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The Impact of Electronic Word-of-Mouth Antecedents on Tourist  
Purchase Intentions in the HORECA industry:  
The Mediating Role of visual eWOM on Instagram

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## Abstract

**Background and Objectives:** Among the wide popularity of social networking platforms where information is often consumed quickly, electronic word of mouth (eWOM) proved to be influential. Visual eWOM has gained the attention of researchers in the HORECA sector as visual content tends to capture attention more effectively than plain text enabling HORECA establishments to stand out and make a stronger impression. An enormous number of authors have explored the concept of eWOM and its implication on consumer booking intentions. However, the current study aims to investigate the role of information quality, credibility, website quality, motivation, innovativeness, destination fascination, popularity heuristics, destination image and user generated content conveyed through visual eWOM shared in the Instagram application on consumer booking intention in the HORECA sector.

**Methodology:** Using positivism as a research philosophy thus a deductive approach, the quantitative research method was adopted where primary data was gathered using an online survey which was pilot tested then modified to achieve a high internal consistency. Pollfish.com, the survey tool, was used to gather responses from the sample of n=300 international tourists from around the world. Respondents from two different demographic profiles, including Generation Y and Generation Z, were targeted in the survey to provide a distinct perspective on visual eWOM and its implications on those two generations' booking intentions when traveling for leisure. Primary data gathered through the survey was analyzed using Statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) where descriptive and inferential statistics were used to propose research findings by conducting various statistical tests which include frequency distribution, independent T test, Whitney U test, Bivariate correlation, simple regression and Hayes process macros.

**Findings:** The study suggests that all variables which included information quality, credibility, website quality, motivation, innovativeness, destination fascination, popularity heuristics, destination image and user generated content have significant impact on visual eWOM using Instagram. Furthermore, findings from Hayes process macros reveal visual eWOM both directly and indirectly mediates the relationship between all the variables and consumer booking intentions. Lastly, findings reveal that there are significant differences in terms of perception of Generation Y and Generation Z when it comes to information credibility and destination fascination.

**Implications:** The findings of the study propose significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the study validates the role of the dynamics of visual eWOM using Instagram supporting the key assumptions made by the theory of planned behavior, uses and gratification theory, elaboration likelihood model, information adoption model, and technology acceptance model. Lastly, practical implications are proposed for marketing professionals and policymakers to increase the potential of HORECA establishments using social media platforms like Instagram.

**Keywords:** Visual eWOM, consumer booking intentions, social media, Generation Y, Generation Z, online reviews, HORECA, Instagram, consumer behavior.



## **Dedication**

To my beloved husband and my precious three children. This thesis may bear my name, but its roots lie in the fertile ground of your endless love and patience. You embraced my late nights, cheered my victories as your own, and whispered encouragement when the path seemed long. This Ph.D. is a beacon of knowledge, illuminating the path for all of us, a reminder that with unwavering support, even the loftiest dreams can take flight.



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Thank you once again for your endless support and mentorship.

## Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the

University of Nicosia. It is a product of original work of my own, unless otherwise mentioned

through references, notes, or any other statements.

Signed *Jessy Kfoury Aoun*

Date: **11 October 2024**



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## Abbreviation Index

|        |                               |
|--------|-------------------------------|
| CBBE   | Consumer-based brand equity   |
| ELM    | Elaboration Likelihood Model  |
| eWOM   | Electronic Word-of-Mouth      |
| FOA's  | Food Ordering Apps            |
| HORECA | Hotel, Restaurant, and Café   |
| IAM    | Information Adoption Model    |
| OBD    | Online Booking Decisions      |
| PU     | Perceived Usefulness          |
| SEM    | Structural Equation Modeling  |
| SNS    | Social Networking Sites       |
| TAM    | Technology Acceptance Model   |
| TPB    | Theory of Planned Behavior    |
| UGC    | user-generated content        |
| UGT    | Uses and Gratification Theory |
| WOM    | Word-of-Mouth                 |

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**



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## **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter serves as an introduction to the thesis, presenting an overview of the research background and explaining the research problem. It continues by highlighting research gaps in the field of tourism, particularly about the influence of electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) on decision-making and tourist information searches within the hospitality and the Hotels, Restaurants, and Cafés (HORECA) industry. Social media platforms, such as Instagram, along with the shared appealing pictures and their call-to-action buttons, have positively influenced how tourists search for, interact, and assess accommodations, destinations, and dining experiences. The research study's aim is to discover the influence of visual eWOM antecedents including information quality, information credibility, popularity heuristics, motivation, destination fascination, innovativeness, website quality and user-generated content, particularly on tourists' booking intentions with the mediating role of eWOM in Instagram within the HORECA industry. The objectives of the research are highlighted, and the research questions that guide the study concentrate on the consideration of eWOM on social networking sites (SNS) during the planning of the trip, the impact of visual eWOM on the processing of consumer messages, the influence of Instagram on tourists' information search behavior, and the impact of visual eWOM (Instagram) on tourists' booking intentions. By addressing the research gaps and answering the research questions, the study's objective is to contribute to the understanding of the influence of visual eWOM and social media usage on tourists' decision-making processes in the HORECA industry.

### **1.1 Research Background and Problem Statement**

#### **1.1.1 Tourism and Hospitality Industry**

Tourism and hospitality are essential in every region's economy, society, and culture. The tourism industry as a whole has evolved in a post-pandemic context. According to UNWTO (2023), international tourism in 2023 has reached 90% of the pre-pandemic level as international tourism figures accounted for \$1.4 trillion, compared to 1.5 trillion in 2019. The Middle East, Asia Pacific, and Europe are leading the international HORECA market share. The HORECA industry, which heavily depends on customer loyalty and satisfaction, has become the main contributor to most states' revenues and even the worldwide economy. The progress of the tourism industry has positively empowered certain groups of communities. Tourism has been identified as a sector of strategy that integrates into many sectors of nations' development.

### **1.1.2 Journey from Word of Mouth to E-Word of Mouth**

Word of Mouth (WOM) refers to the informal communication between individuals regarding an organization, brand, product, or service. WOM plays an essential role in consumer decision-making, with several individuals depending upon it as an information source when selecting services or products. In the travel industry, Yoon and Uysal (2005) notably suggested that WOM is one of the most desirable sources of information.

The widespread use of online communication platforms and rapid technological advancement have shifted businesses' traditional game and marketing practices from traditional WOM to electronic WOM, also called eWOM. eWOM encompasses recommendations, opinions, and online reviews and with the advancement of technology, it has become progressively significant.

Nilashi et al. (2022) state that eWOM contains informal communication aimed at consumers through internet-based technology that emphasizes the attributes of services and goods or their sellers. This communication can happen between consumers and brands or between consumers themselves. The study also classified eWOM into two dimensions: (a) scope of communication, ranging from one-to-one by emails or many-to-many (virtual communities), one-to-many (review sites), and (b) interactivity level, varying from asynchronous (blogs, review sites and email) to synchronous (instant messaging, chat rooms and newsgroups). The speed of interaction and range of influence can differentiate traditional WOM influences from eWOM's impact.

Information technology's emergence has greatly influenced marketing, and eWOM has significantly impacted consumers' purchasing decisions. eWOM can have a significant positive or negative influence on a company or product and is easily reachable on the internet. In the tourism industry, eWOM positively distributes the image and quality of tourist destinations, improving customer loyalty and satisfaction. Tourist destinations are often selected based on the destination image and consumers' destination, which is maintained and constructed through non-tourism and promotion activities. Social media users can empower eWOM which affects the destination image, tourist interest, and trust in visiting depending on other viewers (Aprilia and Kusumawati, 2021).

eWOM has transformed how customers utilize and perceive media for creating content and sharing information. The rise of many media channels of eWOM, such as third-party review sites, social media websites, and the company's website, has made it easy for information searchers to achieve trustworthy and helpful information about different

services and products in the tourism and travel sector. These platforms have enabled tourists to obtain relevant information and reviews about hotels, restaurants, travel, tourist destinations, and other services posted by users worldwide. Users can post reviews in photos, videos, and text, making it easy for visitors to make informed decisions. With eWOM media channels, tourists can choose the best tour and compare information from different review websites. This can help limit the significant risk linked with making purchases during the online decision-making process, which led to an increased focus on eWOM as an essential element in the tourism and travel industry, highlighting the significance of online reputation management for tourism and other hotel businesses (Nilashi et al., 2022). Bore et al. (2017) state that eWOM is more robust due to easy access and speed, inexistent interpersonal pressure, and broader audience reach. The hospitality industry, particularly hotels, is affected by eWOM and has become essential to online reputation management. Thus, revenue management systems (RMS) are progressively interested in understanding the impact of eWOM and the determinants of consumer behavior. The study aims to analyze and research further eWOM in the tourism industry and gain valuable insights into the new effects of communication forms.

### **1.1.3 eWOM in Tourism**

With the fast development in the IT sector, tourism research has progressively emphasized using informative communication and social media for promotion. The emergence of the internet has led to a new pattern in the communication of WOM, which is now eWOM. However, consumer cynicism towards eWOM information has received less research attention. eWOM is a knowledge exchange through public and online platforms and can positively or negatively impact the tourist destination image (Di Pierro et al., 2023). The tourism industry provides a large margin and huge market potential, attracting many competitors and players. With several choices available to tourists, businesses need to stand out in the market. Serra-Cantallops, Ramón Cardona, and Salvi (2020) explored the relevance and usefulness of eWOM in many fields. However, some studies have determined it from the perspective of technology in a tourist destination context. Understanding the impact of eWOM on the decision-making process of individuals' purchases is essential for businesses operating in the HORECA industry. Positive online recommendations or reviews can significantly impact the business's reputation, drive positive attitudes, and build trust toward services and products. Equally, negative reviews can lead to decreased revenue and sales, reduced brand equity, and lower credibility.

The impact of digital technology on tourism has been a subject of interest for researchers in recent years. One of the main findings is the impact of tourism websites and eWOM on tourists' perceptions and intentions of hospitality, café, restaurants, and destinations. Molinillo et al. (2021) reported that digital technology has improved the use of visual eWOM, such as videos and images, which positively impacts the behavior of tourist information searches. However, despite the significance of eWOM in tourism, limited literature has been studied. Most of the literature has shown that eWOM significantly impacts tourist destination brand image and attention, which affects travel intentions. The significant eWOM effects are accredited to its speed, convenience, and the fact that it can reach a massive audience compared to cultural WOM. The impact of eWOM on the tourism industry is specifically significant for restaurants. In this term, online reputation derived from reviews can negatively influence a hotel's performance as well as other tourism sector members. As a result, organizations are progressively seeking to understand the determinants of eWOM use and the influences resulting from its use.

#### **1.1.4 eWOM in HORECA**

The HORECA sector is an integral part of the tourism industry, as tourists frequently visit restaurants, cafés, and hotels during their travels. Understanding how eWOM impacts tourist information searches towards the HORECA industry cannot be understated. In recent years, social media platforms have become an essential source of information for tourists planning their trips. Through social media, tourists can collect information about the destination, including the HORECA services from other tourists visiting the location. The opinions and reviews shared by persons can positively impact the decision-making process of potential visitors. Therefore, eWOM has become a primary factor in the tourism industry's marketing strategies (Filiari et al., 2021). Many types of research (Gupta, 2019; Tsai and Bui, 2020) have shown that consumers are more likely to follow and trust recommendations from fellow travelers despite traditional advertising methods.

Additionally, the influence of eWOM on myriad HORECA experiences requires recognizing factors that affect the perception of eWOM. Azhar et al. (2022) discovered the reliability and credibility of eWOM in the HORECA industry and its influence on tourist decision-making processes. The study's current literature on tourism and eWOM offers a better understanding of its influence on tourist information searches towards the HORECA industry. It can be used by establishing HORECA to develop policies to attract more tourists and improve their online reputations. Moreover, it offers valuable insights into the reliability

and credibility of eWOM, which can be helpful for tourists in making decisions about where to stay.

### **1.1.5 Social Media and eWOM**

Social media platforms allow tourists to share their experiences, making it easier for visitors to choose a destination. This information can impact tourists' decision-making process as they will likely choose a destination with positive feedback and reputation. Moreover, technological advancements have made it easier for tourists to access information about the HORECA industry. With the rise of mobile devices, tourists can access information about HORECA services on the go (Alen, Sanzhar, and Aiya, 2022). To keep up with the evolving landscape of consumer behavior and consumer preferences across many industries, including HORECA, a brand must adapt to these changes and ensure that its online presence is informative and attractive to potential customers. Social media platforms provide consumers a way to share their experiences about distant kinds of businesses in which they are involved. These kinds of networks are designed to permit consumers to post reviews and respond about different kinds of industries, including movies, books, and HORECA. Some customer review networks like TripAdvisor and Zomato enable consumers to give feedback on HORECA industry businesses. TripAdvisor is devoted to sharing reviews and opinions about restaurants, hotels, and related businesses. The literature provides valuable insights to marketers on how online networks comprising Facebook, TripAdvisor, and Zomato affect the decision-making process and consumer purchasing behavior (Bulchand-Gidumal and Melián-González, 2023).

In the context of social media platforms or SNS, online reviews have been found to strongly influence the tourism industry, as the imperceptibility of tourism services creates ambiguity and uncertainty for potential visitors. The study by Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2018) is grounded in the theory of 'Trust Transfer', which postulates that trust can be moved from the trusted source to an unidentified target perceived as associated with the source. The study highlighted the significance of online reviews in the tourism industry. It suggested that destination policymakers and marketers communicate trust to potential tourists to improve market share and guarantee guests' safety. In recent years, social media platforms have become increasingly popular for sharing reviews and information about the establishment of HORECA. With this research, Santos et al. (2020) aimed to offer new insights for markets on how social networks, including TripAdvisor, Zomato, and Facebook, influence consumers' decision-making process and their purchasing behavior. By investigating the eWOM media determinants, including ease of use, reviewer proficiency, information

quality, and perceived curiosity, the researchers investigated how eWOM impacts decisions of online booking for many tourist destinations in the United States.

Mladenović et al. (2022) examined the effect of eWOM via social media on decisions on online booking moderated by gender. The study used a structured questionnaire to gather data from tourists who visited the USA and used social media to access information about the HORECA industry. The study offers insights into eWOM's impact on the HORECA industry marketing policies. eWOM has become highly valued in the service industry, particularly in the hotel sector. Since evaluating a service before using it is difficult, online messages significantly limit uncertainty during decision-making. Websites permit users to create content quickly, giving them control over information sharing and aiding in comparison quality. This digital change has led to the growth of eWOM, which has become a progressively exciting area of study due to its potential for communication and its effects during purchasing, like traditional WOM. In the hospitality industry, the quality of service hotels offer has become an essential factor for potential guests when deciding. Tourists are increasingly relying on the information to decide which hotel to book. In addition, eWOM has become an essential information source for guests and an important factor for hotels to attract new guests and maintain their reputations.

The studies related to eWOM have mainly focused on tourism information searches related to the HORECA industry. At the same time, there is limited research on the influence of visual eWOM on the information research regarding tourism intentions to visit a HORECA service (Bigne, Ruiz, and Curras-Perez, 2019). There needs to be more analysis of visual cues' impact on the consumers' intentions toward destinations and HORECA (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Visual cues have a positive impact on the behavior of consumers. Visual eWOM is defined as the content of visuals shared by users on social media platforms, such as Pinterest, YouTube, and Instagram. These platforms have a vast reach, and their visual content can significantly influence consumer behavior. Many studies have emphasized the visual eWOM influence on decision-making and tourists' perception of recommendations, travel destinations, and feedback. This visual content can help tourists make more informed decisions about their travel plans. Visual eWOM can also increase the destination's brand image and enhance its visibility, thus attracting more tourists to the HORECA services. The videos and pictures shared on the platforms of social media can generate a positive image of the destination and excite interest among potential tourists. Research conducted by Yerizal and Abror (2019) showed that HORECA businesses must develop a significant visual image and improve their guests' ability to share their experiences



on social media platforms. Additionally, visual eWOM can impact tourists' intention to revisit the destination of HORECA.

### **1.1.6 Role of Instagram as an eWOM platform**

Instagram has become one of the most popular social media for travelers to share their tourism experiences and visual eWOM. Most tourists visit Instagram to discover new destinations, hotels, and restaurant attractions before making any decision. A study by Lee et al. (2020) shows that Instagram has become an essential tool for tourists to evaluate and search for destinations before making reservations. Instagram visual eWOM can impact consumers' intentions and perceptions towards the tourism destination, giving them an authentic representation of activity and location. The visual cues shared by users through Instagram can have a positive impact on tourists' decisions in terms of choosing their HORECA experience. Many studies have investigated the impact of visual eWOM on Instagram and consumer behavior (Wang et al., 2018; Mosa, 2021; Meyers, 2021; Filieri et al. 2021). One such study was conducted by Wang et al. (2018) discovered the visual eWOM effect on choices of tourist destinations. The research found that visual eWOM Instagram positively impacts choices of tourist destinations, and the number of comments and likes on visual content was significantly correlated with the intention of tourists to visit the destination.

Furthermore, the visual eWOM of Instagram also impacts tourist decision-making through several determinants, such as source credibility and user-generated content (UGC). In the study by Mosa (2021), the visual content type, such as stories, videos and photos, proved to play a vital role in tourist booking intentions. Eventually, the source credibility of visual eWOM, such as celebrity and influencer endorsements, also has a positive impact on the behavior of the consumers. Instagram UGC, including videos and photos posted by users, is essential to be a potent source of visual eWOM. UGC is more authentic and trustworthy than the brand's content, as it is generated by actual people who have experienced the activity or the experience.

Simultaneously, Lee et al. (2020) found that UGC significantly affects tourist destination choices and is considered more effective than other traditional marketing policies. Overall, Instagram has become an essential tool for tourists to search for and examine the destination before making a reservation. The visual content type, UGC, and source credibility affect the visual eWOM influence on consumer decision-making. Future

studies are essential to discover the impact of Instagram videos and stories on consumers' intentions towards the HORECA experience.

Gen Y and Gen Z are two segments heavily dependent on social media, and technology is universal. They are accustomed to using online platforms for entertainment, information, and communication. A survey report found that 54% of Millennials and 57 % of Gen Z use social media platforms to plan their trips. Hence, it concludes that both Gen-Y and Gen-Z are more likely to depend on eWOM when making decisions about tourism and travel, including where to dine and stay (Meyers, 2021). Furthermore, they are more likely to share their opinions and experiences on social media, making them an essential eWOM source for the HORECA industry. Evidence from Filieri et al. (2021) shows that 95% of travelers read reviews before booking a hotel. Similarly, 76% of travelers are willing to pay more for a hotel with a high rating. On the contrary, 94% of travelers evade hotel booking with negative reviews.

In a nutshell, the tourism industry is a principal participant in any country's economy, sometimes generating billions of dollars in revenue annually. The HORECA industry, which comprises restaurants, hotels, and cafés, is an integral part of the tourism sector and plays a significant role in offering a pleasurable experience for visitors (Khan et al., 2020). However, the emergence of eWOM has positively influenced how tourists search to decide where to dine and where to stay. With increasing social media and internet use, consumers have access to much information about HORECA establishments and tourist destinations. However, the reliability and credibility of this information may be doubtful, making it challenging for tourists to make purchases or informed decisions. Thus, it is better to investigate the impact of eWOM on tourist information decisions to understand its impact on the HORECA industry and recognize ways to improve the experience of tourists. Regardless, the impact of eWOM is growing in the tourism industry, but research gaps must be addressed.

The theories of social networks, planned action, and the technological acceptance model explain the booking intention behavior of tourists. They showed the eWOM in the booking decision-making stages and the booking intentions (Sabapathy and Selvakumar, 2018). The shreds of evidence from the past studies provided that the quality of the source of eWOM, the characteristic of the message of eWOM, the characteristics of the services of the hotels, and the characteristics of the receiver of the eWOM are all considered to be potential factors and determinants of the effectiveness of eWOM that further creates an impact on the booking intentions of the customers (Guerreiro, Viegas and Guerreiro, 2019; Zhang and Yang, 2019; Al-Gasawneha and Al Adamat, 2020; Tarkang et al., 2020). This

empirical evidence determines the significant impact of social media platforms on decision-making and travel inspiration.

### **1.1.7 Literature Gap**

The current literature has revealed that researchers have been involved in examining the usefulness of eWOM in many fields, comprising its influences on individual purchase decision-making processes. However, only some studies (Nilashi et al., 2022; Silaban et al., 2023) investigated the perspective of technology of eWOM, precisely the perceived usefulness of eWOM media and its impact on the purchase choice of individuals in a tourist destination context. One of the advantages of reviewing the media of eWOM is that it permits tourists to read comments sent by peers, enabling them to make a more informed decision. Furthermore, tourists originate enjoyment and pleasure from seeing impressive pictures, text, and videos shared by others that are very easy to see. Usability is another essential factor that impacts an individual's decision to use a specific website. Thus, conflicting findings by earlier literature provide the research gap and allow for further investigation in the tourism sector, a conceptual model incorporating the quality of information as a valid source of the eWOM proposed platform (Perera et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the growth of the HORECA industry leads to fierce competition as it is increasing due to rising numbers of restaurants, hotels and cafés. However, several hotels, restaurants and cafés closed due to the inability to compete in the marketplace. Many factors that lead businesses to bankruptcy include less delicious foods, expensive prices and services which are less friendly and less than optimal. Service excellency is the main factor in the service industry to maintain competitive advantage. Hence, the customers remain aligned with the restaurants and cafés that are competitive due to better services. The eWOM is an inevitable factor for the promotion and marketing procedures which require investigation to understand the customer behavior towards purchase intention (Zulyanti et al., 2024). While the aspect of the hedonism of eWOM media is investigated through many factors, such as ease of use, enjoyment, perceived curiosity fulfillment, reviewers' trustworthiness and proficiency, the eWOM perceived usefulness (PU) is expected to influence the decision of online booking for many decisions of tourists in India. Positive reviews in industry services have been found to enhance order numbers and improve revenue and sales. The convicting, negative online customer reviews increased the perceived risk of service quality or inferior product, equity, and low brand credibility, limiting the sales volume (Tariyal et al., 2022). The purchase decision procedure includes many determinants that can influence a consumer's choices of services and products, including HORECA services. These

determinants comprise the location, its available amenities (such as spa, golf course, or pool), brand name, price, loyalty programs, and rating given by past tourists. The design and atmosphere of the restaurant may also be considered. Thus, eWOM is an essential factor that impacts consumers' decision-making process.

Numerous studies in the past have explored and presented the factors that influence the effectiveness of eWOM and its role in influencing customers' purchase intentions in different industries (Alamanda et al., 2019; Bhaiswar, Meenakshi and Chawla, 2021; Gabbianelli and Pencarelli, 2020; Sijoria, Mukherjee and Datta, 2019; Sarwar et al., 2019). However, there is a limited literature related to HORECA services which need to be investigated due to its large dependency on eWOM that may result in a purchase intention. Several scholars recommended studying the influence of visual eWOM on the information research regarding tourism intentions to visit HORECA services (Bigne et al. 2019, Dwivedi et al. 2021, Arvanitis, 2020). As well, Instagram is relatively under-researched and needs to be studied to detect the influence of various factors as the source of visual eWOM on the booking intentions of tourists (Mosa, 2021; Filieri et al., 2021). The previous literature has limitations as it only focused on particular locality for data collection to gain insights of eWOM in the HORECA industry. However, the gap in the literature allows us to collect data from many countries to reflect on a wide diversity of cultures, countries, and nationalities (Alabdullatif and Akram, 2018; Agyapong and Yuan, 2022) accordingly to understand the broad insights from tourists over eWOM antecedents influencing their booking intentions. The existing literature also provides a potential gap in this scope to understand the young generations and their digital behavior differences (Meyers, 2021; Williams, 2018; Tabassum, Khwaja, and Zaman, 2020) over eWOM antecedents in evaluating their purchase intentions.

Research on visual eWOM (photos, videos, and pictures) has recently increased in the tourism industry since eWOM positively influences tourists' information searches (Mishra and Singh, 2019). The meta-analysis presented by Ismagilova et al. (2019) comprised 69 research articles that emphasized the importance of eWOM and its influence on human behavior. Social networking sites (SNS) like Facebook, TripAdvisor, Instagram, Airbnb, and X are some of the most common tools of eWOM. Guerreiro, Viegas and Guerreiro (2019) state that SNS are considered an integral and reliable medium for social media users to obtain information, plan, book hotels, and select destinations. Ong's (2022) findings revealed that approximately 33% of travelers seek holiday inspiration through social media platforms. The hashtag "#travel" on TikTok has amassed an impressive 74.4 billion views, whereas a staggering 624 million Instagram posts are dedicated to travel. According

to a study conducted by Facebook, as cited by Zote (2023), 67% of travelers rely on Instagram to discover travel encouragement before making their trip reservations. Even after their travel plans are confirmed, they continue using the platform to fuel their excitement for the impending adventure. Among millennials, an impressive 40% factor in the "Instagrammability" of a destination plays a big role when deciding on their upcoming holiday spot. It is evident that Instagram stands out as the dominant platform for travel inspiration, boasting over 300 million posts tagged with the keyword 'travel'. According to Truyols (2022), tourism business representatives employ a variety of channels in their marketing strategies. According to International Tourist Research Centers, an overwhelming 88% of tourism industries vigorously utilize social media platforms to promote offerings and destinations and gain insights into consumer attitudes. With the growth of tourism, how people search for information about tourist destinations is changing rapidly, and eWOM is playing an increasingly critical role.

