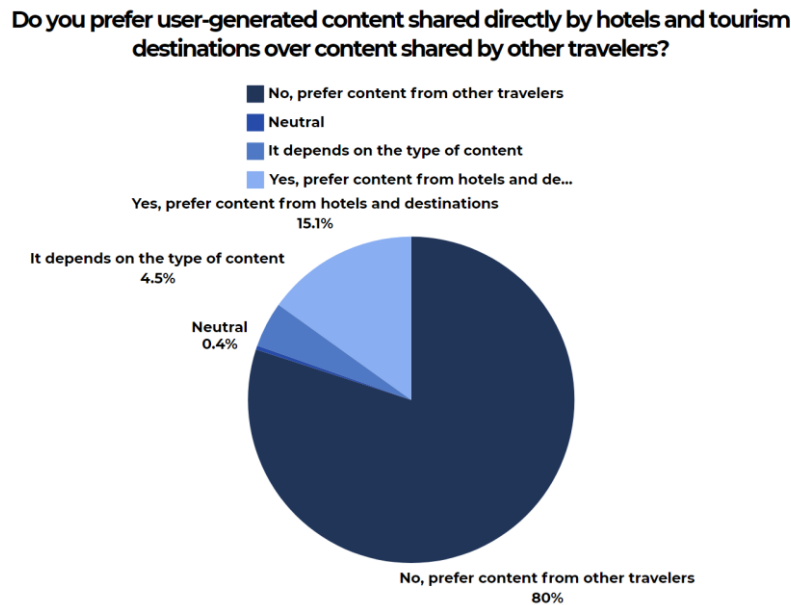
Source: Authors

Moreover, figures 5 and 6 depict the elements impacting participants' choices to interact with user-generated content linked to travel, along with their beliefs in the trustworthiness and reliability concerning different kinds of UGC.

In terms of engagement (Figure 5), relevance to individual interests emerges as the most crucial element, with a noteworthy 80.8% of participants indicating its significance. Authenticity comes closely after, with 49.4% of participants appreciating this characteristic in user-generated travel content. Additionally, personal attachment and visual appeal are also recognized as important elements, with 46.4% and 42.6% of participants respectively acknowledging their impact on participation choices.

As for credibility and trustworthiness (Figure 6), personal travel narratives are deemed as the most reliable form of user-generated material, with an overwhelming 79.6% of participants finding them trustworthy. Authentic evaluations also hold substantial weight, with 68.7% of participants seeing them as credible sources of information. In the meantime, comprehensive travel plans and advice from locals are seen as slightly less trustworthy, although still appreciated by a significant portion of participants, with 35.8% and 40.4% respectively.

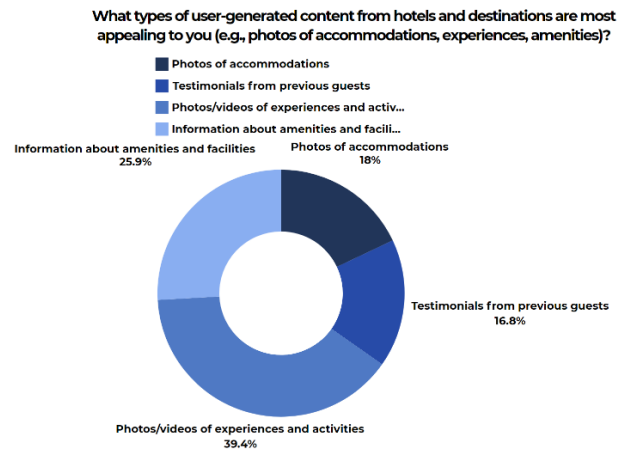
Figure 7: Source Preference for User-Generated Content: Hotels and Destinations vs. Travelers



Source: Authors

The information presented in Figure 7 shows that the majority of participants, approximately 80%, favor content created by other travelers. On the other hand, only 15.1% of respondents prefer content provided directly by hotels and destinations. A tiny fraction, 4.5%, indicated a liking for a particular category of content, whereas 0.4% stayed impartial. These findings emphasize a strong preference for user-generated content shared by fellow travelers, indicating a higher level of trust and authenticity associated with content that comes from peer experiences rather than promotional material from hotels and destinations. This preference highlights the importance of recommendations from peers and firsthand experiences in influencing the perceptions and decision-making processes of travelers.