*The research gap from the literature highlighted that there needs to be more studies on the impact of visual eWOM on tourists' information searches and decision-making about their destination points or the HORECA industry (Bigne et al, 2019; Dwivedi et al. 2021; Arvanitis, 2020). Notably, there needs to be more research investigating the impact of eWOM, specifically on social media platforms such as Instagram (Mosa, 2021), on tourists' perceptions and intentions towards the HORECA industry. The credibility and reliability of visual eWOM, UGC role, and the impact of various visual contents like stories, photos, and videos must be examined. Moreover, the study needs to investigate the factors affecting the perceptions associated with visual eWOM, such as authenticity and credibility (Daowd et al., 2021). The existing literature focuses on the impact and relevance of eWOM in the tourism industry, but there are still fascinating questions worth exploring. For example, what factors affect consumers' purchase intention in eWOM platforms? Are there differences between generations when it comes to the adoption of visual eWOM on Instagram? Furthermore, in a period where social media has a projecting role, what are the potential challenges and opportunities for businesses in using eWOM effectively?*

## **1.2 Research Aims and Objectives**

Investigating the state of current research related to the impact of eWOM on tourists' booking intentions, the overarching aim of the study is: "To explore the impact of visual eWOM and social media usage (Instagram) on the tourists' booking intentions towards tourism consumption in the HORECA Industry." Moreover, the study also provides an understanding of the significant factors that influence tourists' purchase intentions in the

context of eWOM aided by Instagram. The eWOM antecedents chosen for the model consist of information quality, source credibility, popularity heuristics, motivation, user-generated content, website quality, innovativeness and destination fascination that may derive the consumer behavior towards purchase intention in HORECA industry. To facilitate the above research aim and to answer the research questions, the following research objectives have been considered:

*Table 1. 1: Research Objectives*

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| RO1 | To review extant research on visual eWOM and identify theoretical gaps  |
| RO2 | To investigate the underpinning theories and evaluate the impact and factors related to visual eWOM that influence the tourists' intentions towards HORECA services.  |
| RO3 | To develop a preliminary conceptual framework related to the visual eWOM antecedents based on the studied literature and constructed hypotheses that derive the purchase intention.   |
| RO4 | To collect data from tourists in many countries regarding their perception of visual eWOM impact on their intentions toward tourism consumption of HORECA services then accordingly test the conceptual framework.  |
| RO5 | To investigate the antecedents of visual eWOM related to information quality, source credibility, destination fascination, user-generated content and others on SNS (Instagram) leading to consumer purchase intention of HORECA services.  |
| RO6 | To provide research implications for practice and policy insights to market HORECA and delineate a future research agenda by contributing to the current literature on the topic by generating new insights based on the perceptions, attitudes and experiences of an international audience. |

The current study emphasizes investigating the impact of eWOM, particularly visual eWOM, on purchase intention towards the HORECA industry. It targets both generations Y and Z, known for their involvement in social media platforms. These generations have a firm reliance on and presence on social media platforms; therefore, the current study focuses on understanding how eWOM influences their behavior while seeking information related to tourism and hospitality destinations. The study explores the factors affecting Gen Y and Gen Z's intentions towards the HORECA services, mainly focusing on Instagram as a social media platform. The current study analyzes the factors for Gen Y and Gen Z because of the

possibility for different preferences in terms of destination fascination, destination image, information quality and information credibility. Both generations' travel preferences can help to anticipate the future trends for the HORECA industry.

The geographical focus of the study is the overall tourists from various nationalities while considering the importance of the tourism industry and its contribution to the economy of the global tourism industry. The study also briefly includes the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the HORECA industry to measure the possible impacts on tourist information search behavior and their perception of the industry.

The research findings pose significant insights into the HORECA industry, supporting them in comprehending the needs and preferences of Gen Y and Gen Z tourists, according to eWOM. The study desires to identify the weaknesses and strengths of digital marketing policies in the HORECA industry, intending to enhance its reputation and online presence. Additionally, the research contributes to the academic literature on the impact of eWOM on tourist behavior, particularly among younger generations. Thus, it is essential to note that the scope of the study is limited to visual eWOM impact on tourist destination searches in the HORECA industry. Moreover, the target participants in the study are Gen Y and Z internationally. The study does not detail other aspects of the tourism industry or examine other demographic groups.

**The main objective of the current study is to explore the impact of visual eWOM and social media usage (Instagram) on the tourists' booking intentions towards tourism consumption in the HORECA industry.** There is substantial evidence regarding the visual eWOM influence, either negative or positive influence, on consumer purchase intention in HORECA services. Hence, eWOM management and monitoring are essential for maintaining presence by responding to online reviews and feedback and improving the experience and services. The research already conducted provide insights for a particular domain or area, however the current study collected data from many countries of the Middle East and MENA region (Egypt, UAE, Occupied Palestine, Jordan, Kuwait and Morocco), the European region (France, Spain, Italy, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Serbia, Slovakia, Finland, Turkey, Switzerland , Great Britain and Ukraine), the Asian pacific region (Singapore, Malaysia, China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand), Africa (Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, and Ghand) , North and Latin America (USA, Canada and Brazil), Australia, and Russia. The respondents, who were from diverse regions at the international level, reflected the broad

views on the importance of visual eWOM for customers' intention to visit HORECA services abroad.

The current study reflected on several theories i.e. the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and the theory of planned behavior (TPB) from the literature. For instance, the UGT provides insights regarding the motivation customers/tourists seek through their interaction through visual eWOM content. It provides information to customers through visual eWOM and social interaction at different social media platforms that drive their motivation and gratification to visit HORECA. On the other hand, the planned behavior theory helps explain whether visual antecedents influence customers' booking intention towards HORECA services.

Further, several statistical analyses have been used to test the impact of visual eWOM antecedents on customers' booking intention towards HORECA services. The information quality reported P-value and non-zero between LLCI and ULCI in Hayes process macros represent the significant direct and indirect impact on customer intention through visual e-WOM using Instagram. The information credibility reported P-value and non-zero between LLCI and ULCI in Hayes process macros represent the significant direct and indirect impact on customer intention through visual e-WOM using Instagram. Moreover, the website quality reported P-value and non-zero between LLCI and ULCI in Hayes process macros represent the significant direct and indirect impact on customer intention through visual e-WOM using Instagram. Further, the motivation reported P-value and non-zero between LLCI and ULCI in Hayes process macros represent the significant direct and indirect impact on customer intention through visual e-WOM using Instagram. In addition, the innovativeness reported P-value and non-zero between LLCI and ULCI in Hayes process macros represent the significant direct and indirect impact on customer intention through visual e-WOM using Instagram. In addition, the destination fascination reported P-value and non-zero between LLCI and ULCI in Hayes process macros represent the significant direct and indirect impact on customer intention through visual e-WOM using Instagram. Further, the popularity heuristics reported P-value and non-zero between LLCI and ULCI in Hayes process macros represent the significant direct and indirect impact on customer intention through visual e-WOM using Instagram. The destination image reported P-value and non-zero between LLCI and ULCI in Hayes process macros represent the significant direct and indirect impact on customer intention through visual e-WOM using Instagram. Finally, The user-generated content reported P-value and non-zero between LLCI and ULCI in Hayes



process macros represent the significant direct and indirect impact on customer intention through visual e-WOM using Instagram.

Furthermore, Levene's test for equality of variance and t-test for equality of means have been employed. The results demonstrate that the P-value of all visual eWOM antecedents is  $>.05$ , more significant than the standard significance level, indicating the equality of variance between generation 'Y' and generation 'Z'. On the other hand, the t-stat of information quality, innovativeness, popularity heuristics, destination brand image user-generated content, and visual eWOM using Instagram shows  $<2$ , less than the standard value, indicating that the mean between the two generations is equal. On the contrary, the t-stat of information credibility, website quality, motivation and destination fascination shows  $\geq 2$ , indicating that the mean between the two generations is unequal.

### 1.3 Study's Contributions

This dissertation has several contributions: to theory, to practice and to policy which will be fully covered in the last chapter. However, it is worth mentioning early that this study has a valuable contribution to the tourism sector because of the significance of visual eWOM on SNS that deeply shapes the tourist's behavior. In parallel to the literature, it was discussed that eWOM on different SNS helps in accessing information and sharing experiences about destinations and that Gen Y and Gen Z are impacted by eWOM on SNS as an information source to their travel decision. The study also contributed to theory where the adopted model provides findings validating the theories used as TPB, UGT, ELM, IAM, and TAM.

In the end, authorities alongside policymakers related at ministerial and municipalities level in the tourism industry need to be essentially aware of inspecting the fineness of visual eWOM on SNS and thereafter introducing appropriate policy actions related to the HORECA marketing services and strategies to improve customer satisfaction.

### 1.4 Definition of Key Terms

**eWOM:** eWOM, or electronic word-of-mouth, is the sharing of recommendations, opinions, and experiences about products, brands, or services via electronic channels, particularly on social media platforms and the internet. It is a method of online consumer-generated content that influences other consumers' behaviors, attitudes, and decision-making.

**Visual eWOM:** visual eWOM, also known as visual electronic word-of-mouth, is the distribution of visual content, such as videos, photos, and other visual media, to convey

opinions, recommendations, and experiences about destinations, products, and services through electronic channels. It is also a form of online consumer-generated content that utilizes visual elements to communicate information and influence the behaviors and attitudes of other customers.

**Consumer Intention:** Consumer intention is a consumer's anticipated or planned action or behavior towards a specific brand, product, or service. It represents the individual's mindset and disposition to participate in a particular action, including purchasing a product, using a service, or adopting a specific behavior.

**HORECA:** HORECA is an acronym for Hotel, Restaurant, and Café/Catering. It is a term commonly used in the food service industry to refer to industries that provide dining, lodging, and catering services.

**Social Networking Sites:** Social networking sites (SNS) are online platforms that enable individuals to create profiles, connect with other users, and share content, information, and interests within a virtual community.

## 1.5 Thesis Structure

The outline of this dissertation is guided by a five-chapter model where the entire dissertation is divided into five chapters, and each chapter covers a specific aspect of the research.

Chapter one, referred to as Introduction, is the introductory chapter of the research, which provides insight into building a background on the role of eWOM on consumer purchase intention by highlighting the gaps in the existing literature. This chapter proposes research aims and objectives, which the researcher intends to investigate during the research, followed by the practical and policy contribution made by the study.

Chapter two, referred to as the Literature Review, dives deep into the conceptual definitions, explanation, and empirical evidence from previous literature on visual eWOM and its implications on consumer purchase intention. Factors influencing visual eWOM and empirical evidence from the previously published literature have been analyzed to identify knowledge gaps and shortcomings. Furthermore, this chapter provides insight on theoretical insights proposing the development of the framework and research hypotheses on essential emerging areas and unexplored realms of eWOM.

Chapter three refers to the Research Methodology which provides insights into the methodological choices made by the researcher and reflections on the research onion

approach proposed by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009). The chapter provides as well insights into the research philosophy, the research approach, the strategy, the methodological choices and sources of the data being collected to achieve the proposed research objectives. Further insights into choosing a quantitative approach as a research approach for data collection where primary data has been gathered using survey choices, along with the justification for using such an approach, were discussed. Instrumentation of measurement of the variable section has been added along with steps utilized to design the survey instrument to collect primary data necessary to test the proposed research hypotheses. Finally, this chapter provides insights into the researcher's data analysis techniques and the ethical considerations for conducting such research.

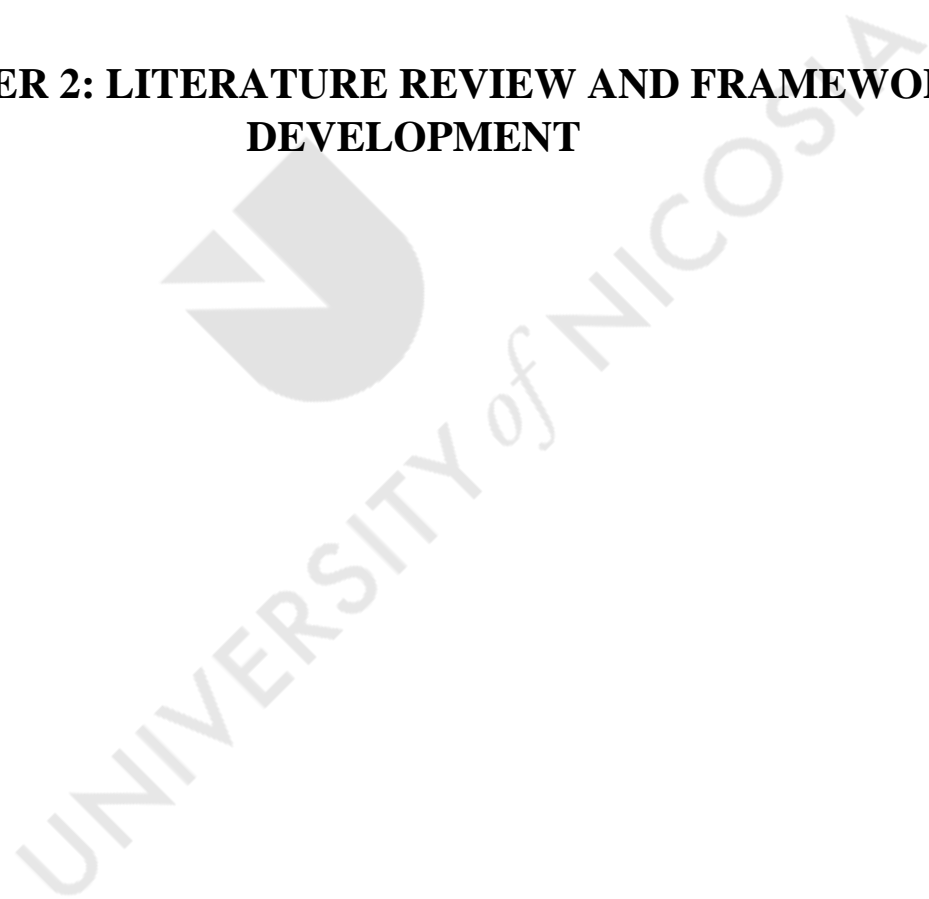
Chapter four discusses the research findings that are presented as a result of the quantitative analysis of the data gathered from the self-administered online questionnaires. The demographics of respondents have been analyzed along with the descriptive statistics of responses gathered from the questionnaires. The reliability and validity of the instrument have been tested, along with the interpretation and justifications. Inferential statistics have been analyzed, and various statistical tests were conducted to test the proposed research hypotheses. Lastly, a discussion of the study's findings has been proposed to end the chapter with the research summary.

Chapter five presents the concluding remarks on the thesis by providing a comprehensive conclusion on the entire thesis by recalling the proposed research objectives mentioned in the initial chapters. Critical implications of the research findings and recommendations have been made in this chapter, followed by limitations of future research outlook.

## **1.6 Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter presents the introduction of the present study, which discusses the background of the topic, the HORECA industry, and the role of social media in eWOM searches. The background of the study mainly focused on HORECA industries' eWOM searches and Instagram as a social media platform. Moreover, the study discussed the research gaps identified from previous literature and defined research problems for the current study. The chapter also discusses the significance, scope, and rationale of the research and its impact on future research and the tourism industry. Furthermore, it presents the definitions of the terms used in the study.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT**



## **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter comprehensively analyzes the key concepts and theories related to the topic of "Impact of factors as the Source of Visual eWOM affecting the Tourists' Intentions toward HORECA (hotel, restaurant and cafés) Services". It investigates various aspects of the HORECA industry, customer behavior and satisfaction, technology advancements, and the role of social media in influencing consumer intentions. In addition, it explores the significance of factors such as information quality, credibility, website quality, motivation, innovation, destination fascination, popularity heuristics, destination brand image, and user-generated content in shaping tourists' intentions. The literature review chapter provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the factors and mechanisms impacting consumers' decision-making processes and intentions to visit HORECA all of which were combined in the proposed conceptual framework.

## **2.1 Concept of HORECA**

HORECA is a term used to describe the hospitality industry sector that provides food and beverage services in hotels, restaurants, cafés, and bars. This industry plays a significant role in the global economy and offers many job opportunities. The HORECA sector has recently undergone significant changes due to technological advancements, consumer behavior shifts, and competition from other food and beverage providers. Studies in the field of HORECA have explored a range of subjects, including industry challenges and trends (Madurga, 2021), customer behavior and satisfaction, marketing and promotion tactics, and the role of technology and online presence. The food and drink quality, service quality, and the physical atmosphere of an establishment have been identified as crucial factors that impact customer behavior and satisfaction in the HORECA industry. To overcome these challenges, HORECA businesses have utilized various marketing strategies such as advertising, discounts, and loyalty programs (Zarzo, 2019).

### **2.1.1 Technology Advancement in HORECA**

With the advancement of technology and globalization, the demand for travel and tourism-related activities such as eating, drinking, and accommodation has grown. This growth has led to various challenges and the search for solutions, with digitization being a popular method. To better understand the perspectives of customers and businesses on digital applications in the HORECA industry, research, and analysis of user experiences through

studies, questionnaires, and interviews are crucial for guiding future development (Samoggia, 2021).

Over time, the HORECA sector has experienced notable changes driven by technological advancements, evolving consumer demands, and competition from other food and beverage providers. This literature review examines some primary themes researched within the HORECA field. One of the significant areas of study in HORECA has been industry trends and difficulties. The authors found that while the industry faced several obstacles, such as shifting consumer preferences and heightened competition, there were also several prospects, like the growing popularity of health and wellness trends (Madurga, 2021).

One of the main areas of research in recent years has been the impact of technology on the HORECA sector. Evoke (2023) explored the role of technology in enhancing the customer experience in the HORECA sector. The author found that technology, such as online ordering systems and mobile applications, had allowed HORECA establishments to improve customer engagement and increase customer satisfaction. Similarly, a study by Lee and Cai (2020) found that using social media in the HORECA sector allowed establishments to reach a wider audience, enhance their online presence, and increase customer loyalty. The HORECA sector has undergone significant changes in recent years due to technological advancements, changing consumer preferences, and increased competition from alternative food and beverage providers. This literature review examines the latest developments and trends in the HORECA sector, focusing on customer behavior and satisfaction, marketing and promotion strategies, and the role of technology in the industry.

Studies have shown that technology, such as online ordering systems and social media, has positively impacted the customer experience in the HORECA sector. Research has also explored the impact of promotions, discounts, and loyalty programs on customer behavior and satisfaction, with findings suggesting that these strategies can effectively attract and retain customers (Türkeş, 2020).

### **2.1.2 Customer Behavior and Satisfaction**

Another critical theme in the HORECA literature is customer behavior and satisfaction. Hubeni et al. (2020) conducted a study that explored consumer behavior in the HORECA sector. The authors found that the quality of food and drinks, service quality, and the physical environment were the key factors influencing customer behavior and satisfaction. Similarly, Githiri (2016) found that the physical environment, such as the

atmosphere and décor, was essential in determining customer satisfaction. Finally, customer behavior and satisfaction have continued to be a focus of research in the HORECA sector. Ali et al. (2021) found that service quality was critical in determining customer satisfaction and that HORECA establishments that provided high-quality service were more likely to retain customers. In a similar study, Kim and Lee (2021) found that the quality of food and drinks was another critical factor in customer satisfaction in the HORECA sector. Marketing and promotion strategies have also been vital research areas in recent years. Furthermore, it was found that promotions and discounts effectively attracted customers to HORECA establishments but could have been more effective in increasing customer loyalty. In addition, Kim and Lee (2021) explored the impact of loyalty programs in the HORECA sector. They found that loyalty programs were an effective way for HORECA establishments to increase customer loyalty and repeat business.

### **2.1.3 Food delivery services**

Another key theme in recent HORECA literature has been the impact of food delivery services on the industry. In a study by Kim and Kim (2020), found that food delivery services had created new opportunities for HORECA establishments and resulted in increased competition and changing consumer preferences. HORECA establishments have been forced to adapt their marketing and promotion strategies to remain competitive in response to these challenges. In conclusion, the HORECA sector has undergone significant changes in recent years, driven by technological advancements, changing consumer preferences, and increased competition. The study by Kim (2020) provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing the HORECA sector and suggests that technology, marketing and promotion strategies, and customer behavior and satisfaction will continue to play a critical role in the growth and development of the industry.

### **2.1.4 Food and beverages**

The food and beverage sector within the HORECA industry is a significant subsector, employing many people and encompassing a variety of enterprises, from Michelin Star restaurants to fast food chains, street food trucks, and small food stalls in market halls. The importance of the food and beverage sector has grown compared to the past, as food tourism has become an increasingly active and creative aspect of the tourism industry. Food tourism is now a popular way for tourists to experience local culture through flavors and traditional activities within restaurants, enjoying the food and beverages on offer (Lopes, 2021).

### **2.1.5 Hotel and Accommodation**

The hotel and accommodation sector is diverse and varies greatly worldwide according to some aspects like finance, economics, operations, and laws. Due to differences in legal regulations, the sector experiences unique implementations in different countries regarding ownership, business scope, and operations. These variations impact the strategies and customer services offered in the industry. Financial conditions affect taxation and returns from operations, while a country's economy affects hospitality enterprises' size, types, and limitations. Other key factors that impact the sector include supply-side elements such as productivity and cost, as well as demand-side factors such as pricing, wealth, exchange rates, quality, culture, and security, which all play a role in determining the length of stay, size, location, and type of accommodation, as well as the type of tourist, whether local or international and their activities while receiving hospitality services (Nae, 2022).

### **2.1.6 Summary**

The literature discusses the HORECA sector and how technological advancements can enhance its growth to meet employment challenges through online ordering systems and mobile applications. Additionally, the customer behavior, food delivery services and hotel accommodations are crucial that can shape the purchase intention and economic activity towards HORECA. Hence, it provides a potential gap to identify the factors, particularly online social media platforms that can enhance the purchase intention of HORECA services.

## **2.2 Role of social media in the HORECA Industry**

Social media denotes the online platforms and applications that enable users to interact and network by sharing information. The critical aspect of social media is the capability to like and comment on posts, fostering a two-way conversation. It encompasses how people communicate and exchange ideas and information online in simulated communities through websites, apps, and platforms (Abbas et al. 2019).

According to global tourism industry statistics, the impact of social media on tourism is strong among younger generations (Pop, 2022). It also streamlines the booking process. Online bookings can come from various sources, including Online Travel Agents (OTAs) and Instagram, and directing traffic to a dedicated booking website or form (Papetti et al., 2018). Additionally, it provides a platform for sharing experiences, as people love to recount their travel adventures online. Social posts can serve as valuable social proof, and a



recommendation from family or friends can inspire others to take their next trip (Ana and Istudor, 2019).

Social media plays a crucial role in the HORECA industry. It serves as a platform for businesses to reach and engage with their target audience, build brand awareness, and drive customer loyalty. Businesses can use social media to showcase their products and services, promote special offers, and interact with customers through reviews, comments, and direct messaging. Additionally, social media can drive website traffic, increase online bookings, and manage reputation by addressing negative feedback and managing online reviews. A robust social media presence allows hotels to frequently update their offerings, services, promotions, and content to a large audience without incurring significant expenses. It provides a cost-effective and direct way for hotels to reach their target market. An effectively managed website can be a powerful tool for establishing a solid online presence and driving bookings (Nyikos, 2023).

According to Williams (2018), the generation following millennials, known as Generation Z, heavily relies on social media for travel inspiration, with around 70% using smartphones. According to a survey, 84% of Gen Z travelers believe that social media significantly impacts their travel decisions, particularly regarding promotions, deals, and recommendations from friends or influencers, and visual content such as videos and pictures. Additionally, 77% of Gen Z travelers are receptive to digital platforms for travel planning, and over 60% are influenced by advertising, mainly if it includes attractive images and deals (Williams, 2018). Findings show the group's willingness to engage with travel marketers through promotions.

Nowadays, platforms that heavily feature images, like Instagram, are the most popular sources for travel ideas (Lou, Chee, and Zhou, 2022). Gen-Z has a strong inclination towards creating photos for generating travel-related content. The usage patterns of travel-related apps vary among Gen-Z in Germany, the US, and the UK. Instagram and Google Maps are the most crucial platforms across these markets, emphasizing the importance of destinations providing visually appealing experiences for sharing on Instagram and making navigation easier using apps like Google Maps (European Travel Commission, 2020).