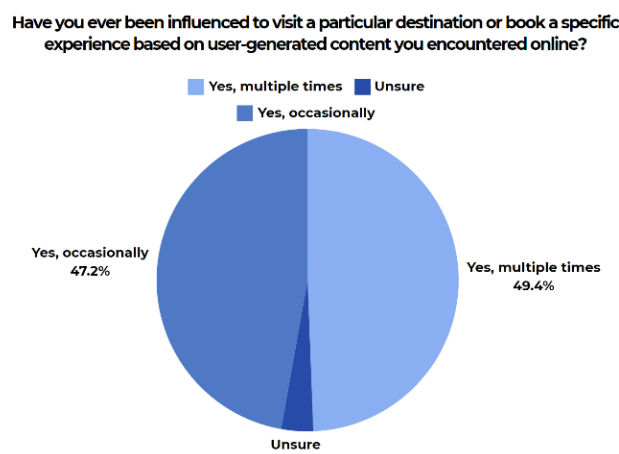
Figure 8: Preferred User-Generated Content from Hotels and Destinations



Source: Authors

The data shown in figure 8 indicates that a significant majority of participants, 86.8%, are most attracted to photos or videos of experiences and activities shared by hotels and destinations. Furthermore, 57% show interest in details about amenities and facilities, while 39.6% are interested in images of accommodations, and 37% value feedback from past visitors. This indicates a strong preference for visual content that showcases experiences and activities provided by hotels and destinations, meeting the desires of modern travelers for immersive and interactive digital experiences. It emphasizes the significance of engaging imagery in attracting the interest and intrigue of potential tourists, stressing the vital role of visual narratives in conveying the unique features and atmosphere of accommodations and locations, ultimately influencing travel choices.

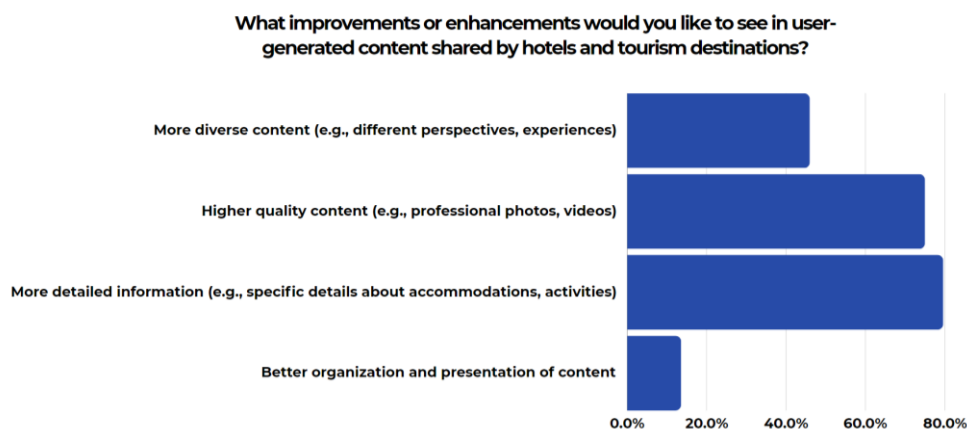
Figure 9: Influence of Online User-Generated Content on Travel Decisions



Source: Authors

The graph above (figure 9) suggests that respondents have clear expectations regarding improvements or enhancements in user-generated content shared by hotels and tourism destinations. A significant majority of 79.6% express a desire for more detailed information, including specific details about accommodations and activities. Additionally, 75.5% emphasize the importance of higher quality content, such as professional photos and videos. Furthermore, 46% of respondents seek more diverse content, including different perspectives and experiences. However, only 13.6% prioritize better organization and presentation of content. These discoveries demonstrate a high demand for user-created material that is not just informative and aesthetically pleasing but also varied and extensive in its inclusion of different facets of the journey experience.