Social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, personal blogs, and YouTube, significantly impact consumers' decision-making to travel for leisure. These platforms allow people to gain a deeper understanding and knowledge of the places they are interested in visiting and the attractions and experiences they can enjoy. Social media is an efficient and

cost-effective way of improving the tourist experience and satisfaction. Social media provides potential and experienced travelers the information they need to make informed decisions and become more excited about their travels (Ana and Istudor, 2019). The rise of Internet and Web 2.0 technologies, like social networks, wikis, and forums, is significant in the tourism industry because the services offered, such as sightseeing, hotel stays, and dining experiences, can only be assessed after consumption (Fernández-Miguélez et al., 2020).

Instagram is a popular photo-based network due to its various content options, including text, photos, videos, and brand pages (Machová, 2021). Vacation photos posted by users can serve as an effective advertisement for hotels. Instagram offers different methods of posting content, such as stories lasting 24 hours only, which can be used to make announcements or conduct customer feedback polls. People have come to recognize the potential of Instagram as a marketing platform and to leverage it as a marketing medium fully. Restaurant owners must understand when using Instagram for marketing purposes (Agam, 2017).

Wibisono (2020) studied the marketing strategy of a globally recognized coffee shop, such as Costa Coffee, which uses influencers through Instagram social media. The research employed a quantitative research design and involved questionnaires. Primary data was collected through a combination of observations and questionnaires. The research examined Costa Coffee's loyalty program, which rewards frequent customers with discounts, exclusive offers, and personalized promotions. This program helps to build customer loyalty and encourages repeat visits. The study results indicated that Costa Coffee leverages digital marketing channels, including social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and X, to engage with customers, share updates, run promotions, and showcase their products and brand personality. It supports creating a positive brand image and resonates with socially conscious customers.

### **2.2.1 Social Media Marketing**

The most recent advancements in technology in media may influence customers' reasons for spreading WOM through SNS on mobile devices. Consumers can share and obtain real-time consumption experiences through interactive means with the help of mobile eWOM services (Farzin and Fattahi, 2018). Digital technology has transformed how people live their lives, affecting how they communicate, the type of information they consume, and how they consume it. This trend of popular social media platforms and SNS is expected to grow and impact people's lives even more (Wang, Liu and Parker, 2020). Destination

marketing is as crucial as promoting products and services, so effective social media marketing should focus more than just showcasing tours or activity offerings. However, it should also point out the unique and outstanding features of the destination (Heras-Pedrosa et al., 2020). The tourism industry's digital marketers must stay aware of their competitors to comprehend what they must do to attract travelers. This competitiveness drives the industry's growth and expands the reach of the public. Consumers can choose among the best options to make their trip more enjoyable (Kumar, 2021).

Hotels have embraced social media marketing to boost their brand image and foster better guest relationships. Marketing plays a crucial role in driving hotel sales, and the most significant benefit of social media is its accessibility and availability everywhere. It helps to increase brand awareness among visitors and provides a platform for the hotel to listen to their feedback (Lee et al., 2020). Social media sites like Yatra.com, MakeMyTrip.com, and TripAdvisor, among others, assist hotels and guests in the reservation process and serve as marketing tools (Mutalik, 2021).

### **2.2.2 Online Reviews**

Social media also plays a role in rating hotels and giving online reviews. Hotels effortlessly collect feedback about their food or stay from guests, and guests can share their experiences. Active social media users are always interested in hearing about new offers and promotions. Hotels can address, improve, or enhance the guest experience through social media, creating a distinguishing factor. Social media also serves as a platform for people to ask each other for recommendations on hotels and their features. Positive feedback from guests can increase brand loyalty and make the hotel a top choice for guests (Kim and Kim, 2022).

In online networking and social media, online reviews have gained much importance. A good experience by a customer usually leads him to suggest the product to other customers through WOM. With online platforms, WOM has transformed into eWOM. eWOM has become critical today, changing how customers respond to products (Daga, 2020).

According to a study by Fernández-Miguélez et al. (2020), online reviews (ORs) on social media have become a crucial aspect for restaurant industry consumers, as they provide credible and objective information based on other diners' experiences. Social media plays a vital role not only in the restaurants' strategy but also in their corporate operations. Nevertheless, previous research has emphasized analyzing social media impact at the establishment level instead of the corporate level, particularly regarding financial

performance. The study aimed to investigate the effect of social media on corporate financial performance. Restaurants are becoming increasingly aware of the significance of this phenomenon as it can provide opportunities for sustainable economic growth.

### **2.2.3 Digital Branding**

Over the past decade, digital marketing has evolved into a specialized field within the marketing industry due to its effectiveness in directly engaging with target audiences. Digital marketing allows for more direct interaction with the target audience. Therefore, branding should focus more on technology and digital media, allowing businesses to improve their interactions with consumers through digital devices. It is a technique that uses a combination of internet branding and digital marketing to develop a brand over a range of digital venues, including internet-based relationships, device-based applications, or media content (Chakraborty and Jain, 2022).

Digital marketing primarily focuses on promoting a product or service by emphasizing its benefits. Digital marketing effectively attracts one-time customers, but the impact may be short-lasting. Digital branding, however, remains even after a product has been replaced or superseded, leaving a lasting impression on consumers and influencing their decision to repurchase. Digital branding assists in acquiring and retaining customers and building a positive reputation in the marketplace. It can be considered an economically understanding and considerable marketing strategy for any e-commerce start-up (Tarannum, 2020).

Digital branding enables guests/customers to participate in an extraordinary personal experience. This approach is a perfect way for businesses to engage with their customers by displaying a clickable banner ad on specific or multiple websites, making a GIF showcasing the company's top services and features, and more. This allows customers to immerse themselves in a uniquely personal experience and is widely regarded as an effective way for companies to communicate with their customers.

### **2.2.4 Promoting Products/Services**

Promotion is crucial in any business or service industry, including global tourism. Promoting services and products to a wide range of audiences is vital to establish the brand identity and to attract consumers (Rohmad et al., 2022). One of the examples is excellent or bad WOM. Good/bad WOM is a cost-free and highly effective advertising strategy. It spreads rapidly through personal networks, making it a trustworthy source of information.

People are more likely to remember recommendations from friends, family, or neighbors rather than advertisements.

Traditionally, WOM marketing relies on recommendations from one person to another. This makes it a consistent source of information for potential consumers. Modern WOM marketing encompasses intentional campaigns and naturally occurring instances where consumers share their satisfaction with a brand or a product (Barnhart, 2022). In today's highly connected market, a single recommendation from a reliable source can have a significant impact and make WOM marketing a valuable tactic. Approximately 92% of consumers globally state that they trust recommendations from family and friends over TV or newspaper advertisements (Tarannum, 2020).

### **2.2.5 Summary**

The literature provides insights about the role of social media in contributing consumer behavior towards the tourism sector. The Gen-Y and Gen-Z both use social media platforms to stay informed about the market dynamics which can influence the consumer purchase intention. Hence, the literature allows us to investigate the role of social media platforms to shape the customer purchase intentions through different aspects for the tourism sector.

## **2.3 Theoretical Frameworks**

The theoretical frameworks underpin and provide an understanding and analysis of the subject. Initially, exploring the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) offers valuable insights into decision-making and behavior. Also, this section discusses other relevant theories, such as the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Information Adoption Model (IAM), and Technology acceptance model (TAM). These theories are a solid ground to build upon this present study's hypotheses.

The TPB used in the current study provides a structured framework to understand how perceived behavior control influences individual attitudes and customers' purchase intentions. Hence, TPB is significant in supporting our research objectives to understand how eWOM influences tourists' purchase intentions. The UGC is also relevant to this study in achieving the research objective that acknowledges the potential impact of opinions and experiences shared by tourists on Instagram. The ELM is a method of social information processing that focuses primarily on persuasion. The ELM is a crucial tool for assessing the effectiveness and credibility of communication, including visual eWOM. IAM proposes that users' adoption of information technology is influenced by their perceptions of its usefulness

and ease of use. The IAM used in the study considers innovativeness and motivation. Innovativeness informs the tourists using updated travel-related information sources that motivate and influence the tourists to visit HORECA services. Lastly, the TAM recognized a theoretical framework that includes the construct of perceived ease of use, which aligns with this study's website quality concept. TAM also includes the factors of innovativeness and motivation that reflect the individual willingness to adopt new technologies and motivate tourists to engage with Instagram and other innovative platforms for travel-related decisions.

Therefore, the five theories of TPB, UGT, IAM, ELM and TAM have been discussed in the study as they align with the framework's variables and items. These theories were previously used in different combinations to explore consumers' intention to use social media for travel decision; ELM and TPB (Wang, 2012), TPB, TAM and Social Influence (SIT) (Casaló et al., 2010), but there was no study available up until year 2022 studying the impact of social media in tourism and hospitality sector using Information Adoption Model (IAM) (Sussman and Siegal 2003; Haldar, 2022). Out of these five theories, two main theories played a critical role as a base in developing this study's conceptual framework including the TPB and TAM that discuss the ease of use and information usefulness deriving the consumer behavior from visual eWOM towards booking intentions.

### **2.3.1 Theory of Planned Behavior**

The Theory of Planned behavior (TPB) , as this study's first main base theory, is a theory in behavioral science that anticipates and examines the behavior of individuals. It was derived from the theory of reasoned action (TRA) formulated by Fishbein and Ajzen (2011). The TPB describes people's behavior on the basis that they are reasonable, methodical in their use of information, and deliberate about the outcomes of their actions. The theory states that people devise their actions and that successful outcomes come from the intention to manage obstacles that hinder their behavior. According to TPB, an individual's behavior is influenced by their attitude towards a behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control.

The TPB given in Fig 2.1 explains the belief that is divided into two subcategories: behavior beliefs and normative beliefs. Behavioral beliefs entail the individual perception regarding outcomes or consequences of engaging in a particular behavior. Also, behavioral beliefs are the cognitive evaluations that people have regarding the expected positive or negative outcomes associated with a particular task. Subsequently, individuals evaluate the potential outcome, either positive or negative, before establishing an attitude towards a

specific behavior. In the next step, people build an attitude towards the behavior after a detailed evaluation and considering potential consequences and benefits.

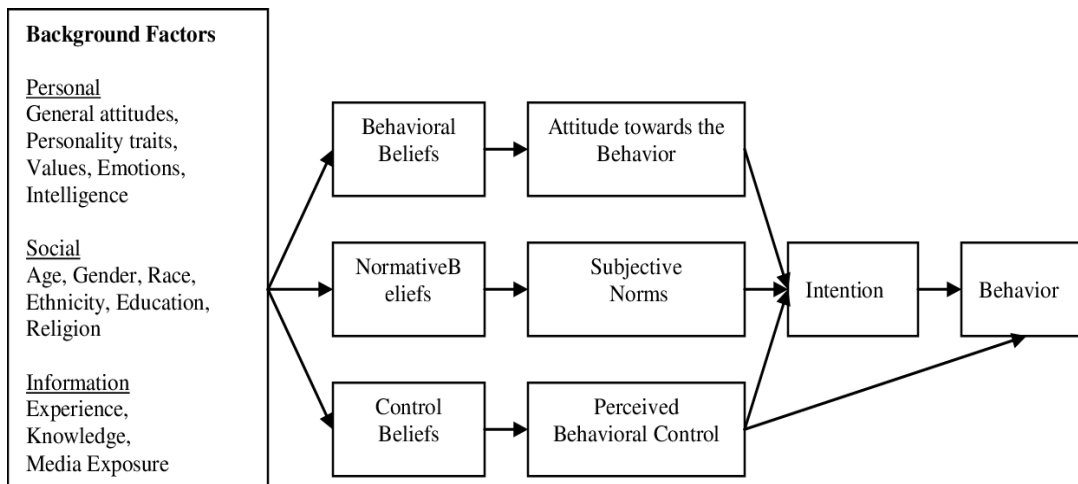


Figure 2. 1: Theory of Planned Behavior (Fishbein and Ajzen ,2011)

On the other hand, the second component of TPB is a normative belief that shows individual perceptions of social norms or societal expectations regarding a particular behavior. It is further categorized into beliefs of important referents and motivation to comply with referents. Belief in important referents involves individual perceptions of the attitudes and expectations of particular groups because these groups are considered as important referents and influence in shaping individual behavior. The second category is the motivation to comply with referents (important groups) whose opinions and experiences influence the individual subjective norms which impact their behavioral intention. These important referents influence individuals' behavioral intentions that lead to subjective norms. In the next step, individuals make an evaluation or comparative importance between attitude toward behavior and subjective norms which leads to the intention to avail the services. The intention reflects the attitude towards behavior or subjective norm depending on the dominating factor over individuals' intention. Finally, once the intention is formed, it is considered as the critical predictor and leads an individual to the actual behavior.

In eWOM, an individual's purchase intention is influenced by their attitude towards the product or service, the subjective norms of their social group, and their perceived control over the purchase decision. The TPB can help explain how visual eWOM factors influence tourists' intentions to visit HORECA services. Attitudes towards visual eWOM, such as the perceived credibility and quality of information, can impact tourists' intentions. Subjective norms, including social influences and recommendations from others, can also shape intentions. Also, perceived behavioral control, such as the ease of accessing and engaging

with visual eWOM, can influence tourists' intentions to visit HORECA services. By applying the TPB, the research can determine how these factors influence consumers' intentions to engage in eWOM behavior towards HORECA services. TPB offers a comprehensive framework that considers cognitive, social, and behavioral aspects, making it suitable for analyzing the factors influencing tourists' intentions toward HORECA services. Other theories may focus on different aspects of consumer behavior or may not specifically address intentions, which is a crucial aspect of this present study.

The TPB has been applied to various studies in the hospitality industry, including the impact of eWOM on purchase intention. For instance, Choirisa et al. (2021) recognized the theoretical arguments and assumptions about the connections among destination image, eWOM, and tourist attitudes toward visiting intention. Choirisa et al. (2021) found that eWOM significantly influences destination image and tourist attitudes, affecting their intention to visit. TPB is a frequently employed research framework due to its comprehensive framework that incorporates attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control to explain and predict individuals' behavioral intentions. Various studies have demonstrated its applicability across different domains, highlighting its effectiveness in understanding and analyzing consumer intentions and behaviors.

The present study incorporates an eWOM aspect of the TPB model. It examines how eWOM impacts the relationships of TPB, particularly regarding the influence of destination image and attitude on travel intention. The TPB emphasizes the subjective norms, attitudes, and perceived behavioral control in shaping intention and provides a comprehensive framework to examine the social and cognitive factors that shape the individual behavioral intention and influence the purchase decision-making in achieving the research objective.

### **2.3.2 Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT)**

The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) was initially devised in the 1940s to investigate associations between individual users and mass media. It concentrates on audience conceptualization and what individuals do with media (Quan Haase, 2012). The theory's primary purpose is to explain individuals' psychological and social bases, motivations for using different media, and how media satisfies their innate desires and requirements. The UGT considers every person an active media user. If we know the demands that various media qualities meet, gratification can be predicted with a certain level of accuracy.



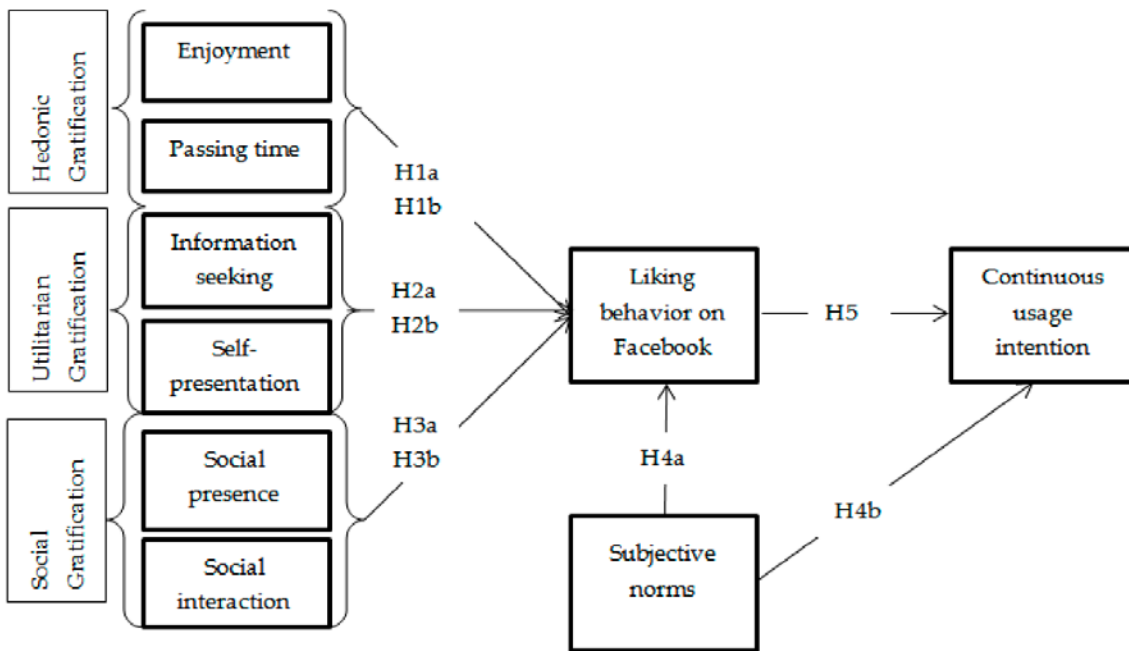


Figure 2. 2: Uses and Gratification theory (Hossain, Kim, and Jahan, 2019)

UGT shown in Fig. 2.2 helps discover the motivations and gratifications tourists seek through their interactions with visual eWOM content. It offers insights into why tourists engage with visual eWOM, such as seeking information, entertainment, social connection, or validating their choices. UGT accompanies understanding tourists' intentions by focusing on the underlying motivations and gratifications they seek through visual eWOM. Whereas TPB provides a framework for understanding the factors influencing intentions, UGT helps uncover the specific needs and desires that drive tourists to engage with visual eWOM in the first place.

In the tourism context, tourists are considered active users of smartphones to meet their necessities such as entertainment, social interaction, information, and convenience, and receive satisfaction when they are active. UGT provides travel-related information and impression management, including self-expression. It is a theoretical and empirical means for exploring audiences' engagement with digital media. Moreover, UGT delivers a distinctive viewpoint on digital media by stressing media's relevancy in ordinary life, gratifications pursued and received, and exploring uses and media approaches over the period.

Plume and Slade (2018) claimed that UGT could be used to study tourists' motivations toward social media usage and provide motives to implement it. Additionally, the UGT encourages consumers to respond and give opinions on using social media content related to HORECA services by recognizing their active role as content creators and participants in the digital sphere (Hanekom and Swart, 2023).

Therefore, the research explored the principles of UGT and how it can be related to social media platforms such as Instagram. Lastly, user-generated content emphasizes content created by the users on social media platforms and helps understand the role of user-generated content in shaping attitudes, perceptions, and intentions of tourists using Instagram, which aligns with our study's objective.

### **2.3.3 Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)**

Several theories and models have been developed in decision-making and consumer behavior to understand the factors influencing individuals' attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. These theories provide valuable frameworks for examining the complex interplay between variables and their impact on consumer choices. In the context of this present study, several theories and models are relevant for understanding the impact of visual eWOM on tourists' intentions toward HORECA services. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) explains how tourists may evaluate visual eWOM messages related to HORECA services. Contingent on their motivation and ability to process information, tourists may use either central or peripheral processing when evaluating the visual eWOM content. This processing route can impact their attitudes, intentions, and subsequent behaviors toward HORECA services.

ELM is a method of social information processing that focuses primarily on persuasion and involves two distinct categories as shown in Fig. 2.3 below. The central premise of ELM reflects that persuasion can occur in different ways, depending on how much information is relevant to the topic of persuasion the receiver considers. ELM suggests that, depending on the situation, the receiver will vary in the extent to which they engage in issue-relevant thinking. In some cases, the receiver will engage in a high level of elaboration, closely scrutinizing the message's claims and evidence, reflecting on other arguments they know, and so on.

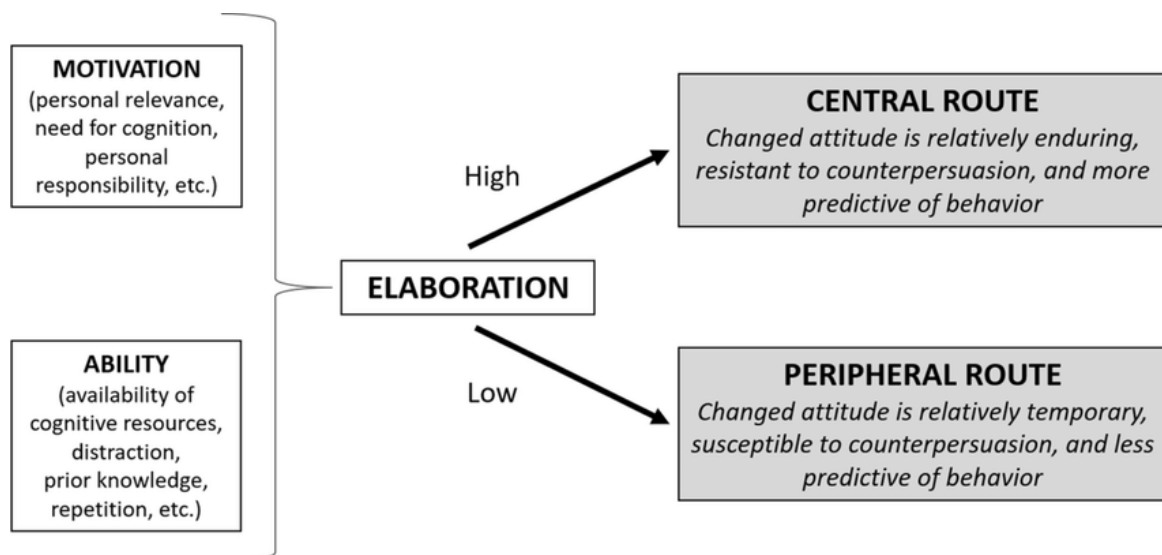


Figure 2. 3: Elaboration and Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986)

Consumers nowadays are overwhelmed with an enormous amount of information about various brands, products, and services. However, due to the overwhelming volume of credible messages from various sources, such as businesses and friends, customers may need help processing them all effectively. To deal with this, consumers often adopt the information processing theory proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), which helps them to gather relevant information.

The ELM is a crucial tool for assessing the effectiveness and credibility of communication, including visual eWOM. Accordingly, previous findings investigated in the literature have broadly used the ELM to understand the concept of visual eWOM communication (Rani and Shivaprasad, 2021).

### 2.3.4 Information Adoption Model (IAM)

The TPB, UGT and ELM models discussed previously shed light on consumers' motivations and gratifications, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors in using social media. The IAM highlights the importance of information quality, credibility, usefulness, and ease of use in determining individuals' adoption and subsequent behavioral intentions. The IAM also provides a framework for assessing the role of these factors in shaping tourists' intentions toward HORECA services. The Information Adoption Model (IAM) was initially proposed by Sussman and Siegal (2003) and has been commonly used to study information adoption in various contexts.

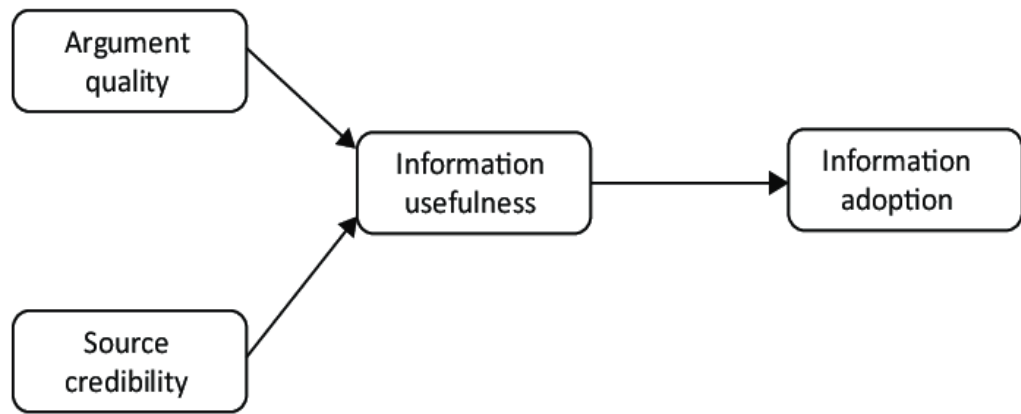


Figure 2. 4: Information and Adoption Model (Gumpo et al. 2020)

Previous studies have utilized several base models, such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) or Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), to determine the factors that influence the adoption of ideas or information. However, Sussman and Siegal (2003) developed the IAM by combining the TAM and the ELM. The IAM suggests that a message can influence people through central and peripheral routes. The central route pertains to the core of the message, while the peripheral route pertains to issues that are indirectly related to the core of the message. According to Yang, Wang, and Zhao (2023), IAM clarifies how user-generated information on digital platforms influences people. As this model focuses on adopting information by travelers in the context of digital platforms, precisely information generated on social media, it has been employed to examine the impact of WOM generated on social media.