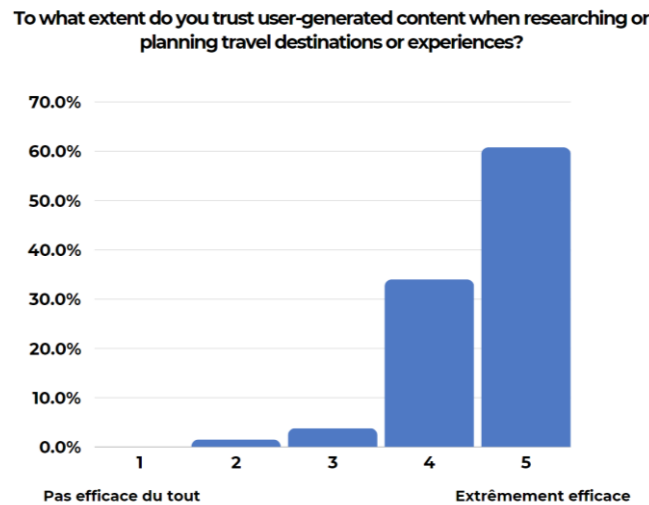
Figure 10: Recommendations for Enhancing User-Generated Content from Hotels and Tourism Destinations



Source: Authors

As per the results shown in figure 10, a significant 49.4% of participants have been swayed on numerous occasions to explore a certain location or reserve a particular activity after coming across user-created content on the internet. Additionally, 47.2% of respondents mentioned sporadically being influenced by such content when making travel choices. Interestingly, none of the respondents reported never being influenced by user-generated content, while a small percentage of 3.4% expressed uncertainty. These findings emphasize the significant impact of user-generated content on travel decision-making, highlighting its effectiveness in inspiring and influencing travelers' destination choices and experiences.

Figure 11: Level of Trust in User-Generated Content for Travel Research or Planning



Source: Authors

To sum up, we inquired the participants about their reliance on user-created material while exploring or organizing trips or adventures (Figure 11). The data discloses a strong level of faith among participants, with a noteworthy 60.8% reporting complete trust and another 34% showing a high level of trust. Interestingly, none of the participants showed complete skepticism in user-generated content. These discoveries underscore the notable trust invested in user-generated content by travelers when searching for information and direction for their travel encounters.

5.2.BIVARIATE ANALYSIS

Following the univariate analysis, we delve into the bivariate analysis using SPSS. This additional layer of analysis allows us to examine the relationships between different variables in our data, providing a more nuanced understanding of travelers' perceptions and behaviors regarding UGC in the tourism sector.

5.2.1. GENERATION-BASED TRUST IN USER-GENERATED CONTENT FOR TRAVEL PLANNING

This analysis explores the correlation between respondents' generation cohorts (captured in Question 2) and their trust in user-generated content (UGC) when researching or planning destinations and travel experiences (measured by Question 12). By examining this relationship,

we aim to understand whether different generations exhibit varying levels of trust in UGC during their trip planning process.

Table1: Dependency analysis between generation and trust in UGC

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16,235 ^a	6	,013
Likelihood Ratio	17,430	6	,008
N of Valid Cases	265		

Source: Authors

Table 2: Analysis of the intensity of the correlation between generation and confidence in UGC

Symmetric Measures

	Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal Phi	,248	,013
Cramer's V	,175	,013
N of Valid Cases	265	

Source: Authors

Tables 1 & 2 reveal a significant relationship between respondents' generational cohorts and their trust in UGC for travel planning. The Pearson's chi-square test obtained a value of 16.235 ($p < 0.05$) indicating a statistically significant relationship between generational cohorts and trust in UGC.

The Phi coefficient stands at 0.248, and Cramer's V coefficient is 0.175. These coefficients suggest a moderate positive correlation between generational cohorts and trust in UGC for travel planning. In simpler terms, different generational groups exhibit varying levels of trust in UGC. For instance, it's observed that certain generational cohorts may express higher levels of trust in UGC compared to others when considering travel planning. This variation could be

influenced by factors such as differing attitudes towards technology, social media usage patterns, or past experiences with UGC.

Understanding these differences in trust levels among generational cohorts is essential for marketers and tourism professionals. Tailoring content and communication strategies based on the preferences and trust levels of each generational group can enhance engagement and effectiveness in reaching target audiences across different age segments.

5.2.2. FREQUENCY OF EXPOSURE TO UGC AND PROPENSITY TO ENGAGE

This analysis delves into the correlation between the frequency of encountering user-generated content related to online tourism (captured in Question 3) and the propensity to engage with that content (measured by Question 5). By examining this relationship, we aim to understand whether individuals exposed to user-generated content more frequently are also more likely to interact with it.

Table3: Dependency analysis between Frequency of Exposure to UGC and Propensity to Engage

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	169,770 ^a	6	,000
Likelihood Ratio	168,157	6	,000
N of Valid Cases	265		

Source: Authors

Table 4: Analysis of the intensity of the correlation between Frequency of Exposure to UGC and Propensity to Engage

Symmetric Measures

	Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal Phi	,800	,000
Cramer's V	,566	,000
N of Valid Cases	265	

Source: Authors

The analysis in Tables 3 & 4 reveals a significant relationship between the frequency of encountering UGC and the propensity to engage with this content. The Pearson's chi-square test yielded a value of 169.770 ($p < 0.05$), affirming an association between exposure to UGC and engagement.

Moreover, the Phi coefficient is 0.800, and the Cramer's V coefficient is 0.566. These coefficients suggest a moderate positive correlation between the frequency of exposure to UGC and the propensity to engage. In simpler terms, individuals exposed more frequently to UGC are more inclined to interact with this content. This variation could be influenced by factors such as attitudes towards technology, social media usage patterns, or past experiences with UGC.

Understanding these differences in engagement levels among individuals exposed to UGC is essential for marketing and tourism professionals. Adapting content and communication strategies based on the preferences and trust levels of each group can enhance communication effectiveness across different age segments.

5.2.3. IMPACT OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT TYPES ON USER ENGAGEMENT

This analysis explores the correlation between the types of user-generated content perceived as credible and trustworthy (captured in Question 7) and the tendency to interact with such content (captured in Question 5). By examining this connection, our goal is to determine if certain types of user-generated content are more effective at driving user engagement than others.

Table5: Dependency analysis between Types of User-Generated Content and Propensity to Engage

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	160,336 ^a	26	,000
Likelihood Ratio	144,590	26	,000
N of Valid Cases	265		

Source: Authors

Table 6: Analysis of the intensity of the correlation between Types of User-Generated Content and Propensity to Engage

Symmetric Measures

	Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal Phi	,778	,000
Cramer's V	,550	,000
N of Valid Cases	265	

Source: Authors

The analysis, as presented in Tables 5 & 6, unveils a significant relationship between the types of user-generated content perceived as credible and trustworthy and the propensity to engage with that content. The Pearson's chi-square test indicates a value of 160.336 ($p < 0.05$), indicating an association between content types and engagement.

Furthermore, the Phi coefficient is calculated at 0.778, and the Cramer's V coefficient at 0.550. These coefficients suggest a strong positive correlation between content types and the propensity to engage. In essence, certain types of user-generated content prove highly effective at driving engagement. This variation could be influenced by factors such as authenticity, relevance, and perceived credibility.

Understanding these nuances in content types is crucial for marketing and content strategy professionals. Tailoring content approaches based on the preferences and trust levels associated with each type can significantly enhance communication effectiveness across diverse audiences.

5.2.4. INFLUENCE OF CONTENT SOURCE ON USER TRUST

This analysis explores the association between preference for content generated by hotels and destinations over content generated by other travelers (captured in Question 8) and trust in user-generated content when researching or planning destinations or travel experiences (measured

by Question 12). By examining this relationship, we seek to understand if the source of user-generated content influences the perception of its trustworthiness and credibility.

Table7: Dependency analysis between Content Source Preference and Trust in UGC

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	53,100 ^a	9	,000
Likelihood Ratio	30,886	9	,000
N of Valid Cases	265		

Source: Authors

Table 8: Analysis of the intensity of the correlation between Content Source Preference and Trust in UGC

Symmetric Measures

	Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal Phi	,448	,000
Cramer's V	,258	,000
N of Valid Cases	265	

Source: Authors

The analysis in Tables 7 & 8 uncovers a significant relationship between preference for content generated by hotels and destinations and trust in user-generated content (UGC) for travel planning. The Pearson's chi-square test showed a value of 53,100 ($p < 0.05$), confirming an association between content source preference and trust in UGC.

In addition, with a Phi coefficient of 0.448 and a Cramer's V coefficient of 0.258, there is a moderate positive correlation between content source preference and trust in UGC. Put simply, individuals who prefer content from hotels and destinations are more likely to trust UGC. This

variation could be influenced by factors such as perceived credibility, reliability, and alignment with personal preferences.