The IAM proposes that users' adoption of information technology is influenced by their perceptions of its usefulness and ease of use (Mensah et al., 2021). In the context of eWOM and website quality, users' perceptions of the quality of the website will influence their perception of the usefulness and ease of use of the technology. This perception will likely impact their likelihood of engaging in eWOM (Hermawan, 2022). Therefore, IAM could explain how website quality affects eWOM in the HORECA industry.

Haldar (2022) stated that the behavior of travelers in adopting information is influenced by the feedback and reviews shared by social media users about their experiences with destinations and services. This study investigated the information adoption behavior of travelers using a conceptual model based on the IAM, which examined the impact of information quality, credibility, and usefulness on information adoption. The present study investigates how travelers intend to use UGC in social media when choosing travel destinations and services. The researcher has selected the IAM as the most suitable base

model for this study. Its various components have been modified and adapted to make the model more applicable to this research.

The IAM with the study's variables, such as user-generated content, information credibility, and information quality, also contributes to understanding the cognitive process related to tourist acceptance and internalizing information from Instagram to make purchase decisions in achieving the research objective.

### **2.3.5 Technology Acceptance Model**

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) examines attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control in shaping tourists' intentions. The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) explores motivations and gratifications about tourists' responses to HORECA-related social media content. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) focuses on cognitive processing and the persuasive impact of visual eWOM on tourists' intentions. The Information Adoption Model (IAM) emphasizes stages of information adoption and factors such as quality and usefulness in shaping behavioral intentions. While the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) focuses on consumers' acceptance and adoption of new technologies and innovations, TAM is the second main base theory for this study. In the context of HORECA, TAM can help assess tourists' acceptance and adoption of visual eWOM as a digital communication channel. Also, it considers factors such as perceived usefulness and ease of use in shaping attitudes and intentions toward adopting visual eWOM.

The TAM, also known as the tolerance of ambiguity model, was initially proposed by Stanley Budner (1962), to explain how individuals cope with ambiguity and uncertainty in social situations. In the digital age, visual eWOM has become an essential source of information for tourists in their decision-making process, particularly in the HORECA industry. The TAM provides a valuable framework to understand better how tourists interact with visual eWOM and the role of tolerance and acceptance in their behavior. By examining the relationship between tolerance, acceptance, and information searches, researchers can gain insights into how tourists use visual eWOM and other sources of information to make decisions, which can be utilized by businesses in the HORECA sector to tailor their marketing strategies.

Additionally, the TAM is another commonly used theoretical framework that describes individuals' behavioral attributes towards information technology. TAM is built on two constructs as shown in Fig. 2.5: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, both are used to predict an individual's likelihood of embracing a technology system. This model

has been applied in various settings, including social media usage, telemedicine, mobile commerce, online banking, and online reviews. As technology continues to shape the tourism industry, staying up-to-date with these theoretical frameworks is crucial for understanding and meeting the needs of tourists (Rahaman et al., 2022).

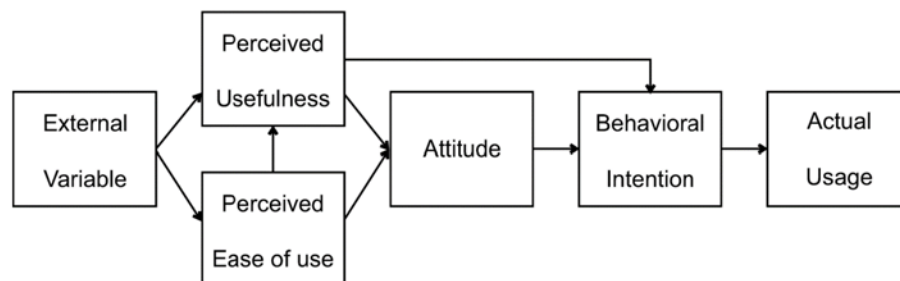


Figure 2. 5: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989)

The TAM emphasizes users' acceptance and adoption and aligns with the constructs of motivation, innovativeness, and website quality. It also helps to understand how tourists perceive and accept Instagram as a platform for visual eWOM, which influences their purchase intention to achieve the objective.

### 2.3.6 Major contributions in Conceptual Framework

The current study emphasizes mostly on theory of planned behavior and technology acceptance model that provide basis in the formation of conceptual framework. Theory of planned behavior had two components including behavior belief and normative belief. The behavioral belief entails the individual perception about consequences and benefits while availing any opportunity. On the other hand, the normative belief derives the consumer behavior based on societal perception by sharing their experiences and deriving purchase intention. Hence, theory of planned behavior discusses the consumer behavior affected by the numerous measures to derive the individual purchase intention. Besides, the technological acceptance model is the second major contributor for the conceptual framework of the current study which discusses the individuals' interest in technology. The perceived ease of use and usefulness are important factors in the TAM that allow individuals to use the technology and social networking sites and direct their intention towards purchase intention through eWOM. It covers the aspects and antecedents of most of the eWOM including innovativeness, information quality and others that help to derive the consumer purchase intention.

### **2.3.7 Discussion of Frameworks**

The theories chosen for the current research are interrelated and complement each other in forming the conceptual framework and consolidating the different viewpoints. The technology acceptance model involves the ease of use and usefulness that enable individuals to use technology which can reflect in normative belief existing in theory of planned behavior to build social perceptions through eWOM for consumers purchase intention towards HORECA services. The perceived ease of usefulness can also satisfy the consumers by seeking information that is relevant and desirable for consumers given by UGC through eWOM. Information adoption model (IAM) also complement the theory of planned behavior by emphasizing on source quality and credibility which encourage the consumers in trust building and leading to the tourism booking intentions. The elaboration likelihood model also relates with the uses and gratification theory which in turn affect the theory of planned behavior. The relevant information that individuals are willing to seek from eWOM can enhance the user satisfaction due to appropriate information availability which in turn influences the consumer purchase intention towards HORECA services. However, some shortcomings also exist in the theoretical frameworks individually as they are interdependent on each other to validate their argument and preparation of conceptual framework. As UGC only discusses consumer satisfaction through relevant information seeking from the eWOM that satisfy themselves. The theoretical basis provided on relevant information by the ELM model which discusses two different paths as options for information seeking for consumers based on their desires. Therefore, the theoretical frameworks have advantages due to their interdependency while also weaknesses that reflect in formulation of conceptual framework based on individual theoretical framework.

### **2.4 Consumer Intention**

The previous sections on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Information Adoption Model (IAM) and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) establish a strong foundation for understanding the factors influencing consumer intention. Building upon these theories, the concept of consumer intention in the context of HORECA services is investigated. By integrating these theories, we can gain insights into the cognitive processes, motivations, attitudes, and information adoption that shape tourists' intentions toward HORECA services.

Purchase intention, or buying intent, pertains to the degree to which potential customers are inclined and willing to purchase a product or service from a business within a

specific time frame. Several studies have defined purchase intention. Marlien et al. (2020) defined purchase intention as a decision made by consumers to purchase a particular brand or product, which suggests that it is a desire or intent that consumers have to buy specific brands or products. Meanwhile, Zafar and Rafique (2012) asserted that consumer purchase intention is the inclination of customers to purchase advertised products due to the likelihood that they will purchase these products in the future. For instance, Cozer (2018) stated that product values and recommendations from advertising or other users influence consumers' willingness to buy a specific product or service.

The use of purchase intentions can aid managers in evaluating the effectiveness of a new distribution channel, allowing them to determine the feasibility of further developing the concept and identifying the appropriate consumer segments and geographic markets to target via the network. The significance of purchase intentions stems from the fact that they are regarded as the primary pointer of actual behavior. As such, their examination is crucial in ensuring the success of any online retailer (Peña-García et al., 2020).

Kenia et al. (2019) stated that individuals act with the expectation of fulfilling their needs via their behavior. A meta-analysis of empirical literature shows that the correlation coefficients between intentions and attitudes range from 0.45 to 0.60, indicating a positive relationship. A positive ingesting experience can also raise the intention of consumers to practice the product or services again in the future. Furthermore, studies have shown that satisfaction is a valuable predictor of positive purchase intentions.

Marlien et al. (2020) conducted a study to inspect the impact of quality perception, value perception, price perception, and brand image on purchase intention and their influence on consumer-based brand equity (CBBE). The study's population comprised all Indomaret consumers, with 100 respondents as the sample size. The primary data was collected directly from Indomaret consumers in Semarang City through a questionnaire. The study's findings revealed that quality perception, brand image, value perception, and price perception have a significant positive effect on purchase intention, while purchase intention has no impact on CBBE.

These understandings from the literature highlight consumer intention's crucial role in evaluating the success and effectiveness of marketing strategies. By examining factors such as quality perception, brand image, value perception, and price perception, researchers and practitioners can gain valuable insights into influencing consumers' purchase intentions and enhancing their brand equity.



### 2.4.1 Consumer intention to visit HORECA services

Purchase intention is often used as an indicator of future behavior, and it can be influenced by several factors, as previously discussed. In the HORECA industry, purchase intention is essential because it can directly impact revenue and growth. If customers have a high purchase intention, they are more likely to make purchases and become loyal, which can contribute to a business's long-term success (Rustagi and Prakash, 2022). Several factors can influence customers' purchase intentions in the HORECA industry, and establishments must understand these factors to attract and retain customers (Hidayah and Idris, 2019). Some of these, according to Hidayah and Idris (2019), include:

- **Quality of the Product/Service:** The quality of the products and services offered by a hotel, restaurant, or café can significantly influence customers' purchase intention. Customers are likely to buy from establishments offering high-quality products and services.
- **Price:** the pricing of products and services can also play a vital role in deciding customers' purchase intentions. Customers are more likely to buy from establishments that offer affordable prices, while high prices can discourage customers from purchasing.
- **Brand Image:** the brand image of a hotel, restaurant, or café can significantly affect customers' purchase intentions. Customers are more likely to buy from establishments with a positive brand image and a good reputation.
- **Location:** the location of a hotel, restaurant, or café can also play a crucial role in shaping customers' purchase intentions. Customers are more likely to buy from establishments that are easily accessible and located in convenient locations.
- **Service Quality:** the quality of service a hotel, restaurant, or café provides can significantly affect customers' purchase intentions. Customers will likely buy from establishments that provide excellent customer service and a pleasant customer experience.
- **Word of Mouth:** in marketing, Word of Mouth (WOM) is a promotional tactic a brand uses to encourage consumers to discuss, advocate, and recommend their brand to others.

- **Menu Variety:** a restaurant or café's variety of menu items can significantly affect customers' purchase intentions. Customers are more likely to buy from establishments that offer a wide range of menu items.
- **Personal Preferences:** personal preferences are crucial in shaping customers' purchase intentions. For example, customers may prefer hotels, restaurants, cafés offering vegetarian or vegan options, or establishments catering to specific dietary needs.

Sudrajat and Lestari (2020) examined the impact of brand image with trust as the mediating variable, using Lampoh Coffee as a case study. The data for this research was obtained through a questionnaire distributed to 165 respondents, selected through convenience sampling. The data analysis used quantitative statistics, with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and LISREL version 9.2 software. The findings indicated brand image significantly influenced trust, which, in turn, significantly influenced café purchasing decisions. Both direct and indirect relationships were observed in the research results. Brand image had a significant direct consequence on the selection decision and a significant indirect outcome through trust in the purchasing decision.

However, the HORECA industry is highly competitive, and businesses must comprehend the aspects affecting customers' purchase intentions to attract and retain customers. For example, a restaurant may offer high-quality food at an affordable price. If the location was more convenient or the service quality was better, customers may have a higher purchase intention but may choose to dine elsewhere. Therefore, businesses in the HORECA industry must build a positive brand image, and cater to customers' personal preferences to increase their purchase intention. By doing so, businesses can enhance their customer base, build a loyal following, and ultimately grow their business.

Kim, Song, and Youn (2020) investigated the factors contributing to consumers' perceived reality by concentrating on three aspects of the restaurant (i.e., type of ownership, authenticator, and historical background). The outcomes indicated that authenticity validated by ownership and local people by a chain significantly elevates the perceived authenticity of consumers. Furthermore, consumers' perceived authenticity, directly and indirectly, affects their intention to purchase according to the restaurant's image and positive emotions. The results of this research provide traditional restaurant owners with valuable information about enhancing purchase intention and perceived authenticity.

When consumers have two or more alternatives, they choose by evaluating each product and service employing their prior information. Liewin and Genoveva (2021) examined consumers' purchasing decisions for international brands regarding fast-food franchises by assuming that these brands already have superior quality, high cleanliness standards, and more comfortable settings, thereby creating greater consumer confidence compared to local brands. This study used an online questionnaire to gather data via the quantitative method, with 180 valid responses. The findings indicated that food safety, quality, and environment significantly influenced purchasing decisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. In conclusion, the study showed that food safety, food quality, and the environment positively and significantly impact consumer confidence, which, in turn, affects purchasing decisions.

Consumers with experience with various product sources, such as online databases, retailers' websites, or inventories, sometimes receive recommendations from their communities. Xue et al. (2021) investigated the influence of fast-food knowledge on the longing to purchase fast food and examined its impact on purchasing intentions. The study collected data via a questionnaire. A sample of 279 consumers who frequently visit well-known shops in Pakistan was analyzed using exploratory factor analysis, multigroup moderations, and confirmatory factor analysis. The findings indicated that food knowledge and uniqueness-seeking features are directly related to fast food purchasing intentions and mediated by other factors.

Costa (2017) studied the relationship between websites and consumers and online tourism dedicated to providing accommodation reservation services. The study examined perceptions such as website characteristics, eWOM, and purchase intentions. Specific features like website quality and consumer feedback were investigated for their influence on electronic trust, purchase intentions, and future hotel booking decisions. The study used a quantitative methodology in the form of an online survey questionnaire, primarily distributed via Facebook, with 509 valid responses collected. The main findings suggest that Booking.com is the most preferred website for searching for and booking accommodation, and trust in these websites is significantly influenced by feedback from former consumers. Moreover, website quality is the most significant feature that affects consumers' purchasing intentions.

Regarding the behavior of HORECA customers in the market, in the traditional purchasing process, the client in a catering establishment selects a dish from the menu, determining the initial need for food products. Based on this, the manager or other decision-

makers responsible for food supply determine the required delivery volume and set quality and price requirements. Potential suppliers are sought in the following steps: different options are evaluated, and the final purchase decision is made. Additionally, food purchases can be made by the owner, an employee of the catering business, or a professional in the purchasing field (Grzegorz, 2022).

Aprilia and Kusumawati (2021) aimed to investigate the importance of hedonic and utilitarian determinants. Furthermore, the study analyzed their influence on the perceived usefulness (PU) of eWOM media and subsequent online booking decisions (OBD) for tourist destinations in India. Additionally, the study aimed to examine whether the impact of PU on OBD varies based on gender. A conceptual model was introduced and empirically validated using data from 338 Indian tourists who used eWOM media for information search. The findings indicate that utilitarian and hedonic determinants significantly influence tourist decision-making, with TripAdvisor.com being the most popular web portal for destination information. The study suggests that website designers and administrators should tailor their content to meet the identified needs. The results also revealed that the impact of eWOM media PU on OBD was more substantial in males than females, according to the moderating analysis.

## **2.5 Visual eWOM**

Slamet and Albab (2023) define eWOM as "the dynamic and ongoing information exchange process between potential, actual, or former consumers regarding a product, service, brand, or company, which is available to a multitude of individuals and institutions via the Internet". Nonetheless, eWOM interests' researchers in three main areas: understanding its format and function, its purpose in online communication, and its impact on the receiver. Moreover, eWOM is used in two modes: one for information explorers, such as forums and website product reviews, and the other in social media and online communities where users focus on sharing emotions and feelings (Cunha, 2021). With the increasing popularity of social media, eWOM provides a valuable opportunity to study WOM in context. As consumers increasingly rely on their peers for purchasing decisions, eWOM will continue to have significant consequences for marketing managers (Seo et al., 2020).

Consumer intention helps us understand how various factors discussed earlier influence tourists' attitudes, motivations, and behaviors. In visual eWOM, understanding tourists' intentions becomes essential as it allows us to explore the role of visual content and social media in shaping their decision-making. By investigating the factors that drive tourists

to engage with visual eWOM, such as the quality of information, credibility, perceived usefulness, and ease of use, we can assess their impact on tourists' intentions to visit HORECA destinations.

WOM communication is widespread. It occurs when customers share their opinions and experiences with others about various topics, such as their favorite restaurants, car buying, or expressing dissatisfaction with a brand's customer service (Hayes, Kindness, and Kvilhaug, 2022). These discussions can negatively or positively impact consumer behavior and are responsible for over 3.3 billion brand impressions daily. Research has shown that WOM can promote social platform adoption, and contribute to the success of television programs (Rai and Tripathi, 2020). The WOM model contains a message a sender conveys to the target audience via a communication network. The evidence suggests that the average person is exposed to around 3,000 brand messages daily (Trana and Strutton, 2020).

On the other hand, visual eWOM refers to using visual content, like videos or images, to share opinions, recommendations, and experiences about a product, service, or brand on online platforms. Sampat and Sabat (2021, p.52.) defined eWOM as "all informal communications directed at consumers through Internet-based technology (IT) related to the usage or characteristics of particular goods and services, or their sellers" while visual eWOM is a powerful tool for businesses, allowing customers to share their experiences more engaging and impactfully while reaching a wider audience. Rochmana et al. (2022) stated that visual eWOM can take many forms, including sharing photos of a product on social media, creating product review videos, or posting visual content showcasing a brand's values or story. Visual content can be more persuasive and memorable than text-based content, as it appeals to our emotions and senses and can convey more information quickly. Visual eWOM is a valuable component of a business's overall eWOM strategy and can help to create a more engaging and authentic online presence (Akbari et al. 2022). Cheng et al. (2021) state that businesses can leverage visual eWOM by encouraging customers to share visual content about their products or services on social media and other online platforms. This can increase brand awareness and credibility and provide valuable insights into how customers are using and experiencing the product.

Visual eWOM significantly affects consumer behavior and buying decisions. The quality of visual eWOM significantly influences the effectiveness of eWOM. High-quality visual content that is visually appealing, clear, and engaging is more likely to capture consumers' attention and be shared widely (Sutherland, 2021). In addition, the relevance of the visual content to the product or service being discussed is more likely to be effective than

unrelated visual content. For example, a high-quality image of a restaurant dish is more likely to be effective in promoting the restaurant than a generic image of a plate of food (Liu et al., 2022). Visual content shared by a trusted source, such as friends, family members, or influencers, is more likely to be effective than visual content shared by unknown or untrusted sources. These trusted sources use platforms or channels more effectively for visual eWOM. For example, social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram may be more effective for sharing images and videos (Rani, Shivaprasad, and Singh, 2019). At the same time, product review websites may be more effective for sharing product-related visual eWOM. Therefore, visual eWOM can be a powerful tool for marketers and professionals (Retnowati, 2022).

The appearance of eWOM and e-commerce has significantly influenced consumers' decision-making processes. Consumers can express their opinions, feelings, and product reviews through various technological platforms (Hidayat and Astuti, 2019). Practitioners and academics have emphasized the significance of positive eWOM, as it can increase consumers' intention to purchase, attract more customer visits, and aid retailers in directing their marketing strategies more efficiently (Salman, 2022).

Retnowati (2022) investigated how Yogyakarta Indonesian female students are influenced in their decision-making to buy cosmetics online. The study used mixed research methods, including 160 surveys, individual observations, and 30 interviews. The study concluded that eWOM significantly impacts purchasers' cognition and emotion, which leads to their online purchasing behavior. The variables influencing online purchases of cosmetic stuff by Yogyakarta female students include attractive marketing, satisfied friend's experience, online consumer recommendations, and discounted prices. In addition, eWOM directly affects students' online purchase intentions of cosmetics, and consumer satisfaction plays a crucial role in their purchasing behavior.

Likewise, eWOM has a critical role in the HORECA industry. Businesses must actively monitor their online reputation to remain competitive and successful by influencing customer behavior and purchase decisions. Online reviews, ratings, and recommendations shared by customers on various social media platforms, review websites, and forums can impact the reputation and success of HORECA businesses (Castro, 2016). Positive eWOM can attract new customers, while negative eWOM can lead to declining sales and reputation. Therefore, managing and monitoring eWOM is crucial for HORECA businesses to maintain a positive online presence and stay competitive. The HORECA industry relies heavily on customer satisfaction and experience to attract and retain customers. With the rise of online and social media review platforms, customers now have the power to share their opinions

and past knowledge or experiences with a broader viewer base, making eWOM a crucial aspect of the industry. Online reviews and ratings can directly influence the decision-making process of potential customers, as they tend to trust and rely on other customers' experiences before making a purchase (Alen, Sanzhar, and Aiya, 2022).

Managing eWOM is essential to maintaining a positive online presence for HORECA businesses. This involves monitoring and responding to online reviews and feedback, both positive and negative, and using this information to improve customer experience and service (Beltramo, Peira, and Bonadonna, 2021). Responding to negative reviews promptly and professionally can help mitigate damage to the business's reputation and show that the business values customer feedback and is willing to take steps to improve. In addition, HORECA businesses can leverage positive eWOM to attract new customers and retain existing ones. Encouraging satisfied customers to leave reviews and share their opinions on social media can increase brand visibility and credibility, leading to more significant customer loyalty and revenue (Eccles, Newquist, and Schatz, 2007).

Roy et al. (2020) analyzed eWOM employing the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework, shown in Fig. 2.6 below, and its influence on customers' perceived service quality and the likelihood of recommending online hotel booking services. The study measures the effects of eWOM stimuli (valence, image reviews, and volume), how they influence perceived service quality, and the moderating impact of the eWOM response in hotels. The study findings from the multiple regression analysis suggested that eWOM stimuli significantly influence perceived service quality, and eWOM response moderates this effect.

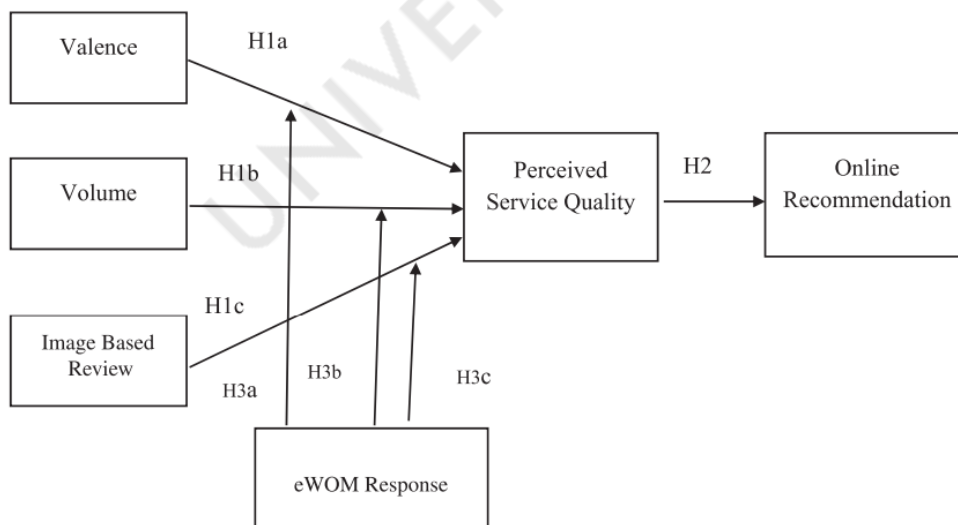


Figure 2. 6: Framework for hotel recommendation intention (Roy et al., 2020)

Currently, the most widely used social media platform for eWOM is Instagram. In addition to being accessible at no cost, Instagram allows for communication and self-expression via innovative and distinctive visual content. Instagram simplifies the method of eWOM, enabling messaging, fostering customer relationships, and cultivating social connections among users. Using visual features, such as videos and images, on Instagram can help instill confidence in potential visitors. In addition to likes and comments, the platform also provides a means for eWOM, which allows customers to share their knowledge, experiences, and opinions about services digitally. This can be especially useful for businesses in the tourism industry, as it allows them to share information with potential visitors and for visitors to share their own experiences, including those related to culinary tourism (Matikainen, 2020). Then and Felisa (2021) conducted a quantitative explanatory research study using purposive sampling to collect 120 online samples. They found a significant impact of eWOM on the visiting decisions and interest of tourist area guests at Culinary Pasar Lama in Tangerang, either simultaneously or partially. The study aims to benefit tourism businesses using Instagram social media to share information with potential visitors and attract their interest and decision to visit.

Modern consumers rely on feedback and evaluations from fellow buyers when purchasing (Al-Abbadi et al., 2022). Sampat and Sabat (2021) examined how restaurants in India used Food Ordering Apps (FOAs) to engage with customers and identified the features that affect customers' intention to spread eWOM about FOAs, including e-satisfaction, perceived value, trust, and e-loyalty. Furthermore, it investigated if eWOM varies for FOAs based on the online shopping experience, gender, age, order value, and family size. The study involved a literature review, a survey of 375 FOA users, and a multivariate logistic regression analysis. The study found that loyalty, trust, and perceived value significantly forecast customers' intent to spread eWOM for FOAs. In contrast, e-satisfaction, gender, age, order value, family size, and shopping experience were insignificant. The results can help managers improve the profitability and existence projections of the corporation.