Grasping these dynamics is crucial for marketing and travel professionals. Tailoring content strategies based on user preferences can enhance communication effectiveness and foster trust among different audiences.

5.2.5. MOST IMPACTFUL USER-GENERATED CONTENT TYPES ON TRAVEL DECISIONS

This analysis examines the association between preferred types of user-generated content (captured in Question 9) and the influence of user-generated content on the decision to visit a destination or book a specific experience (measured by Question 10). By exploring this relationship, we seek to determine which types of user-generated content have the greatest impact on respondents' travel decisions.

Table 9: Dependency analysis between Preferred User-Generated Content Types and Travel Decisions

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	169,882 ^a	24	,000
Likelihood Ratio	190,152	24	,000
N of Valid Cases	265		

Source: Authors

Table 10: Analysis of the intensity of the correlation between Preferred User-Generated Content Types and Travel Decisions

Symmetric Measures

	Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal Phi	,801	,000
Cramer's V	,566	,000
N of Valid Cases	265	

Source: Authors

The analysis, as presented in Tables 9 & 10, uncovers a substantial relationship between preferred user-generated content types and the influence of user-generated content on travel decisions. The Pearson's chi-square test indicates a strong association between content types and travel decisions ($p < 0.05$).

Furthermore, with a Phi coefficient of 0.801 and a Cramer's V coefficient of 0.566, there is a very strong positive correlation between user-generated content types and travel decisions. Simply put, certain types of user-generated content significantly influence respondents' travel choices.

These insights can assist marketing and travel professionals in customizing content strategies to effectively shape travel decisions across diverse audiences.

Drawing from an analysis of both graphs and survey data, along with the knowledge gained from the research conducted in this study, it is evident that User-generated content (UGC) has transformed destination marketing and given travelers the ability to openly share their thoughts. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TripAdvisor, and YouTube have emerged as primary sources of inspiration and recommendations, providing genuine and varied details through images, clips, and written content. UGC influences wanderlust by sharing personal experiences and unveiling hidden gems, thereby encouraging spontaneous travel decisions.

Online reviews and ratings play a pivotal role in building consumer trust and influencing bookings. However, the surge of UGC presents challenges, such as identifying pertinent information amid the volume and questions about authenticity. Despite these obstacles, UGC profoundly impacts the tourism industry, transforming marketing practices and enabling destinations and businesses to showcase their offerings.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this research and the thorough analysis of review of literature highlight the significant influence of User-generated content (UGC) on the tourism sector. The empirical data obtained from the survey highlights the significant role that UGC plays in influencing travelers' decision-making processes, from destination selection to booking experiences. Platforms like Instagram, TripAdvisor, and YouTube have emerged as powerful tools, offering authentic and diverse information through photos, videos, and written posts.

Moreover, within the new media landscape, consumers wield unprecedented power through their ability to create content, express opinions, and influence others via social networks, forums, and complaint sites (Minazzi, 2015). In response, tourism companies must adapt their marketing research and strategies to maintain brand control, retain existing customers, and attract new ones (Akehurst, 2009; Alikiliç, 2008). Neglecting to comply with this instruction may result in losing authority over brand supervision and overlooking chances to interact with existing and prospective clients.

Additionally, travelers seek engagement with their preferred brands and value platforms where they can read authentic traveler comments and share their own impressions (Ana & Istudor, 2019; Minazzi, 2015). By integrating UGC functionalities into their online presence, tourism providers can cultivate genuine communities around their brands, effectively engaging with their audience (Lam, Ismail, & Lee, 2020).

Despite the challenges posed by the surge of UGC, such as identifying pertinent information amid the volume and questions about authenticity, its impact on the tourism industry is undeniable. UGC has reshaped destination marketing practices and enabled destinations and businesses to showcase their offerings in innovative ways. The transformative potential of UGC in shaping the future of travel and tourism cannot be overstated.

As we progress, it is crucial for companies in the tourism sector to seize the chances offered by User-Generated Content (UGC) while tackling the related obstacles. Through skillfully utilizing the influence of UGC, providers in the tourism industry can amplify their brand's presence, cultivate trust among consumers, and establish significant relationships with their intended audience. Let us persist in delving into and utilizing the potential of UGC to stimulate favorable transformations and originality within the tourism field.

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