Ledikwe et al. (2020) explored the effects of social media marketing on consumer behavior toward online fast-food restaurants in Indonesia, employing the S-O-R model. Their research indicated that mobile eWOM affects customer responses and that emotional, affective, and cognitive responses directly impact consumer behavior. Additionally, the results suggest that CBBE fully facilitates the association of mobile eWOM and consumer response. The study highlights the significance of evaluating consumer reactions toward mobile eWOM and CBBE. The findings from the visual eWOM section highlighted the



significance of factors influencing tourists' intentions toward HORECA services. Building upon these insights, an in-depth analysis of factors as the source of Visual eWOM, examining their impact on tourists' intentions, follows.

## **2.5.1 Literature Review of Visual eWOM factors & proposed hypotheses**

The factors used to formulate hypotheses are based on the insights from the previous discussion on the impact of visual eWOM on tourists' intentions towards HORECA services. This section aims to develop a theoretical framework and hypotheses for our empirical investigation by uncovering factors associated with eWOM and its implications on consumer purchase intention.

### ***2.5.1.1 Information Quality***

The term "Information quality" refers to the extent to which information is appropriate for a specific purpose. Information quality is evaluated based on certain criteria, and its measurement is essential in determining the suitability of the information (Walkowski et al., 2022). Hence, it is crucial in a communication platform where various information, including text, video, audio, and other complex formats, must be managed by organizations (Rijitha, 2021). It is, therefore, essential for suppliers to offer user-friendly information on their websites related to destinations, as the success of information search depends on the website quality and can influence the tourists' intentions positively. High-quality information is essential for making informed decisions regarding product development, target customers, cost, and distribution channels, which helps reduce the uncertainty of creating new products or services. The information must possess certain qualities to be considered high quality, including completeness, accessibility, accuracy, precision, objectivity, consistency, relevancy, timeliness, and intelligibility (Maravilhas, 2015).

The quality of information on a website can be evaluated based on factors such as timeliness, completeness, understandability, presentation diversity, trustworthiness, search functionality, and website design. The completeness, timeliness, usefulness, and accuracy of performance-related information are essential for management decisions (Albaom et al. 2022). Assessing the quality of information is a complicated task. Five essential criteria must be met to determine if information can be considered reliable: authority, accuracy, currency, coverage, and objectivity. These criteria originated in the print media and are considered universal standards that must be met regardless of the type of media being evaluated. Each criterion must be considered separately, although they often overlap, leading to discussions

around "accuracy" and "authorship." To get a more comprehensive understanding, it is necessary to consider these criteria together (Kattenbeck and Elsweiler, 2019).

Quality of information is divided into four categories: contextual quality, intrinsic quality, accessibility quality, and representational quality. The types have distinct characteristics that make them evaluable. Intrinsic quality refers to the quality of the information itself, contextual quality involves considering the context in which the information is used, representational quality focuses on the system that stores and facilitates access to information and how it is interpreted, and accessibility quality concerns the ease of accessing information. Information storage and retrieval systems must be easy to use, consistent, accessible, and secure. The representational quality considers how the information should be presented when available; it should be legible, easy to comprehend, and compatible. Significance is the dimension that best reflects this category as it evaluates the level of understandability of the information. Accessibility quality evaluates how information is accessed based on usability and security, focusing on the system where the information is stored and how it is stored and made available rather than the information itself (Wook et al., 2021).

The market gains information quality through the use of logistics services. Logistics quality is characterized by a company's ability to meet customer demands for exceptional service, timely delivery, dependability, clear communication, and ease of use. The evaluation of logistics service quality is based on customer and customer service representative feedback and the accuracy of information provided during the ordering and delivery process (Vu, Grant, and Menachof, 2020). Therefore, companies should invest in information technology to enhance the internal management of information flow along the supply chain (Pham et al., 2019).

The Internet provides a wealth of information and a favorable business atmosphere for travelers, enabling them to research destinations, plan their trips, select and book accommodations, buy tickets, secure insurance, purchase activities, rent cars, and more (Walkowski et al., 2022). However, more information from organizations can positively affect society and commerce. It is, therefore, crucial to assess the issue and act to address it (Azemi, Zaidi, and Hussin, 2017).

Walkowski et al. (2022) conducted a study on the quality of information produced by the Acolhida na Colônia association's social media platform (Instagram). They evaluated the significance of each attribute in the eyes of consumers by analyzing categories and

dimensions for quality information based on user perspectives and semantic criteria. The results showed a noticeable alteration in the Instagram content quality between families. The properties' content and image quality positively impacted the institutional profile to meet the expectations of tourists, which resulted in a significant rise in followers. Instagram was also used for advertising initiatives, such as the basket delivery in Florianópolis, which reinforced the Acolhida Colônia brand, including its agro ecological production, short trade, and compliance with COVID-19 health and safety protocols. The workshop evaluation emphasized the importance of visual images and the need for a consistent posting schedule in the institutional profile to meet tourists' expectations. However, there is still a need to increase the available information and keep it up-to-date.

Information quality and eWOM have a complex relationship and can be both positive and negative. On the one hand, high-quality information can positively impact eWOM by increasing consumer trust and credibility, leading to more favorable recommendations and a more positive online reputation for the product or brand (Tran, Nguyen, and Luong, 2022). High-quality information, accompanied by visually appealing images and videos, can attract and retain consumers' attention, increasing their engagement and interest in the product or brand. As visual content is more easily memorable, it can also help spread information more effectively. Hence, it leads to more favorable recommendations and a positive online reputation for the product or brand (Sheriff, Zulkifli, and Othman, 2019). The quality of the information in visual eWOM plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and decisions. Some of how information quality affects visual eWOM, according to Ruangkanjanases et al. (2021), are:

- **Credibility:** high-quality visual eWOM information, such as clear and accurate product images and reviews, enhances the source's credibility and increases consumer trust.
- **Decision making:** good quality visual eWOM provides consumers with a comprehensive understanding of the product, which helps them make informed purchasing decisions.
- **Brand image:** poor visual eWOM information, such as manipulated or misleading images, can damage a brand's image and reputation.
- **Influence on purchase intent:** high-quality visual eWOM can positively impact consumer purchase intent, while low-quality visual eWOM can decrease it.

On the other hand, low-quality or misleading information in visual content can quickly spread and negatively impact the product or brand's reputation, highlighting the importance of maintaining high information quality in visual eWOM (Shih, Huang, and Huang, 2022). The information communicated through eWOM needs to be more reliable due to the need for proper editing. As a result, false information and online harassment are prevalent. This low-quality information can lead consumers to make better purchasing decisions, contributing to trust. Additionally, favorable comments and positive reviews created by e-commerce merchants as part of "double-edged swords" can be deceptive, making it harder for consumers to protect their rights and putting retailers at risk of losing their reputation. Furthermore, some of these merchants may even file for bankruptcy.

With increased social commerce, eWOM has become a significant source for users when making purchasing decisions. Nevertheless, the information quality shared through eWOM on various platforms could be more consistent, affecting users' trust in eWOM and the reputation of the platforms. eWOM involves evaluations, personal experiences, recommendations, and discussions shared by online consumers through online media regarding products, services, and brands. Thus, using eWOM as a marketing tool has become crucial for businesses to boost sales and increase market share.

Zhao et al. (2020) examined the impact of information quality and social psychological distance on trust and purchase intentions in eWOM. This study utilized a questionnaire survey among Xiaohongshu users and analyzed the results through path analysis. The findings showed that information quality positively correlates with social psychological trust and distance; social psychological distance positively affects trust; social psychological distance facilitates the relationship between information quality and trust; and trust is positively related to purchase intention. Based on these results, the authors suggest that social e-commerce platforms consider these factors.

Another study by Perera, Nayak, and Long (2019) investigated the influence of eWOM on e-purchase and e-loyalty. The study created a model with eWOM as the independent variable, e-purchase and e-loyalty as dependent variables, and information quality and usefulness as mediating variables. The study analyzed data from 120 online brand members and found that eWOM significantly positively impacts e-loyalty and e-purchase. Information quality and usefulness were also crucial in encouraging, persuading, and attracting Vietnamese internet users and online consumers to build and increase e-loyalty.

Consumers respond to specific information characteristics related to eWOM. These characteristics include the quality of the information, the consumer's attitude towards it, and their intent to purchase a new bubble tea flavor as per Leong, Loi, and Woon's (2022). The latter study findings showed that the quality of the information and the consumer's attitude toward it impact the usefulness of the information. The intention to purchase was influenced by the adoption of the information, with the usefulness of the information being a predictor of adoption. This study contributes to the existing literature on purchase intention by incorporating the role of eWOM in a prolonged Information Acceptance Model.

Filieri et al. (2021) studied the impact of Dual Coding Theory on consumer behavior and intention regarding eWOM. A field and experimental study showed that eWOM primarily influences tourists' decisions and intentions through visual cues. The popularity of a destination, performance visual heuristics, and user-generated images (UGI) affect tourists' intentions to visit and make decisions about a destination and its attractions. The study also revealed that the quality of the information did not impact tourists' decisions. This research provides important insights for both theoretical and practical applications.

Research by Zinko et al. (2020) stated that previous studies on eWOM suggest that having too much or too little information in a review can lead to a decrease in trust and purchase intention. This study added to that idea by examining the impact of images on reducing uncertainty in eWOM. The authors examined how images may affect trust and purchase intention in an online review when insufficient or excessive textual information exists. The findings showed that when there was too little textual information, adding images increased trust and purchase intention as the amount of information increased. Conversely, when there was too much text, it was found that consumers tended to overlook parts of the text. Thus, images are valuable as they provide information that may have needed to be included in the text. These results indicate that images can mitigate the potential adverse effects on trust and purchase intention when a review has inadequate text.

The information quality is determined by the words used to convey their true meaning and essence. With the rise of internet usage, people worldwide can now express their opinions and share product reviews, leading to uncertainty about information quality. This ambiguity makes it difficult for consumers to determine the quality of information they encounter (Sardar et al., 2021). Researchers such as Cho and Shin (2020) and Ukpabi and Karjaluoto (2018) have investigated the impact of information quality on eWOM, with previous studies showing that the quality of product reviews on SNS can significantly

influence a consumer's purchasing decisions. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1: Information Quality conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.**

### ***2.5.1.2 Credibility Information***

Credibility refers to the trust someone has in someone else or information. McKnight and Kacmar (2021) define the credibility of information as a person's belief in the information presented on a website. This credibility dramatically impacts the public's decisions and actions. Thus, the credibility of information on social media can be seen as a person's confidence in the source of information, which can affect their decisions and actions (Keshavarz, 2020). The credibility of the information plays a crucial role in shaping the understanding of the subject at hand, and it is essential to evaluate the reliability and reputation of the source before accepting and incorporating it into this research.

With the rise of the Internet and social media, spreading false information has become a significant concern. In this era of misinformation and fake news, the credibility of information is more critical than ever. The dissemination of inaccurate information can result in severe consequences, making it imperative to identify credible sources to avoid misguided (Liang, 2021). Personal characteristics and first impressions play a role in shaping a person's opinion of the credibility of information on a website. The research findings demonstrate that these factors significantly impact how consumers perceive an unfamiliar website's credibility. This information is essential for website owners as the credibility of their information is crucial for generating revenue. To maximize the perceived credibility of their website, owners may need to consider individual differences and first impressions when designing their site (Savitri et al., 2022).

### **Factors of Credibility Information Affecting eWOM**

Several elements can affect the credibility of eWOM, such as the origin of the information, the medium utilized, and the message's contents. The source of information is a crucial factor in determining the credibility of eWOM. Consumers are more likely to believe information from a reputable source, like an expert or someone knowledgeable. For instance, Ben (2019) discovered that the source's expertise and reputation positively impacted the perceived credibility of eWOM in the food and beverage industry. The type of medium used also influences the credibility of eWOM. Consumers tend to trust information shared through trustworthy platforms like forums or blogs known for their accuracy and

reliability. As an example, Daowd et al. (2021) found that consumers were more likely to trust eWOM shared through forums than social media. The message's content can also impact the credibility of eWOM. Well-structured, easily understandable messages that provide specific details are more likely credible. For example, it was found that the content of an online message, including specific details, can positively affect the perceived credibility of eWOM.

### **Stages of Credibility Information**

The process of determining the credibility of information involves several stages, and one model that outlines these stages is the Onward Model (Ong, 2019). This model consists of five steps: Awareness, Attention, Assessment, Action, and Adoption. Awareness involves recognizing the need for information and becoming aware of the sources of information. In the Attention stage, the individual evaluates the relevance of the information and pays attention to it. In the Assessment stage, the individual evaluates the credibility of the information by looking at factors such as the author's qualifications, the source of information, and the publication date. The Action stage involves deciding whether to use the information and how to use it. Finally, in the Adoption stage, the individual implements the information in their decision-making and behavior.

Savitri et al. (2022) aimed to examine the impact of eWOM on consumer purchasing decisions in Indonesia. The research focused on the factors of eWOM information credibility, quality, and attitude and their effect on the usefulness of eWOM information for consumers. The sample consisted of 460 female respondents who changed their fashion product purchasing behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed that all the variables studied had a significant and positive effect on the usefulness of eWOM information for consumers. Hence, it implies that the credibility, quality, and attitude of eWOM information are crucial in determining its usefulness for consumers making purchasing decisions. Companies should prioritize the usefulness of information for consumers.

Lundin (2021) designed to examine the role of source credibility in building trust in eWOM communications related to hotel stays and its effect on consumers' intention to book a hotel stay online. The study focused on three dimensions of source credibility: homophily, expertise, and trustworthiness. A quantitative method was used, and a questionnaire was distributed to students studying economics and real estate at the Lulea University of Technology and the author's friends and family through Facebook Messenger. The results

showed that all three dimensions of source credibility impacted trust in eWOM and influenced consumers' intention to book a hotel stay. The trust towards a hotel manager was found to be lower compared to previous customers' reviews. The most trustworthy information for booking a hotel stay online was customer reviews that provided much information, were repetitive, and were new. Review websites should categorize reviews to make it easier for consumers to find what they want.

Daowd et al. (2021) studied the effect of eWOM on purchase intention, particularly among Generation Y consumers, who are heavily influenced by online shopping and digital communication. The study uses a sample of online survey participants from Thailand to test a conceptual model of factors that may impact eWOM credibility and influence consumer behavior. The findings suggest that source style as a visual attribute is the most significant factor affecting eWOM credibility, followed by source credibility, argument quality, and source homophily. This study provides new insights into the impact of eWOM on purchase intention and helps companies understand what to consider when developing their marketing strategies.

Ismagilova et al. (2020) combined the findings of existing studies on the characteristics of eWOM source credibility by using a meta-analysis. Twenty research articles were analyzed, and it was found that source expertise, trustworthiness, and homophily significantly impact perceived eWOM usefulness and credibility, intention to purchase, and information adoption. The results of this study add to our understanding of how source characteristics influence consumer behavior, which can be helpful for marketers in improving their marketing efforts.

Bilal, Ghani, and Idrees (2022) aimed to explore the influence of social media-based eWOM on college admission choices. The research was conducted in the context of higher education institutions, and a sample of 340 students from two universities in Peshawar, Pakistan, was surveyed through questionnaires. The results showed that information quality, credibility, and adoption of eWOM on social media significantly impacted consumer purchase intention. At the same time, the usefulness of eWOM did not significantly impact. The findings support previous research in the field.

Another research examines the effect of various aspects of eWOM information, such as information quality, credibility, task fit, information needs, and attitude, on consumers' purchase intention of flavored bubble tea. The analysis was done using partial least squares-structural equation modeling. The findings show that information usefulness impacts



information quality, credibility, task fit, and attitudes toward information. Information adoption and, thus, purchase intentions are influenced by information usefulness. This study adds to the literature on purchase intention by incorporating eWOM information into an extended Information Acceptance Model. It highlights the importance of online reviews' quality, credibility, and relevance in influencing consumer behavior. The study contributes to understanding the relationship between information characteristics and consumer behavior (Leon, Loi, and Woon, 2021).

Muda and Hamza (2021) explored the impact of consumer perceptions of source credibility on their attitudes and behaviors in user-generated content (UGC) on YouTube videos. The research combines social identity theory and source homophily theory to better understand source credibility's effect. The results showed that perceived source credibility affects purchase intention and WOM indirectly through attitude toward UGC and mediates the effect of perceived source homophily on attitude toward UGC. Companies may need to reconsider their marketing strategies by supporting micro-influencers, other ordinary consumers, celebrities, and public figures. The research highlights the importance of source homophily in understanding consumer behavior leading up to purchase and encourages further exploration of the topic. Instead of relying on public figures and celebrities to promote their products, companies may also want to engage with independent content creators, whom consumers see as more credible. These micro-influencers and prosumers have the potential to be transformed into brand ambassadors. Although it is easy to measure the outcome of a purchase using metrics and analytics, the role of source homophily in the process leading up to the purchase is not yet well understood. By exploring the theoretical basis of source homophily, researchers can better understand the relationship between credibility, attitude, and purchase intention and how positive WOM is generated among UGC followers on social media.

Lamia, Ghidouche, and Seraphin (2021) explored how the receptiveness to eWOM affects the perceived credibility of eWOM messages on an individual's intention to visit a destination. The relationship between credibility, destination image, and perceived usefulness of eWOM messages is also investigated. The results indicate that the destination image mediates the relationship between perceived credibility and intention to visit a destination, and the susceptibility of others influences this relationship to eWOM. These findings have implications for tourism professionals leveraging eWOM as a marketing tool to attract tourists. However, they should be mindful of managing eWOM to maximize its effectiveness.

Siddiqui et al. (2021) studied to understand the factors that impact the credibility of eWOM on SNS through a theoretical and practical model. The model explores how consumers use SNSs for information sharing and how this affects the brand image and online purchase intentions. The study was conducted through a structured questionnaire with 256 participants from 4 cities in India. The data were analyzed to examine the relationship between eWOM credibility, brand image, and purchase intentions. The results show that SNS activities significantly impact eWOM credibility, shaping the brand image and purchase intentions. The findings provide valuable insights for companies to create a positive brand image and enhance their purchase intentions through eWOM on SNSs. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2: The credibility information conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.**

### ***2.5.1.3 Website Quality***

Website quality (WQ) refers to a website's overall value and user experience, including design, functionality, content, accessibility, speed, and security. A high-quality website should provide users with an enjoyable, efficient, and trustworthy experience. In addition, a managed, organized, and clear website is a representation of the company's efforts to make information accessible to customers, and this has a positive impact on customer satisfaction. The service quality and user system can measure the WQ. Besides, the adequate quality of SNS has the potential to eventually convince the users to remain their regular customers and users, mainly as the boards, to exchange relevant information (Mutambik et al., 2022). In the process of customer perception related to online reviews, WQ plays a vital role because opinions about websites affect the purchase rates of customers (Nasiri and Shokouhyar, 2021).

WQ is determined by various factors contributing to the overall user experience the site provides (Sauro, 2016). The design and content of a website are essential aspects of its quality, affecting its visual appearance, layout, and usability. It should be relevant, accurate, and helpful to users. The functionality is another factor, including its performance, reliability, and ease of use; in addition to the speed, users expect pages to load quickly and smoothly. Moreover, security is a crucial concern for many users, and a high-quality website should have measures in place to protect users' data and prevent hacking or other malicious activities. On the other side, accessibility is also important, as a website should be usable by all users, including those with disabilities who use assistive technologies. Thus, the overall user experience of a website is a crucial aspect of its quality, including its users' satisfaction

and perception of the site. Finally, search engine optimization (SEO) and mobile compatibility are important considerations, as a website should be optimized for search engines and easily used on mobile devices (Misiak, 2020).

According to a recent study, first impressions matter, and a business's website is crucial in providing that first impression to potential customers (Ghimire, 2022). A high-quality website can enhance brand credibility and professionalism, making it easier for businesses to attract and retain customers. A website with fast loading times, responsive design, and optimization for search engines can improve the overall online presence of a business, making it easier for customers to find and interact with them online (Hallman, 2022).

From an e-commerce point of view, WQ is considered a crucial aspect that customers use to evaluate e-retailers. In e-commerce, transactions between e-retailers and customers usually occur on the website. Several online retailers have more effective WQ features that make their websites more appealing to customers (Shang and Bao, 2022). Aggarwal and Aakash (2020) stated that e-commerce websites with better accessibility, functionality, reliability, usability, stability, and flexibility are considered high quality. The Information Systems (IS) Success Model assesses the qualities of WQ in electronic commerce, identifying widely recognized dimensions like service quality and information quality. These dimensions are the main features in determining the perceptions and expectations of website consumers about WQ.

Previous literature has shown a direct and positive association between WQ and customer satisfaction (Setyaning and Nugroho, 2020; Zhou and Jia, 2018). When customers observe and have a positive experience with a shopping website, they are more likely to share it with others through eWOM. Tarkang et al. (2020) found that WQ plays a crucial role in eWOM, meaning that if a website is visually appealing, easily accessible, and user-friendly, the likelihood of the user recommending the website increases.

WQ and visual eWOM engagement are interrelated concepts. WQ, including navigation, design, and content, affects the user's experience and can influence the likelihood of visual eWOM engagement. For example, a high-quality website with visually appealing design elements and user-friendly navigation can encourage users to interact and engage with the site, increasing their chances of sharing their experience through visual eWOM (Setyaning and Nugroho, 2020). In contrast, a low-quality, poorly designed website and user experience may discourage engagement and reduce the likelihood of visual eWOM. Thus,

improving website quality can lead to increased visual eWOM engagement, helping to spread positive information about a brand and potentially increasing online visibility and conversions (Kwangsawad and Jattamart, 2022).

The significance of how WQ and eWOM impact the intention to purchase online has been examined by Saleem et al. (2022) which shows that WQ (such as the quality of information, services provided, and system) strongly influences eWOM, positively affecting consumers' intentions to purchase online in China's e-commerce industry. The study also discovered a significant difference in online shopping behavior between male and female participants.

Likewise, Phan and Pilik (2018) conducted research to determine the effect of a website's design, both in terms of usability and aesthetics, on the intention of eWOM. The study results revealed that a website's design impacts a person's attitude towards the site, leading to positive eWOM. The study also indicated that the website's design impact on eWOM intention is moderated by the online purchasing experience and mediated by a person's attitude towards the website. Finally, the findings presented implications and practical insights for marketers and scholars.

The integration of websites in education is rising as technology plays a significant role in the educational system. The World Wide Web (WWW) enables content delivery through websites, providing a platform for quick and efficient access to information. The image of a university, also known as its brand image, is critical in educational marketing as it represents the university. A positive university brand image is essential for promoting the university (Chen et al., 2021).

Siripipattanakul et al. (2022) explored the relationship between eWOM, website quality, and the intent to follow a website of a Thailand university. Two hundred fourteen participants were selected through convenience sampling and completed online questionnaires. The data was examined with the help of the PLS-SEM program to test the hypotheses. The study outcomes indicated a significant consequence of website quality on university image and the intent to follow the university's website. Furthermore, WQ and image significantly impact eWOM and the purpose of following the university's website. Thus, the study can describe the association of WQ, eWOM, brand image, and the intent to follow websites in any industry or organization.

WQ in HORECA tourism refers to the user experience and functionality a website provides visitors. This includes website design, navigation, content, speed, and accessibility.

A high-quality website can improve customer engagement, increase bookings and sales, and help establish the brand's reputation. A mobile-friendly website is also essential in the HORECA industry, as many customers book and research their travel and dining experiences through mobile devices. The first place guests turn to for information about a hotel is its website, which must be attractively presented and managed effectively since it is always accessible. The website also serves as the primary means of communication with guests (Cadorniga et al., 2022).

A recent study by Jongmans et al. (2022) investigated the WQ impact on visual eWOM engagement in restaurants. The research found that WQ, including website design and content, significantly affects the likelihood of customers sharing visual eWOM, such as photos and videos, on social media platforms. The study's results suggest that restaurants should focus on enhancing the quality of their websites to encourage visual eWOM engagement. This can be achieved through high-quality images, videos, and user-friendly website design. The study also found that website content, such as menu information and customer reviews, enhances visual eWOM engagement. The study highlights the importance of WQ in fostering visual eWOM engagement in the restaurant industry. By investing in a high-quality website, restaurants can increase their chances of attracting and retaining customers through positive WOM recommendations on social media.

Kumar et al. (2020) studied the intentions of booking directly from a hotel website constructed on factors such as participation, website quality, and eWOM. The study used a quantitative method and surveyed 380 people (357 valid replies) who had reserved a room from a hotel website in the past six months. The data was analyzed for various factors such as model fit, normality, reliability, and validity before being used to test hypotheses. The study findings reported that WQ influences participation, whereas participation affects eWOM, leading to increased customer trust and purchase intention. This study contributes to understanding how participation, WQ, and eWOM influence purchase intention for hotel room booking directly from the hotel website.

In addition, Hermawan (2022) aimed to examine the relationship between Perceived Web Quality (PWQ), eWOM, and Behavioral Intention (BI) among Indonesian online travel agency users. The research treated eWOM as the dependent variable and Behavioral Intention as a mediating variable. The study findings presented that PWQ significantly impacts both eWOM and BI. The mediation test results also revealed that Behavioral Intention strengthens the independent variables' effect on eWOM. Moreover, the study highlighted the significance of website quality and privacy in influencing online travel

agency users' intentions in Indonesia. It emphasizes the need for online service sellers and providers to advance their shopping security and services in the technological era.

On the other hand, Setyaning and Nugroho (2020) studied the impact of website features on positive eWOM and buyer satisfaction in e-commerce in Indonesia. The sample consisted of 340 individuals born between 1984 and 2002 who had purchased products from Indonesian e-retailers once a month in the previous year. The researchers employed convenience sampling to gather data and distributed questionnaires through an online survey using Google Forms. The findings indicated that all of the hypotheses were not supported. It showed that the impact of shopping convenience and informative features on customer satisfaction was positive but not statistically significant. Thus, the study can benefit e-retailers by providing information on how website attributes can impact eWOM through customer satisfaction in digital marketing. Thus, the following hypothesis can be proposed for the variable:

**H3: Website Quality conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services**

#### ***2.5.1.4 Motivation***

The motivation behind an individual's sharing of information about a product, service, or brand in an online setting, as pertains to eWOM, refers to what drives their decision (Tohidi, 2021). Motivation is the driving force behind guiding, controlling, and sustaining human behavior in pursuit of high-performance levels and breaking down obstacles to change (Hussain et al., 2018).

Kanje et al. (2020) who have conducted extensive research on the subject, posit that consumers are motivated to participate in eWOM for various reasons, such as being helpful to others, they may share information about a brand to assist others. Maintaining their social identity, they may share information to demonstrate their knowledge and expertise about a specific product or brand. Building relationships is also a reason- as they may share information to connect with others and attain recognition or status and psychological fulfillment, they may share information to feel more connected, alleviate boredom, or experience personal satisfaction. A final reason is gaining practical benefits - they may share information hoping to receive practical benefits, such as discounts or special offers.

Tourism motivation encompasses all elements of an individual's cognitive and emotional personality and is crucial in driving travel-related events. As such, it is a significant factor in shaping tourist behavior. Research by Zhou et al. (2019) reveals that

variations in eWOM motivation results in different ratings for the same hotel across various tourism websites. Tourism motivation has been extensively explored by those who looked at seven socio-psychological motivations who focused on escaping the status quo and seeking new experiences (Zhou et al., 2019), and who considered external conditions and internal desires. However, there have only been a limited number of studies on the eWOM motivations of tourists. Tourism motivation can also impact eWOM motivations to some extent; for instance, a tourist traveling to showcase their status may write eWOM due to feelings of vanity.

Kanje et al. (2020) have investigated the reasons behind posting eWOM. However, these studies had only measured motivations on a single type of eWOM platform. As social media platforms differ from tourism websites in various ways, motivations for posting eWOM can also vary. For instance, the motivation for entertainment is likely more prominent on social media than on tourism websites. Hence, it is essential to consider a multi-platform perspective. The finding revealed that the type of platform where eWOM is posted has a significant impact on readers' evaluation. As eWOM posters are also readers, the platform type is essential to post eWOM. The study aimed to examine tourists' eWOM behavior on social media platforms and integrated tourism websites by examining the psychological process of "emotion/eWOM motivation/eWOM behavior." E-commerce provides a significant opportunity in web-based internet marketing, leading to a shift in consumers' communication behavior and replacing traditional WOM.

Hussain, Song, and Niu (2019) investigated the motivational involvement of consumers in eWOM for online information adoption, as influenced by writer motivations. Using a sample of 390 active Chinese internet users, the study found that social ties and perceived risk are critical factors that impact consumers' behavior and the potential for adverse outcomes and uncertainties during the decision-making process. Online retailers should focus on mitigating perceived risks by providing prompt website responses. Practitioners must understand consumer behavior in the online shopping system to expand the marketplace, including product varieties, online advertising, retail strategies, and market segmentation. Organizations should train their service providers to respond promptly, monitor consumers' reviews, and provide choices for groups and individuals to improve the organization's business performance

Lee and Tussyadiah (2010) aimed to examine the impact of visual information on the motivation of eWOM in the travel industry by exploring the relationship between travel information search and diffusion by online users. The survey results showed that as people

increasingly rely on internet information for their travel, potential travelers view information that combines text and visual information, such as photos and videos, as more powerful and influential in shaping their travel motivations than text-only information. However, while information combining text and photos still ranks high in the information contributed by experienced travelers, a significant portion tends to contribute text-only information. The reasons for this gap and individual differences in information choices are investigated, and managerial suggestions are provided for each eWOM diffusion venue.

Mathews et al. (2021) looked into how effective management of eWOM can enhance motivation and improve a firm's performance. It was conducted through multiple case studies by interviewing senior managers from nine hotels and analyzing their websites and marketing materials. The findings suggested that smaller hotels, even with limited resources, can benefit from using eWOM data analytics to decide their brand reputation strategies. These hotels can create a unique communication style that showcases their authenticity, reinforces their brand position, and shows motivation through their eWOM responses over time. These findings emphasized the importance of eWOM management and motivation in optimizing a firm's performance.

Koufie and Kesa (2020) delved into what drives millennials in Johannesburg to share their restaurant dining experiences on social media and the key factors that shape their purchase intentions and behavior within the dining set. It confirmed the impact of eWOM on millennial consumers' purchasing intentions and behavior in Johannesburg. The study found that the quality of food and service was the primary motivator in choosing restaurants. Among the several motivators identified, altruism was revealed to be the leading reason for sharing positive or negative WOM on social media. The study recommended that restaurants incorporate social media into their marketing communication strategy, encourage and incentivize UGC, and improve food and service quality to encourage positive eWOM. The study highlights the significance of access to information, Internet-enabled mobile devices, social media platforms, and the online engagement tendencies of millennials in transforming the hospitality industry. The study provided insight into the millennial consumer market in South Africa with a focus on eWOM in the restaurant industry and is expected to influence the social media strategies of restaurants in Johannesburg.

Zhou et al. (2019) explored tourists' eWOM behavior and motivation on social media platforms and integrated tourism websites. Through in-depth interviews with 30 experienced tourists, the study delves into the motivations behind eWOM sharing and how platform features fit with tourists' motivations. The results showed that tourists have different



motivations for eWOM depending on their emotional state. The study found that in positive emotional states, tourists' eWOM motivations are centered around sharing experiences, building self-image, socializing, recording life, expressing emotions, and helping others. On the other hand, in negative emotional states, tourists' motivations focus on blowing off steam and releasing frustration, seeking revenge, reminding others about previous experiences, and seeking help. The study also revealed that social media platforms are more suited for tourists' positive eWOM motivations, while integrated tourism websites are better equipped to fit negative eWOM motivations. The study highlighted the significance of platform features in shaping tourists' eWOM behavior and the potential of social media platforms and integrated tourism websites in fostering tourists' communication and interaction. They explored why tourists share their experiences on different platforms, such as social media and integrated tourism websites.

On social media platforms with strong ties, tourists post positive eWOM to enhance their self-image, such as showcasing their high-level experiences. These findings provided valuable insights for destination and platform management. The study on tourists' emotions, eWOM motivations, and platform features reveals that social media platforms align with positive eWOM motivations. In contrast, integrated tourism websites align with negative eWOM motivations. Social media platforms are seen as fulfilling social needs and promoting sociability, security, and emotionality, while integrated tourism websites are more reliable and offer more information. However, interviewees felt that information on social media platforms is less affluent than on integrated tourism websites. The study concluded by providing essential implications for destination and platform management.

Aramendia-Muneta (2022) explored the intrinsic motivation behind positive fake eWOM on social media. The study analyzed the effect of expected satisfaction of self-needs (self-enhancement, exhibitionism, entertainment) and expected satisfaction of social needs (social comparison, social bonding, social enhancement value) as well as social intentions (helping the company/brand, helping others) on the creation of fake positive eWOM. The results suggested that fake positive eWOM is primarily driven by the satisfaction of social needs and social intentions, which are mediators of satisfaction of self-needs. The need for social comparison and social enhancement value positively impacts eWOM, while social bonding is not a driving factor. The desire for entertainment and exhibitionism negatively impacts the intention to help others or the company/brand. These findings suggested that sharing a fake positive review on social media is influenced by social comparison, social

enhancement value, and the desire to help others or the company/brand. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed;

**H4: The motivation conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.**

#### ***2.5.1.5 Innovativeness***

Innovation is “creating and adopting new ideas that bring about change and increase competitiveness and sustainability” (Kamaruddeen, 2019, p.14). This requires imagination and the skill to bring these new concepts to life within a company's business practices.

Innovativeness refers to a person's inclination towards innovation and their innate level of novelty-seeking behavior and personality representation (Mahmood, Khwaja, and Jusoh, 2019). As a result, innovative consumers are more likely to use and recommend new technology-based products to others within their network. Mahmood, Khwaja, and Jusoh (2019) highlighted that innovative consumers are motivated to seek out new products and services and are more likely to share their experiences with others. Furthermore, the research has also found that an individual's opinion leadership and innovativeness are positively correlated, and information seeking is also positively related to innovativeness. Autonomous extrinsic motivation is the source of intrinsic motivation - consumers are motivated to stay up-to-date with the latest technology-related information. Innovative and creative people often engage in information about innovative products and services, driven by intrinsic motivation. As a result of participating in eWOM on social media websites, network members can receive feedback from other members regarding their innovative tasks, providing them with additional intrinsic motivation to complete these tasks. Based on the findings, it was hypothesized that perceived innovativeness among social media members positively impacts their engagement in eWOM on social media websites.

Technological advancements have made the integration of smartphones and online shopping possible. Recent data indicates a growing number of online shoppers who belong to different age groups and shop for various items to meet their needs. Previous research shows that these consumers have a utilitarian approach to shopping and are influenced by personal innovativeness and WOM in purchasing decisions. In the online environment, consumers also tend to display a utilitarian shopping value and rely on eWOM. Additionally, personal innovativeness plays a role in the likelihood of consumers making an online purchase. This has created a conceptual framework that explores the relationship between utilitarian shopping value, personal innovativeness, and eWOM on online purchase intention (Shaqman, Hashim, and Yahya, 2022).

Bhat (2020) studied how consumer innovativeness, the need to belong, and source credibility influence the reception of information through WOM and eWOM communication. The study's results supported the positive relationship between the variables and WOM and eWOM, except for the relationship between the need to belong and WOM, which was not established. The study's findings contributed to new scientific knowledge and can also be utilized by practitioners to enhance customer engagement with their brand and company.

Dobrinic, Gregurec, and Dobrinić (2021) explained that innovative consumers are willing to be among the first to embrace something new, unique, or challenging and characterized innovative consumers as having curiosity, ambition, and reasonableness. The study considered innovation a part of human nature and believed that each individual has a certain level of innovation or desire for new information, stimuli, or experiences. Additionally, the research identified two primary motivations for this behavior: altruism (a desire to share information) and reciprocity (a desire to return the favor). In WOM and eWOM, innovation refers to the consumer's desire for new information and updates about products and services. The results found that a higher level of innovation results in more positive reactions to adopting innovations. Based on the findings, innovative consumers are expected to be more likely to seek information through WOM and eWOM.

Why are some new product launches more viral and successful than others? The research brought together theories of interpersonal communication and consumer learning to answer this question. A study by Nguyen and Chaudhuri (2019) examined millions of eWOM instances on social media for 345 newly launched automobile products from 2008 to 2015. The findings showed that more innovative products generated more eWOM volume but surprisingly had a less positive sentiment. The impact of innovativeness varied across different eWOM channels. The results also indicated that eWOM sentiment predicts new product success more than eWOM volume. Further experimental results provided insights into how product innovativeness affects eWOM metrics in different product categories and highlighted the role of excitement and perceived risk as underlying factors. This research has practical implications for firms in developing effective viral marketing campaigns to improve the success of new products (Nguyen and Chaudhuri, 2019).

Nguyen and Chaudhuri's (2019) research makes several significant contributions to the field of WOM and new product studies. It was one of a few studies that explored both the factors that drive and the outcomes of eWOM expression on social media. The results demonstrated how the level of innovation in a product influences eWOM volume, affecting

new product sales. The study also highlighted how these effects differ across various eWOM channels, communication strategies, pre-announcement timing, and branding tactics. Additionally, the research shed light on the psychological factors influencing the relationship between product innovativeness and eWOM volume and sentiment, such as excitement and perceived risk. Thus, the study provided a comprehensive overview of the connection between new product introductions, eWOM, and sales.

Ali, Hussin, and Dahlan (2019) studied the elements that stimulate customer engagement in eWOM by looking at information characteristics, consumer behavior, motives, innovativeness, and social aspects. The research drew on the ELM, TRA, and Socioemotional Selectivity theory (SST) to create a new model for eWOM engagement in e-commerce. The results indicated that information credibility, quality, social support, innovativeness, altruism, self-enhancement, and a sense of belonging significantly influence eWOM engagement. The Importance-Performance Map Analysis also revealed that innovativeness, information credibility, sense of belonging, attitude towards eWOM, and social support are the most critical factors managers should prioritize to encourage eWOM engagement in e-commerce platforms. The research provided recommendations for future research.

Habib, Hamadneh, and Khan (2021) aimed to understand the impact of eWOM in the service industry and how it can influence customer behavior, innovativeness, and marketing strategies. The research developed a new theoretical model to examine the role of eWOM and investigated how service innovation may impact in-person WOM through service quality and brand loyalty. The study found that focusing on WOM can improve customer perceptions of service quality and encourage repeat visits to a well-known restaurant. The study also explored how the moderated mediation design can be better understood through regulatory focus theory and other related literature. The results concluded that customer behavior, innovativeness, and marketing strategies are significantly related to eWOM.

Khwaja and Zaman (2020) studied how eWOM plays a role in boosting online retail and innovativeness. Online information and technological innovation have changed how consumers make decisions, and eWOM platforms like consumer review websites, shopping platforms, blogs, and discussion forums have become influential. However, the study focused on eWOM on social media platforms. These platforms play a crucial role in shaping consumers' information adoption and innovativeness during the first phase of their online decision-making process. The study examined the impact of the factors that drive eWOM

and the role of multiple mediators like perceived risk, argument quality, information usefulness, innovativeness, and trust inclination on the consumers' information adoption. The result concluded that consumers' information adoption and innovativeness significantly affect eWOM. The study highlighted the practical and theoretical implications for future research and management.

In the digital and innovative technology era, consumers are no longer just passive recipients of marketing messages but have become active suppliers of information about products through various digital media. The communication between consumers that takes place online is referred to as eWOM communication. eWOM is a crucial part of e-commerce, and its importance has increased as the number of internet users grows, and they turn to eWOM for product information. To understand the factors determining the effectiveness of eWOM, they reviewed prior studies on traditional WOM and eWOM. A summary of eWOM communication that aligns with basic communication processes is provided. The research articles on the topic are grouped into eight categories: WOM, eWOM, eWOM impact, source credibility, innovativeness, message characteristics, receiver characteristics, eWOM platform, and response after eWOM adoption. The chapter concluded by discussing various strategies for future theoretical and empirical exploration. eWOM plays a significant role in the digital economy and innovative technology practices. By monitoring and managing eWOM communication effectively, businesses can better understand their customers, acquire and retain customers organically, maintain high brand value, and allocate resources appropriately. Consumers, in turn, benefit from using their power to voice their likes and dislikes, which empowers consumerism in the current era (Ray, 2019).

The growth of the Internet has caused significant shifts in many aspects of people's lives, including how they purchase products and services. In particular, the tourism industry has been significantly impacted by the access to information that the internet provides and innovative technology. Due to the unique features of tourism services, such as their inseparability of provision and intangibility, it can be difficult for consumers to assess the quality of these services beforehand. This leads to high perceived risk during the decision-making process. However, the Internet and its communication possibilities have changed how people consume and plan their journeys. eWOM has become an essential aspect in selecting and booking tourism services. The study aimed to build on existing knowledge in this field by exploring the variables driving consumer participation and innovativeness in eWOM communication in the context of travel accommodations. Using a database of 5,509 hotels from Booking.com, covering all categories and throughout the European Union

(Fernández-Miguélez et al., 2020) showed that the hotel's objective and perceived quality and innovative technology significantly impact eWOM.

Additionally, it was found that customers are motivated to leave comments based on their perceptions of different innovative aspects of the hotel rather than objective features. Finally, the quality-price relationship was determined to be the variable with the most significant impact on online comments, regardless of the tourist profile and location of the hotel, and had a positive effect in all cases (Fernández-Miguélez et al., 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H5: Innovativeness conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.**

#### ***2.5.1.6 Destination Fascination (DF)***

The idea of fascination is commonly utilized in the tourism sector. It is a type of attention captured without effort and arises from exploring and restoring the natural environment in environmental psychology. Fascination is a crucial and fundamental aspect of a restorative experience, including being away, compatibility, and extent. A destination is described as a remote location that provides travelers with compatibility and fulfillment of their travel goals (Basu, Duvall, and Kaplan, 2018). Both business owners and the public find Instagram's various features easy to use to obtain specific information and share their knowledge with the audience, including their experiences with destinations. They share their offerings through videos, images, likes, comments, and invitations via eWOM and provide visitors with information about specific destinations (Ong and Ito, 2019). According to Urdea and Constantin (2021), ecotourism destinations have become significant because of their ability to conserve the atmosphere and promote recreation, education, and employment opportunities. In these destinations, the touristic knowledge occurs in an ordinary setting and is directly tied to the environmental geographies. Understanding and satisfying visitors' travel experiences are essential for long-term ecotourism success in destinations and products. Ecotourists view their visits to these sites as an expressive experience rather than just a transactional one.

Berto et al. (2010) outlined two features of environmental fascination. The first aspect is that people can experience environmental fascination via experience, such as losing time track while backing, which constitutes participatory fascination. The second aspect is that environmental fascination can be experienced through various surrounding elements, including people, objects, items, and views. Berto et al. (2010) further categorized this fascination into two types, hard fascination, and soft fascination, based on the content. Hard

fascination refers to the fascination one experiences while watching an auto race. In contrast, soft fascination refers to the feeling of reflection and calmness while strolling by a lake. The different forms and fascination sources described by Berto et al. (2010) suggest the possibility of investigating and creating numerous dimensions of the described fascination.

The importance of studying visitor experiences is that these experiences can significantly influence future behavior and customer satisfaction. Hence, it is essential to assess the satisfaction levels of visitors with the facilities offered in ecotourism points and how their travel behavior and socio-demographic features impact this satisfaction. To remain viable in the industry, providing high-quality services that lead to customer satisfaction is crucial for business success. Understanding visitors' diverse profiles and varying satisfaction stages is vital in making a sustainable competitive benefit for ecotourism destinations. With information about the different types of visitors and their motivations, ecotourism managers can customize their approach and determine the most likely to visit at diverse stages of a traveler's area's progress (Liu et al., 2017).

DF is crucial in the HORECA industry as it impacts customers' decision-making and how much they are willing to pay for the experiences they desire. In the HORECA industry, destinations that captivate customers often provide unique, unforgettable, and personalized experiences, leading to repeat visits, positive WOM, and increased customer loyalty (Alebaki, Liantakis, and Koutsouris, 2020). For instance, a hotel with a beautiful location, stunning views, or rich history can foster a strong emotional connection with customers, enhancing their overall experience. In the restaurant industry, the venue's atmosphere, decoration, and ambiance also play a role in DF. Restaurants that offer unique, culturally rich, and immersive experiences can often attract customers seeking more than just a meal. For example, a restaurant showcasing traditional cooking methods, live music, and cultural performances can create a memorable dining experience for which customers are willing to pay a premium (Yang and Luo, 2021). Similarly, in the catering industry, event venues and locations that offer a unique and unforgettable experience can drive customer demand and increase revenue. For instance, a catering service that offers farm-to-table dining experiences, highlighting local ingredients and culinary traditions, can attract customers looking for an authentic and meaningful experience (Ryan and Brown, 2023).

In today's digital age, eWOM has become an essential source of information for travelers when considering a destination. These individuals are likely to share their positive experiences and emotions about the destination with others through electronic channels. Destination marketers can leverage eWOM to promote their destinations and create a

positive image, leading to increased DF. The formation of a person's understanding and viewpoint of a travel destination is widely recognized as being influenced by three primary sources of information: destination promoters' marketing efforts, travelers' actual experiences, and WOM communication. Positive eWOM about a travel destination can further enhance its appeal and attract more visitors, thereby increasing its destination's fascination (Aktan et al. 2022).

Moreover, positive eWOM can enhance the destination's reputation, attracting high-value travelers seeking unique and memorable experiences. This can increase the destination's economic benefits, such as increased tourism revenue and job creation (Stylidis, Kim, and Kim, 2022). Conversely, negative eWOM can reduce a destination's appeal and decrease its level of DF. A destination with low levels of DF may result in negative eWOM. It affects the destination's reputation, decreasing interest among potential travelers. This can negatively impact the destination's economy and reduce its competitiveness in the tourism market (Aktan et al. 2022).

Pessoa, Oliveira, and Souza (2022) determined the perspectives of all stakeholders about the destination fascination in the tourism business. The qualitative research was conducted by studying the prior literature and concentration group discussions with travelers, tourism professionals, and promotion experts. The results indicated differing perspectives on what creates a sense of fascination for a destination among these three groups and that other factors influence it. Through engagement with the three groups, the study identified 12 variables that contributed to DF. It proposed a framework to understand the association of DF with unforgettable experiences and the likelihood of return visits. The study also emphasized the need for partnership between marketing professionals and tourism to fulfill tourists' expectations. Furthermore, the study revealed that DF could happen earlier than visiting a place.

The research conducted by Kankhuni and Ngwira (2022) highlights the significant role of natural soundscapes in promoting positive eWOM. The study suggests that destinations and businesses should prioritize improving their natural soundscapes to enhance satisfaction, eWOM, and unforgettable tourism experiences. For example, reducing the number of safari vehicles or limiting motorized events in nature-based charms can expand tourists' knowledge of natural soundscapes. Destinations can also showcase their natural atmospheric features in their promotion efforts. The study used data from 221 overland travelers who uploaded their exposure to African destinations on Instagram. The study outcomes showed that engagement with the natural soundscapes positively impacts tourists'



perceptions, leading to satisfaction, unforgettable tourism experiences, and eWOM. Additionally, the findings indicate that memorable tourism experiences predict eWOM and satisfaction.

Siang, Yang, and Liu (2020) examined the impact of both online and traditional WOM marketing on local tourists' intention and destination image to visit Indonesia. This research was unique as it was the first to integrate both types of WOM in a single study. The results indicated that online WOM significantly impacted destination image and intention to visit. In contrast, traditional WOM had an encouraging but non-significant impact on destination image. Additionally, both traditional and online WOM had a significant and positive impact on the purpose of visiting the place, and the destination itself had a significant favorable influence on the intention to visit. The authors discussed the implications of the findings and future research opportunities in the field.

Thaothampitak, Wongsuwatt, and Choibamroong (2023) investigated the effect of eWOM on the travel purpose of visitors and the mediation of destination image, considering the impact of COVID-19. The research collected data from 280 international students in Thailand through an online survey. The results indicated that Phuket province was the most desired destination for international students, and Google was the most commonly used online platform for obtaining data about their destinations. The analysis exposed positive connections between travel intention and eWOM and a positive consequence of destination image on travel intention. Additionally, the study found that the international students' travel intention was affected by eWOM, and the image of the tourism destination indirectly impacts it.

Sundram et al. (2022) studied the effect of both traditional and eWOM on creating a destination image. The study's purpose was to understand the effect of both WOMs on the insight of a destination and to identify the most reliable source of WOM, whether personal or commercial. The study also aimed to distinguish between negative and positive WOM and its influence on a tourist destination's reputation. Personal WOM was categorized as a non-commercial foundation with a straight connection between the sender and receiver. Destination images are essential as they influence decision-making and signify the tourism products and services available. The influence of WOM communication on the interpretation of a destination is significant. However, the combined effect of eWOM and traditional means on the destination image remains to be determined. The research looked at various aspects of WOM's influence on the tourism experience, including traditional or eWOM, commercial or personal WOM, and negative or positive WOM. The study reported that traditional WOM

has the most substantial influence on destination images compared to eWOM, and both commercial and personal eWOM impacted destination images. Therefore, based on the analysis, the researcher put forward the following hypothesis:

**H6: Destination Fascination conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.**

#### ***2.5.1.7 Popularity Heuristics***

According to Filieri et al. (2021), visual eWOM popularity heuristics refer to any online information about the number of consumers buying, reviewing, liking, or using a product or service. This includes the number of followers of a celebrity, the number of reviews for a particular accommodation, and the number of likes. The customers of online travel services perceive the volume of customer reviews as a sign of the service's popularity, which is often associated with the number of customers who have already purchased the product. Previous research has shown that a product's popularity can positively impact hotel preferences, sales, perceived information value, and purchase intentions (Sundar et al., 2020). Moreover, various studies have found that popular heuristics can help customers make decisions by providing information about the products or services most customers buy, reducing the risks associated with purchasing (Filieri et al., 2021).

The term "popularity heuristics" in the context of eWOM refers to the impact of the number of people who have participated or contributed to the online review or recommendation (Li, Lee, and Yang, 2019, p. 1391). This concept is based on the idea that consumers are influenced by the perceived popularity or endorsement of a product or service based on the number of reviews or ratings received. The population heuristic suggests that the more people who have participated in creating eWOM, the more credible and trustworthy the information is perceived to be by consumers. This phenomenon is also called the bandwagon effect, where consumers are more likely to trust and adopt a product if they believe it is widely accepted and used by others.

With the growth of the sharing economy, the trend of sharing accommodations is increasing worldwide. Through review-sharing platforms, consumers can easily share their thoughts, opinions, praises, and criticisms about accommodations. WOM has evolved into a more communicative and influential form, eWOM, that transcends traditional oral communication. In a study by Wang, Li, and Yang (2021), an empirical approach was used to examine the relationship between eWOM attributes of accommodation sharing and popularity on Tujia.com. Specifically, three heuristic factors of eWOM (i.e., house, review, and host attributes) were identified as impacting accommodation popularity. Rental and host

types were considered moderating variables to understand these relationships further. The results of this study offer valuable insights for accommodation platform managers and hosts to create more popular accommodations.

According to a study by Book, Tanford, and Chang (2018), online customer reviews and ratings are powerful information sources that impact travel purchase decisions. The complexity of the online environment leads to the use of heuristics for decision-making, which can result in biased perceptions. However, engaging in systematic processing can reduce the reliance on heuristics. The research indicates that base rate information, such as recommendation percentages, is often disregarded in favor of more salient but less diagnostic information. In the context of online reviews, the usefulness of review content varies. The study explored the impact of base rate information, review content, and processing effort in a  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  experimental design. The results showed that ambiguous base rate information and high processing effort prompted consumers to pay more attention to review content, affecting their perceptions, decisions, and recall. This study provides a deeper understanding of dual processing systems and their impact on consumer choice.

Katharina and Vilma (2012) aimed to explore the relationship between anonymous and semi-anonymous eWOM and its impact on population heuristics and consumers' attitudes. A qualitative research method was used to gather primary data, as previous research needed to be included. Four focus groups were conducted with consumers from hotels, separated by gender, as differences were observed during a pilot study. WOM is based on personal recommendations and relies on trust between the sender and receiver of the message.

In contrast, eWOM eliminates the ability of the consumer to judge the credibility of the sender and message. Despite this, many people read online reviews and rely on eWOM. Online reviews can either be anonymous or provide personal details of the sender, which can influence the message's credibility and affect consumers' attitudes toward a product. In conclusion, this research found a relationship between the personal attributes of online reviewers and consumers' attitudes towards HORECA. It was found that consumers form their attitudes towards HORECA by reading online reviews and considering the opinions of others, as well as by comparing different cafés and restaurants. The results indicated that consumers are more likely to be influenced by a message if it is perceived as credible. Several personal attributes of a reviewer were found to impact the credibility of a message, either positively or negatively, including the reviewer's name, photo, pseudonym, age,

gender, country of residence, and profession. The results also showed that women tend to be more influenced by a reviewer's attributes than men.

Chen et al. (2022) examined the impact of cues in online product reviews on consumers' perceived credibility. The research focuses on an online platform similar to Amazon and how star ratings, the number of reviews, and the sentiment of the reviews influence the credibility of the information. Two experiments proved that when a review is negative, consumers tend to place greater importance on the number of reviews as a proxy for credibility rather than the star rating. On the other hand, when a review is positive, participants trust the star rating system as the most credible. The study highlighted that the number of reviews could positively affect perceived credibility and add to the existing research body in this area. The presence of numerous reviews on a product can alleviate consumer anxiety by assuring them that many others have already purchased the product. This large number of reviews serves as a signal of credibility and is often motivated by the bandwagon heuristic. As a result, brands are encouraged to incentivize customers to leave reviews for their products, as a high volume of reviews can increase the perceived credibility of the product. The impact of star ratings was significant for both student and non-student samples. However, the results contradict what was expected: participants rated high star ratings as more credible than low star ratings.

Regarding review valence, college students perceived positive reviews as less credible, while there was no significant difference in credibility between positive and negative reviews for non-student participants. These conflicting results merit further examination by future research. The interaction between the number of reviews, valence, and star ratings on perceived credibility can influence the anatomy of online product reviews. Popularity heuristics play a crucial role in providing information and knowledge related to the popularity of a particular destination. This study suggested that eWOM reviews positively impact tourists' intentions as they rely on customer reviews when making travel decisions (Carlisle, Ivanov, and Dijkmans, 2023).

Lu and Chi (2018) aimed to investigate the impact of availability cues on food choice decisions in restaurants through judgment heuristics. To this end, two experiments were conducted, each examining a different aspect of restaurant decision-making. The first study assessed the influence of scarcity cues, bundling, and price on menu item evaluations. The results indicated that server-delivered scarcity messages impacted evaluations and purchase intentions, but menu-based scarcity cues did not. The second study explored the effects of information vividness, message frequency, and price on restaurant appeal and menu choice.

The findings showed that vivid, story-based reviews favored restaurant expectations and menu item choice, while the increased frequency of item mentions also increased purchase likelihood. The results of this study did not support the effect of price bundling on food choice decisions in low-price, low-risk situations. Overall, the results provide insight into the psychological cues that drive restaurant food choice decisions.

Longart, Wickens, and Bakir (2016) studied to examine consumers' restaurant selection process for leisure purposes in the South East of the UK. It utilized a sequential mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative data. The qualitative stage involved six focus groups with semi-structured interviews, analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings showed that the occasion for eating out, such as a romantic dinner, was a significant factor in the decision-making process. The study also applied the concepts of utility theory and the Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell (EKB) model to understand how consumers prioritize benefits from the restaurant they are evaluating. This study explored the factors that impact consumers' decision-making process when selecting a restaurant for leisure, specifically in the South East of the UK. The study delved into the role of emotions, motivations, and consumers' regulatory focus in their decision-making process. The study's findings revealed the eating out occasion's significance and impact on decision-making.

Additionally, the study proposed a new typology of seven categories of restaurant attributes that influence perceived consumer value, with price found to impact expectations of other attributes. The research provides valuable insights for the restaurant industry, highlighting the importance of friendly, welcoming, attentive service and the consumer's willingness to pay more. The findings suggested several avenues for further research.

Popularity heuristics is a mental shortcut that people use to evaluate the quality of a product based on the number of people who have used it or approved of it. In the context of eWOM in the hotel sector, the popularity heuristics can significantly shape consumers' perceptions of hotels and influence their purchasing decisions. Sánchez-González and González-Fernández (2021) studied that the popularity of a hotel, as indicated by the number of positive eWOM comments, can increase consumers' perception of the hotel's quality and desirability. It was found that the popularity of a hotel, as indicated by the number of positive reviews and the number of stars it received, positively affected consumers' perceived quality and reputation. Li, Lee, and Yang (2019) also found that the popularity heuristics were positively associated with consumers' trust in eWOM and that the effect of the popularity heuristics was more substantial when the source of the eWOM was unknown or perceived to be more credible. Overall, these studies suggested that the popularity heuristics can

significantly impact the effectiveness of eWOM in the hotel sector. To maximize the impact of eWOM in this context, hotel managers need to understand the popularity heuristics' role in shaping consumers' perceptions of their hotels and take steps to increase the number of positive eWOM comments about their hotels. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed;

**H7: The popularity heuristics conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.**

#### ***2.5.1.8 Destination Image***

The destination brand image is "a set of brand associations in the minds of consumers, helping consumers recall the brand in memory" (Elfitra, Saragih, and Khoerunisa, 2019, p. 474). Based on historical perspectives, the concept of destination brand image has gained much consideration; however, a cohesive concept in HORECA tourism is still needed. Additionally, destination brand image can also be defined as "an individual's spiritual expression of the knowledge (beliefs), emotions, and the overall perception of a specific destination" (Shafiee, Tabaeian, and Khoshfetrat, 2020. p.10).

Anggraeni and Harris (2019) explained that the destination brand image has a significant impact on eWOM in the hospitality and restaurant industry (HORECA). eWOM refers to opinions and recommendations about a particular product, service, or destination shared among consumers through electronic communication platforms such as social media, online review sites, and forums. Several studies (Al-Dmour et al. 2021; Ong and Ito 2019) have found a positive relationship between destination brand image and eWOM. For instance, a study found that destination brand image significantly positively impacts eWOM in the HORECA industry. The study concluded that a positive destination brand image enhances customer satisfaction, leading to positive eWOM. It also found that destination brand image positively affected eWOM in the HORECA industry by creating a favorable image in customers' minds. A strong destination brand image could lead to positive eWOM and increased customer loyalty. In conclusion, research has shown that destination brand image plays a crucial role in shaping eWOM in the HORECA industry. A positive destination brand image can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, leading to positive eWOM and increased business opportunities for hospitality and restaurant organizations.

The recent health crises have posed significant difficulties for the travel, hospitality, and tourism industries. A study by Skinner (2021) examined the impact of such crises on the brand image of a tourist destination, focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic. The relationships between perceived destination brand image, self-congruence, engagement, love, and

perceived health crisis risk were investigated through interviews and online data collection in China. The results of the exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used to develop and validate a scale to measure tourist behavior towards destination brands during and after health crises. The findings provided valuable insights for future research on destination branding and offered important theoretical and practical implications for the industry.

Huang and Liu (2018) examined that brand image is a crucial factor in the tourism industry, particularly in the hotel sector, due to its unique characteristics such as inseparability, tangibility, heterogeneity, and perishability. The brand image influences a customer's decision to choose a tourism destination. The brand image also plays a role in the decision-making process for accommodations. When guests encounter a brand name, they associate it with certain features and decide based on the images that appeal to them. As guests in the tourism sector have different experiences, expressions, and interactions with the hotel, they have diverse image expectations that hotel operators need to consider. It was noted that brand image in service organizations, such as the tourism sector, is complex. Hotel operators who create a strong brand image can improve organizational esteem and attract more customers. This branding helps the tourism industry to increase its financial performance, achieve profitability, raise average pricing, generate more revenue, and achieve better occupancy. Brand image is crucial in the tourism sector as it helps to understand customers' personalities and attributes, enabling hotel operators to make decisions that attract more guests. Branding allows hotel operators to translate their offerings into what benefits the guests, considering their personality traits and attributes. It was explained that brand image is constructed based on customer expectations through interactions, promotions, public relations, and advertisements. Findings show that tourist imagery, with its unique dimensions, influences tourists' travel decision-making and behavior in choosing the right destination.

Shafiee, Tabaeian, and Khoshfetrat (2020) investigated that the perceived tourist image affects satisfaction levels and assists in destination selection. Brand image plays a vital role in competing in the highly competitive tourism industry. It shapes customers' perception of the services and goods provided and is used to succeed in the industry's competition. The tourism sector employs efficient and effective marketing strategies that support the perception of their services and goods in the modern business world. A strong brand image promotes friendly relationships between tourists and hotel employees, convenience, and quality service in the reservation systems, increasing tourist satisfaction.

The recent emergence of culinary culture as a significant component of the HORECA model in food preparation, marketing, and consumption has led to the reinforcement of touristic destinations. Traditional cuisine has taken a prominent place in the growth of the tourism industry. Stankov et al. (2019) examined the influence of the brand image of traditional Bulgarian cuisine on tourist destination selection. The results revealed that the destination selection could be influenced by various factors, including local cuisine (88%), natural and historical resources of the country (76%), and cultural heritage (52%). Some factors affecting tourists' decision to consume traditional foods were the well-defined destination image, accessibility of local cuisine, and the residents' eating and drinking habits. The study contributes to the marketing potential for the tourism industry, regional development, and hospitality business by highlighting local food as a crucial aspect of the HORECA sector in a tourist's destination selection.

Duman and Sacli (2023) aimed to examine the relationship between destination image, destination selection, and local cuisine elements and to determine the impact of destination image on this relationship. The data was gathered from surveys of domestic tourists in the UNESCO Gastronomy City of Hatay in Turkey. The findings showed that local cuisine elements and destination brand image significantly influence destination selection, with local cuisine having a more significant effect. Additionally, the results showed that local cuisine elements significantly impact destination brand image and that destination image partially mediates the relationship between local cuisine elements and destination selection. This study provides important insights for researchers and managers in the tourism industry by highlighting the critical role that local cuisine and destination image play in destination selection. The study participants were primarily single women aged 28-39 with undergraduate education and a mix of public, private, and higher-income employment. The finding concluded that the destination brand image significantly impacts the food industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic, along with other destination crises, has presented significant difficulties for the travel, hospitality, and tourism industries on a global scale. A study by Li et al. (2022) explores the impact of health crises on the brand image of tourist destinations, focusing on the COVID-19 pandemic in China. Qualitative interviews and online data collection were conducted to create a scale that measures the perception of destination brand image, destination brand self-congruence, destination brand engagement, destination brand love, and perceived risk of a destination health crisis. The results showed meaningful relationships between these constructs, and a tested and validated scale was



developed to understand tourist behavior toward destination brands during and after health crises. The study offers theoretical and practical implications for future research on destination branding.

Noori (2019) studied to examine the impact of branding on tourist destinations and customer satisfaction in the tourism sector. A qualitative narrative method was used to collect data through secondary sources such as journals, books, and peer-reviewed articles written in English published between 2010 and 2019. The results showed that branding in the tourism industry significantly impacts tourist destinations through customer behavior and service quality. By fulfilling the needs and expectations of tourists, branding can improve their decisions on choosing suitable accommodation and increase their loyalty towards the tourism sector. This research provides valuable insights into the relationship between branding and customer satisfaction in the tourism industry. The tourism sector should prioritize branding to improve tourist destinations and customer satisfaction. The study aimed to examine the impact of branding in the tourism industry on tourist destinations and customer satisfaction. Branding is a marketing tool used in tourism to influence tourists' perceptions and decision-making when choosing a destination. A strong brand image addresses customers' needs and expectations, increasing customer satisfaction and retention. The study highlighted the importance of branding in improving the quality of services provided in the tourism sector. The results showed that branding positively impacts customer satisfaction and helps tourism organizations retain customers by improving the guest experience. The study also emphasized the role of branding in promoting customer loyalty and the ability of tourists to predict the services offered by a destination management organization.

El-Baz, Elseidi, and El-Maniaway (2022) state that there is a significant correlation between eWOM and purchasing intentions. However, the destination brand image influences the connection between eWOM and customer buying intentions. Jebbouri et al. (2023) define destination brand image as it encompasses all the associations and overall impressions that tourists have of a specific location, be it an island or a country. Ong and Ito (2019) also emphasized the interplay between visitors' opinions, emotions, and visual images of a tourist destination. Abubakar et al. (2017) further highlighted the importance of destination brand image in destination brand prototypes. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H8: Positive destination image, conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.**

The hypothesis sheds light on the relationship between visual eWOM and tourists' intentions toward HORECA services. In other words, the positive destination brand image conveyed through visual eWOM information favors customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services and establishes the importance of crafting a solid and appealing brand image through visual eWOM strategies.

#### ***2.5.1.9 User-generated Content***

UGC, or user-generated content, refers to unique and brand-specific content formed by consumers and shared on various platforms, such as social media. This type of content can take on various forms, including but not limited to videos, images, testimonials, reviews, and even podcasts (Hofman-Kohlmeyer, 2020). In addition, Bolin (2021, p. 24) defined it as "media content generated by people outside of professional media institutions, often for no pay, which is made available to the public". The popularity of UGC has grown recently, and researchers have looked at its impact on consumer behavior in the industry 4.0 period. Evaluating UGC in eWOM communication can help stakeholders gauge their effectiveness and enhance digital marketing efforts. It has become popular due to the rise of social media, with examples including reviews, ratings, social media posts, photos, and videos. More than 70% of UGC comprises product reviews and ratings on web-based platforms, considered eWOM (Rani et al., 2023).

Consumers use UGC because it boosts confidence in purchases, is more interesting than brand-generated promotion, creates a genuine shopping experience, and encourages customer engagement. A survey by Stackla (2021) reported insights into consumer behavior and preferences, revealing that the trend towards online shopping continues and that modern consumers seek authentic and personalized shopping experiences. The report surveyed over 2,000 consumers and found that 83% believe retailers should provide more genuine shopping experiences, and 70% think brands must provide personalized experiences. The study also showed that most respondents consider UGC the most authentic content, with nearly 80% indicating that UGC highly impacts their purchasing decisions. According to the survey, UGC is 6.6 times more persuasive than branded content and 8.7 times more influential than influencer content (DeGruttola, 2021). Aydin (2020) found that users consider UGC more trustworthy and authentic than traditional tourism data sources. As a result, researchers have observed a growing reliance on online recommendations from other travelers who have already visited a particular destination.

According to Lu et al. (2020), the use of UGC for travel decisions depends on the hedonic, functional, and social benefits consumers receive. Functional benefits refer to the

information consumers need to choose tourism products and services. Consumers may also search for information on the availability of online travel communities, which are especially important when a community promotes their interests. In some instances, consumers may turn to others' opinions to reduce the risks related to their travel decisions, such as assessing the safety of a destination or finding lower prices.

Social media allows travelers to share interactive travel content in various formats, including text, pictures, audio, and videos. With more users sharing information on social media, it has become an effective and preferred method for interaction between organizations, service providers, and individuals. Additionally, social media platforms can be transformed into virtual learning environments or channels for knowledge-sharing between learners and communities. Tourists can share their travel experiences and stories through social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, X, TripAdvisor, and YouTube (Oliveira, Araujo, and Tam, 2020). In the tourism and hospitality industries, consumers use UGC to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a product or service. Social media facilitates creating and sharing of content and allows people to form communities of interest (Kitsios et al., 2021).

Likewise, when people travel, they take many pictures and share them with their opinions on social media platforms like Instagram. This UGC can influence how travel agencies communicate and acquire customers. Germon, Sokolova, and Bam (2017) examined the use and strategy of Instagram UGC by travel agencies and analyzed its impact on community engagement. The study collected Instagram data from three online travel agencies – Airbnb, Voyage Privé, and Very Chic. The research found that the most successful content on Instagram came from regular users and, more often, from non-Instagram bloggers sharing their travel experiences. These results highlight the importance of UGC in community management on Instagram.

The use of UGC also impacts the decision-making process of tourists, and it strives with conventional travel information providers, such as news agencies and tourism companies (Xu, Lovett, and Law, 2022). Kitsios et al. (2022) reported that a significant majority (80%) of travelers now use the Internet to plan their trips, visiting more than 20 websites on average and spending approximately two hours on each site searching for information related to their travel plans. Oliveira, Araujo, and Tam (2020) state that UGC is becoming an increasingly popular marketing and communication tool for travel advertisers states that consumers use UGC to evaluate service quality and price and to identify the best attractions, food, and destinations. Bandinelli (2020) states that consumers seek social

acceptance, enjoyment, communal feeling, and involvement. When planning trips, consumers seek information from marketers and fellow consumers. However, they place more trust in UGC as it is perceived to be sincere and honest, conveying the real experiences of creators. Tourists perceive UGC to be more influential than marketer-generated content as it reflects the performance of typical tourism products.

However, the authenticity of UGC has come under scrutiny due to defamatory reviews posted as a form of revenge. Many consumers post reviews as a form of altruism, and these have been helpful in pre-trip planning decisions. Online third-party advice, such as TripAdvisor and Lonely Planet, has proven to be a reliable source of information for travelers. Their preferences for independent discussion boards have kept these sites popular. Around 80% of travelers read hotel reviews before planning a trip, and 53% will only book a hotel with reviews. Users sharing their travel experiences through text, pictures, and videos provide valuable information for potential travelers regarding new markets, topics, and sensitive issues (Ukpabi and Karjaluoto, 2018).

Several factors highlight the significance of UGC in the tourism and hospitality industries. Firstly, tourism is a pleasurable experience, and travelers want to make the best decisions to enhance their experience by reading reviews and comments from fellow consumers. Secondly, tourism is an experience that cannot be consumed beforehand, so consumers depend on the knowledge and experiences of others. Lastly, reviews from fellow consumers are considered genuine and reliable, making them a trustworthy source of information for travel decisions (Gurjar, Kaurav, and Thakur, 2022).

Sultan et al. (2021) investigated the main factors that impact travelers' decision-making when choosing sustainable destinations. Additionally, the study explored how tour-operator-generated and UGC contribute to forming an overall destination image through cognitive and affective destination images. The study used an SEM approach to test their conceptual model and collected data from 425 individuals in Shanghai, China. The findings indicated that user-generated and tour-operator-generated content positively influences destination image formation. Moreover, the results revealed that travelers rely on UGC and tour-operator-generated to choose sustainable destinations. However, the former had a more significant impact on their decision-making. The use of social media content has been found to play a crucial role in forming the overall destination image, mediated by cognitive and affective destination images.

On the other hand, how consumers perceive UGC is influenced by their demographic characteristics. Younger travelers, for example, tend to explore reviews from multiple sources out of curiosity, while adult travelers have fewer search options (Pencarelli, Gabbianelli, and Savelli, 2020). However, Bilo, Budimir, and Hrustex (2022) reported that there are no substantial distinctions between older generations (Gen X, Baby Boomers) and younger generations (Gen Y, Gen Z) in terms of their tendency to write and read negative comments and reviews. Nevertheless, according to Chiappa, Gallarza, and Dall'Aglio (2018), experiential value-based research found significant alterations in tourists' e-rating behavior grounded on various factors such as gender, hotel size and type, and time of stay.

Online consumer reviews provide others with accurate information and work as an endorsement for them. Several tourism-based industries are concerned about negative reviews and comments as they can harm their reputation. Interestingly, research suggests that people reading negative reviews and comments frequently are inclined to post less frequently and vice versa (Bilo, Budimir, and Hrustex, 2022). Those who derive greater enjoyment and engagement from online reviews are more likely to trust and rely on them for travel planning. The credibility and expertise of the source of information also play a vital role in accepting online reviews. Finally, the type and mode of information sharing also impact the acceptance of reviews (Bandinelli 2020).

The contributions of earlier product users through UGC, including text, images, videos, and experiences uploaded online, are crucial in driving restaurant sales. In light of this, Najar and Rather (2021) researched the role of mediation in the connection between UGC benefits and the purchase intention of restaurants in Jammu and Kashmir, India. The study aimed to determine whether a guest's attitude mediated UGC benefits and their Purchase Intention of Restaurants. The researchers surveyed 400 guests/tourists who visited hotel restaurants, with 330 usable responses analyzed. The findings were consistent with Social Action Theory (SAT) and Social Control Theory (SCT), validating these theories. The study also emphasized that guests' attitudes impacted the relationship between UGC benefits and the purchase intention of restaurants.

UGC can also impact tourists' emotions towards a destination and provide them with basic factual information about travel products and destinations, thus increasing their knowledge (Sultan et al., 2021). In this regard, Xu et al. (2021) examined the structural relationships between destination image, satisfaction, revisit intention, and WOM publicity to investigate the effect of UGC on tourist loyalty behavior. The study focused on data collected from domestic tourists visiting Gulangyu, a World Heritage Site in China. The

results indicated that UGC indirectly affects tourist loyalty by influencing destination image and satisfaction. Additionally, the study found that factual and emotional UGC positively impacted tourists' perceived value of the destination, with emotional UGC having a more significant influence.

As trust in content marketers continues to decline, UGC is becoming more important for shaping the meaning of brands. Consumers have more control over UGC, whereas brands have less control; however, the impact of user-generated images (UGIs) on observers needs to be better understood, especially in the food and beverage industry where UGIs are prevalent. Pleijers (2021) experimented with comparing the effects of marketer-generated images (MGIs) on millennial observers in terms of restaurant visiting intention, consumer-based brand equity (CBBE), and benign envy. The study also examined the moderating roles of restaurant luxuriousness and type of post using a 3 (consumer UGI post vs brand MGI post vs brand UGI repost) x 2 (casual dining vs fine dining) between-subjects design. The results showed that UGI had a more positive impact on CBBE regarding brand expectations than MGI. However, there were no significant differences between UGI and MGI for the other outcome variables. The effect of UGI and MGI on CBBE, restaurant visiting intention, and willingness to pay was moderated by restaurant luxuriousness, with more favorable effects observed in more luxurious restaurants. The post type did not moderate the effect of food-related images on observers.

Filieri et al. (2020) aimed to examine the mediating role of visual eWOM engagement in the relationship between tourists' booking intention and booking behavior towards HORECA services. Previous research has highlighted the increasing use of eWOM in making decisions about various products and services. However, few studies have investigated the influence of visual and verbal eWOM cues on tourists' intentions and behaviors towards tourist destinations. Therefore, this study drew on Dual Coding Theory to fill this gap in the literature. The findings of a field and the experimental study suggested that eWOM mainly affects tourists' intentions and behaviors through visual cues. Popularity heuristics, performance visual heuristics, and user-generated pictures were found to affect tourists' intention and decision to visit a destination and its attractions.

In contrast, information quality did not significantly influence tourists' decisions. These results highlighted the importance of visual eWOM cues in shaping tourists' booking intentions and behaviors towards HORECA services. The study provided important theoretical and managerial implications for the tourism industry. The findings suggested that tourism businesses should prioritize using visual cues in their eWOM strategies to influence

tourists' intentions and behaviors toward their destinations. This may include encouraging customers to share user-generated pictures and utilizing popularity and performance visual heuristics to promote their destinations. Additionally, businesses should focus on enhancing the quality of their visual eWOM to maximize its impact on tourists booking intentions and behaviors.

Harahap and Dwita (2021) studied the impact of visual eWOM on tourists' booking intentions towards HORECA services. In contrast, the study conducted in the Pasaman district investigates the effect of eWOM on the intention to revisit, with attitudes and images of the destination as a mediating variable. The study population consisted of tourists who have visited Pasaman Regency at least twice in the past year. The results showed that eWOM positively and significantly affects return intention, mediated by attitudes and images of places in Pasaman regency tourism destinations. Therefore, the Pasaman Regency Government should increase the frequency of eWOM on social media and improve the image of Pasaman Regency tourist attractions to attract more tourists. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H9: User-generated content conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.**

Moisescu, Gica, and Herle (2022) aimed to explore the impact of social media usage as a moderator on visual eWOM engagement. Specifically, the study investigated the influence of passive and active engagement with brand pages on eWOM, with self-brand connection as a mediator. The study surveyed Facebook users from Romania, a developing European country and a popular social media platform. The study found that passive and active social media brand page engagement positively influences eWOM, directly and indirectly, through self-brand connection. However, the study also revealed that the two types of engagement generate eWOM differently, with passive engagement having a more powerful direct impact on self-brand connection.

In contrast, active engagement has an equal influence on self-brand connection and eWOM. Nonetheless, due to the mediating effect of self-brand connection, both types of engagement have a similar total effect on eWOM. The study's findings offered valuable insights for social media marketers, highlighting the significance of increasing consumers' engagement with brand pages to generate eWOM and strengthen brand loyalty.

Poturak and Turkyilmaz (2018) studied to investigate the impact of social media usage as a moderator on visual eWOM engagement. Social media platforms have become

integral to marketers' strategies to reach their target consumers. With increasing numbers of web users turning to social media to express their opinions, thoughts, and suggestions, it has become an essential part of digital marketing. Traditional media had limitations in placement and outcomes, but social media has overcome these limitations, creating a platform for information to spread rapidly and efficiently. The study focused on the effect of eWOM within the context of social media on consumer purchase decisions. Specifically, it explores how the familiarity of the eWOM source, communication style, writer's expertise, and product popularity impact consumer purchase decisions. The research methodology involved quantitative research, with data collected through a survey sent to students in Sarajevo and Timisoara, two different countries. The sample's diversity offered a reasonable basis for comparative analysis. The survey aimed to gather data for analysis, providing insights into the impact of eWOM in social media on purchase decisions and allowing for a comparison between universities.

Javed, Tučková, and Jibril (2020) studied the impact of social media usage on tourists' intentions towards HORECA tourism. With the emergence of Web 2.0 and the widespread use of social media, it is crucial to understand how social media can influence tourists' behavior and destination choices. Despite the popularity of social media, only some studies have comprehensively examined the driving constructs and indicators of social media that can impact tourists' behavior. Therefore, based on the TPB, this research aimed to fill this gap by developing a set of driving constructs and conducting an empirical analysis of millennials in selected universities in the Czech Republic. The results revealed that social media channels significantly directly and indirectly impact tourists' behavioral intentions and actual behavior. While the constructs of tourist information search and tourism promotion partially predict tourists' behavior, socio-economic factors like gender and educational level also play a crucial role. Thus, the study concluded that social media significantly influences tourists' behavior and discusses the contributions and future directions of the research.

Agyapong and Yuan (2022) proposed to examine the impact of social media usage on international students' tourism destination decision-making in China. With technological advancements, businesses in the tourism sector are increasingly adopting social media to communicate with customers and disseminate information more effectively. Given the limitless capabilities that social media provides, it is transforming various business ecosystems. In light of the Uses and Gratification theory, this present study used a quantitative research approach to investigate the impact of social media on tourism



destination decision-making. An online questionnaire tool was used to gather responses from international students in China, and 271 samples were analyzed. The results showed that behavioral intentions have a positive and significant effect on tourism destination decision-making, and social media significantly influences tourism destination decision-making.

Moreover, tourists' satisfaction can enhance destination decisions when mediated by social media usage. The present study's findings would help tourism service providers select appropriate social media platforms as part of their marketing strategy to improve their competitiveness in the tourism industry.

### **2.5.2 Summary of eWOM antecedents**

The current section elaborates about the various eWOM antecedents including information quality, information credibility, website quality, destination fascination, destination brand image, motivation, popularity heuristics, innovativeness and user-generated content which can affect the purchase intention. The literature review uses a framework based on these variables on various factors to determine customer loyalty. Hence, it provides a literature gap to investigate the eWOM direct and indirect influence on consumer purchase intention through Instagram.

### **2.6 Proposed Conceptual Framework**

The proposed conceptual framework objective is to illustrate the interrelationships between various elements related to the adoption and impact of visual eWOM in HORECA services.

Kan and Fabrigar (2017) provided a theoretical framework based on the TPB, which describes the behavior in belief and normative belief that leads to the attitude towards behavior and subjective norms. In the end, the framework leads to the customer purchasing intention-based comparative analysis between subjective norms and attitudes toward behavior. Thus, the framework based on TPB provides a background that helps contribute to our conceptual framework to investigate the tourists' booking intention.

Hossain, Kim, and Jahan (2019) provided a framework based on the UGT that discusses individual self-presentation, information seeking, social interaction, and enjoyment to create shared experiences through an online platform and influence the customer's continuous usage intention. Petty and Cacioppo (1986) provided a theoretical framework based on the ELM, representing that motivation includes personal responsibility and personal relevance, and ability includes the availability of cognitive sources that shape individual behavior in decision-making through the central route and peripheral route. Davis

(1989) proposed a framework providing a theoretical framework based on the TAM that discusses the development of attitude based on perceived usefulness and ease of use, which leads to behavioral intention and actual usage. Finally, Gumpo et al. (2020) provide a theoretical framework under the IAM that discusses the argument quality and source credibility that encourage the users towards the information usefulness and ultimately leads to information adoption.

Therefore, the theoretical model based on the above-mentioned adopted theories helps to formulate the current study's conceptual framework, which includes information quality, information credibility, website quality, innovativeness, motivation, destination fascination, popularity heuristics, destination brand image, and user-generated content as the explanatory factors that influence the tourist booking intention through visual eWOM using Instagram. The succeeding hypotheses form the foundation of the below proposed conceptual framework:

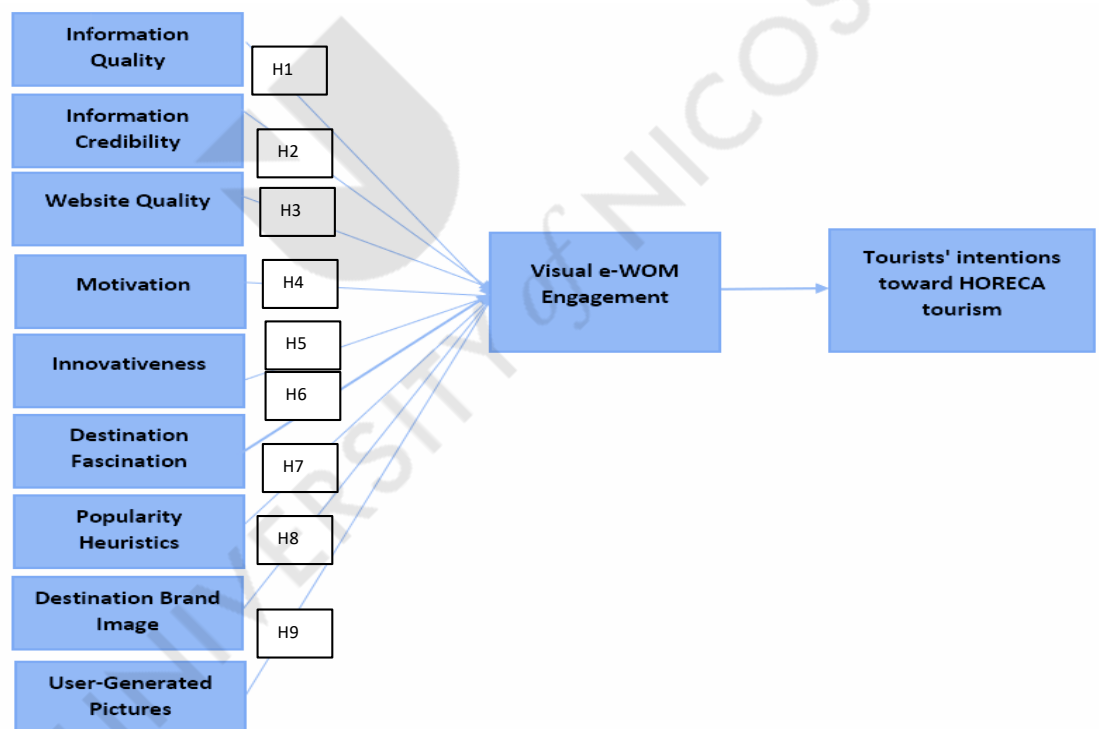


Figure 2. 7: Proposed Conceptual Framework

The various variables shown on the left of the framework represent the independent variables that interrelate between each other and as well between the mediator and the dependent variable. The visual eWOM is the mediator between all the below discussed independent variables and the tourists' booking intention towards a HORECA service as a dependent variable shown on the right in Fig. 2.7. The explanatory variables are eWOM

antecedents which can influence the consumer purchase intention through visual eWOM engagement in social media platforms. The variables chosen in the framework as destination fascination, destination image, motivation, popularity heuristics and user-generated content are the most relevant particularly for the tourism sector to determine the influence on tourists booking intentions. On the other hand, the information credibility, information quality, website quality and innovativeness are also relevant in terms of eWOM in Instagram that play a key role in tourists booking intention.

The first independent variable is the information quality, in this study: the eWOM quality. In other words, the visual eWOM is characterized by whether it is trustworthy, accurate, comprehensive, and timely. Another independent variable is the information credibility, in this study, the visual eWOM credibility. The latter is measured by whether it is favorable, and reliable, and whether tourists' have confidence in visual eWOM, and whether they trust it. The quality and the credibility of the information both interrelate once viewed as a visual eWOM on SNS.

After travelers encounter a specific HORECA service on SNS, they will be redirected to the HORECA brand's website. So another independent variable shown in the framework is the website quality measured by its user-friendly and easy-to-use nature, visually attractive appeal, if it provides relevant and updated info and an easy booking process. The better the quality experience on the website, the higher the chance tourists will reserve a booking. As for the motivation variable, indeed the positive visual eWOM needs to be tested whether it truly motivates travelers' engagement or not. The motivation also reflects the captivating visuals, the written stories, and the excitement expressed by others that could lead to a HORECA booking intention. Another major independent variable of the framework encompasses innovativeness in terms of innovative HORECA offerings, creative and unique experiences, novel and imaginative concepts, and appealing concepts shared as a visual eWOM that could lead to tourists' booking intention towards a HORECA service.

As well, the destination fascination variable is measured by the unique and captivating attractions, historical significance and landmarks, natural beauty and scenic landscapes, and overall charm and allure all shared through visual eWOM that make tourists fascinated and interested in visiting HORECA services. While the popularity heuristics variable is impactful towards visual eWOM as it is characterized by the high engagement towards the social post, the widespread presence of visual eWOM across SNS, the popularity perception, and the positive reviews and recommendations influence. This independent

variable plays a crucial role in the tourists' booking intention mediated by the visual eWOM shared on Instagram.

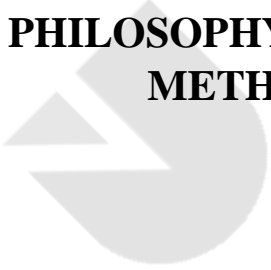
The other independent variable shown in the framework is the destination brand image which could be a unique, strong, positive, consistent, and distinctive identity associated with the brand image of the HORECA services captured in visual eWOM that enhances the tourists' positive perception and trust thus make them more interested in visiting a HORECA service. Finally, the framework also showcases the last independent variable as UGC in terms of all the reviews, ratings, recommendations, photos, and videos shared through visual eWOM influence, and support, creating a sense of engagement and providing a realistic portrayal of the HORECA experience. All the framework instrumental independent variables interrelate yet need to be tested to confirm if they stimulate the visual eWOM engagement as a mediator and then significantly impact the traveler's HORECA bookings' intentions in the tourism industry as the dependent variable.

## **2.7 Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter discussed various concepts and theories related to adopting eWOM and its effect on consumer intentions, particularly in the HORECA industry. The literature review has mainly concentrated on the dependent variable, consumer intention, and how several factors influence it. These factors include information quality, credibility, website quality, motivation, innovativeness, destination fascination, popularity heuristic, destination brand image, and user-generated content, and the significance of these factors in shaping consumers' adoption of eWOM as a mediator. Lastly, a conceptual framework was proposed.



**CHAPTER 3: PHILOSOPHY, METHODOLOGY AND  
METHODS**

 UNIVERSITY of NICOSIA

### **3.0 Introduction**

Research methods encompassed the methodologies employed to formulate and execute research investigations and the techniques utilized to analyze and interpret data gathered from these studies. The following section presents the methods and strategies applied while surveying to explore the impact of visual eWOM and social media usage (Instagram) on the tourists' booking intentions towards tourism consumption in the HORECA industry. The section includes research philosophy, approach, method, research design, population, and sampling. In addition, it discusses the instrumentation for the study and data analysis techniques.

### **3.1 Research Philosophy**

The research philosophy constitutes a set of beliefs and assumptions that shape the researcher's viewpoint or perspective. It is generally used to collect the answers to the questions and the information related to data collection, research approaches, data analysis, and outcomes (Suprpto, 2021; Abu-Alhaija, 2019). Three questions can summarize the fundamental beliefs that define research philosophy. These questions include the relationship between the researcher and reality (epistemology), the nature of reality (ontology), and the methods that can be used to discover that reality (methodology) (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Philosophy is the principal field of inquiry that explores fundamental and overarching issues, such as the nature of knowledge and the values and reality that shape our world. The philosophy's essence lies in its pursuit of thoughtful and systemic responses to all inquiries, employing critical thinking and rational argumentation (Kenaphoom, 2021). Research philosophy pertains to the collection of beliefs concerning the nature of the reality under investigation. Selecting a specific research philosophy in a particular study area depends on the nature of the knowledge being explored (Chege and Otieno, 2020). Various categories of research philosophy guide the process of gathering, evaluating, and utilizing information in research. These categories include realism, positivism, pragmatism, and interpretivism. Each of these philosophies offers a distinct approach to conducting research.

The next discussions list briefly the general aspects of ontology and epistemology along with an outline of the main research philosophies then justify the choice of the positivism philosophy application in this study. The research philosophy has its beginning point, representing main philosophies, approaches, methods, and strategies and defining horizons.

### **3.1.1 Ontology**

Creswell (2014) states that ontology is the basis of research design and deals with the nature of reality. The ontological arguments concern the researchers' assumptions about the path and the urgency of the phenomenon under investigation and commitment to a particular viewpoint with implications for the research process.

According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2007), the two aspects of ontology, objectivism, and subjectivism, have been widely embraced by business researchers. The ontological position reflects the researcher's vision of reality. Objectivism interprets social phenomena along their meanings as just, solid, and unbiased of social actors and their interpretation. In contrast, subjectivism revolves around the assumption that social phenomena are created from social actors' behavior, and hence, social reality is repeatedly edited (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016).

### **3.1.2 Epistemology**

The second set of epistemologies is strongly associated with ontology. It concerns what undertakes acceptable knowledge in a particular field of study. These assumptions concern the components that establish the foundations of knowledge for fellow human beings. The epistemology assumptions deal with the issue of whether knowledge can be acquired or personally experienced (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009).

The current study adopted an ontological viewpoint that discusses the investigation of an already existing knowledge. Conversely, the epistemology emphasizes on the knowledge validity rather than the investigation of an already existing one. Therefore, the current research emphasizes on an ontological point of view as the researcher's responsibility is to investigate solely the knowledge while using a quantitative research methodology.

### **3.1.3 Main Philosophies**

It is crucial to highlight the basic techniques of the research to address the scientific basis of future studies. The philosophical theory provides a basis for classical research methodology, which implies techniques and strategies of research. The position of research philosophy can be distinguished between classical (positivist and interpretivist) and recent (critical realist and pragmatist) based on the historical viewpoint.



### **3.1.3.1 Positivism**

Positivism reflects the philosophical stance of natural scientists. It is based on the objectivist ontological assumption that entities are observed as existing external to social actors. Hence, empirical data and observation may be defined as "credible". The knowledge is obtained through functional law-like and causal relations. Further, it assumes the predictability and controllability of the future. Future anticipation is based on our present and past knowledge, even regularities' precise calculation and functional relations by extrapolation. Lastly, positivism asserts the exclusive validity of knowledge derived from mathematical and logical reasoning and empirical observations. According to positivism, authoritative knowledge is derived solely from these sources, and the truth is found only within this resulting knowledge. Positivism serves as the foundation for quantitative research methodology, which emphasizes using measurable data and statistical analysis in the pursuit of objective knowledge (Kenaphoom, 2021).

### **3.1.3.2 Interpretivism**

The interpretive approach enables researchers to comprehend practices within a specific context. Conversely, pragmatism revolves around practical actions and prioritizes effective decision-making based on the most optimal solutions to the research questions. Realism, as a philosophical approach, is primarily concerned with scientific investigation. It emphasizes the independent existence of objects separate from human perception, contrasting with idealism at the top of the form (Helmi and Pius, 2020). Interpretivism is based on subjectivist ontological assumptions that are constituted of discourse, and socially constructed reality can be reached through language or social construction as consciousness. The knowledge and facts are subjective and relative as reality is socially constructed and constantly evolving.

### **3.1.3.3 Critical Realism**

Critical realism assumes the flexibility of the future. The future is accurate but has yet to conform to events. It consists of multiple possibilities and actualizes through transformative events; the future can be influenced. The critical realist approach provides a distinct foundation for future studies and can be employed to explain possible future constraints. The critical realist is based on some assumptions. First, reality can be divided into three domains: the empirical and actual domain, the smallest, the real domain, and the most significant domain. Hence, there are more real possibilities than actual and empirical, and knowledge regarding the world lies within the actual domain. Hence, knowledge can be known. Second, social reality is based on observable and unobservable components. Thus, precise prediction is impossible. Third, the knowledge of the future is possible based on past

and present logical deduction. Fourth, the analysis of the future creates different narratives of how the future may unfold. Finally, future studies emphasize current processes and actions rather than past events (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009).

#### ***3.1.3.4 Pragmatism***

Pragmatism finds its philosophical foundation in the historical contributions of the philosophy of pragmatism. In the research paradigm context, it is based on the proposition that researchers should use a methodological or philosophical approach to meet the research problems under investigation. Pragmatism is associated with mixed methods, focusing on the consequences of research questions rather than methods. From a research paradigm perspective, pragmatism refuses to get involved in metaphysical concepts such as reality and truth. Instead, it endorsed that there may be multiple realities against the empirical inquiries. The underpinning pragmatist epistemology is based on experience. Pragmatism assumes that both interpretivism and positivism work better for research questions. Each person's knowledge is unique and created by his/her experiences. Notwithstanding, most knowledge is socially shared as it is created from shared experiences. Pragmatism does not support knowledge as reality. Pragmatism has the potential to offer an organizing framework for social work research. Unlike constructivist or positivist research models, a pragmatic model for a plurality of methods vies to be a part of the overall research plan. The pragmatism lens provides an alternative that can be developed and utilized for social work research. Social work literature also acknowledges the importance and value of pragmatism as a research paradigm to address the research needs of the social work profession (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019).

#### **3.1.4 Research Philosophy adopted for this study**

Following the detailed discussion above, it is concluded that positivism is the appropriate and relevant philosophy for the current study. The positivism philosophy has been chosen for the following reasons. First, it adheres to the view that factual knowledge is received through observation. Second, the role of the researcher is restricted to the data collection and interpretation of an objective in positivist studies. Third, it depends on quantifiable information or observations that lead to statistical analysis. Fourth, positivism philosophy is based on an ontology view comprising observable events and discrete events that interact in a determined observable and regular manner. Fifth, the positivism philosophy is pertinent to the viewpoint in which the researcher needs to concentrate on facts (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Jackson, 2012).

Therefore, the present study employs a positivist approach, emphasizing on a scientific empiricist method designed to yield data and facts uninfluenced by human interpretation. Positivism is employed for the current study because of the scientific method that is based on measurable facts, causal explanations and predictions as a contribution. First, the positivist approach entails controllability and predictability of the future based on the past and present. Second, a cross-sectional survey maintains objectivity and keeps personal values from affecting the results. Positivism is the base of methodologies that use cross-sectional surveys to collect data and verify hypotheses. Third, according to Maksimović and Evtimov (2023), the quantitative approach implies a positivism paradigm providing a foundation for the cause-and-effect relationship, questioning and verifying the existing theories. Positivism's object is to prove that social science and phenomena are equally subject to measurement as natural phenomena. Lastly, there is an assignment of the study participants to a survey, considered a critical approach adopted by positivists to examine the mediating role of visual eWOM (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009).

### **3.2 Research Approach**

The research approach is a methodology that involves discerning perspectives and offers a straightforward approach to collecting and evaluating data. Researchers employ inductive and deductive approaches for data collection and interpretation. These approaches exhibit distinct patterns of logic and reasoning. The research approach is the reflection of the research philosophy mentioned in the current section. The current section provides insights into two main approaches and rationalizes the approach that best suits the current study.

#### **3.2.1 Qualitative Research**

In-depth examination of events and phenomena in their natural environments with an interpretation based on the personal, subjective meanings that each individual assigns to them is known as qualitative research. In qualitative research, the goal is to gain a deeper knowledge of the unique viewpoints of the participants, and the information gathered is nominal by nature (Malhotra and Birks, 2006). To be more precise, substantial amounts of primary data are gathered from comparatively small samples mostly employing behavior observation or unstructured inquiries (Hair, Bush and Ortinau, 2003). Thus, rather than testing hypotheses, inductive inference is used to create theories about events based on observing them (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003) leading to a careful data interpretation. Qualitative data collection techniques are typically used in exploratory research projects because they offer initial insights into "particular issues, opportunities, consumer behavior,

decision-making processes, models, and constructs" (Hair, Bush, and Ortinau, 2003). The unstructured nature of such subjective research offers an adaptable, open, and experiential approach permitting analysts to know the wonders beneath examination in a way that quantitative approaches do not allow (Milliken, 2001). Be that as it may, a few analysts contend that subjective inquiry about strategies regularly needs genuine unwavering quality as they are respected as troublesome to reproduce and generalize (Bryman and Chime, 2011).

There are three main kinds of interviews used in qualitative research: semi-structured, unstructured, and in-depth. In a semi-structured interview, the questions are predetermined to collect information from the respondents. However, the interviewer has some flexibility in altering questions due to differences in circumstances and respondents' behavior. In an unstructured interview, the questions are not based on predetermined, the interviewer can change the questions. The researcher needs to learn about the future due to unstructured interviews incorporated into the research. Lastly, in-depth interviews, also used in qualitative research, involve engaging participants and gathering information on their experiences, beliefs, and behaviors (Adhabi and Anozie, 2017). Qualitative research uses non-numerical data, including narratives, interviews, and observations, to make a descriptive and exploratory stance, looking for a comprehensive understanding of phenomena. In addition, it often holds a relativistic worldview, allowing the significance of several interpretations and thoughts. Qualitative research methodology typically inspects the prevailing theories, followed by empirical data collection, analysis using inductive reasoning, and ultimately, a conclusion according to the outcomes (Itaoui, Chomba, and Mansour, 2022). In the qualitative study, the inductive approach is used, in which the research design is developed first, and subsequently, the theory that supports the methodology is presented accordingly. Inductive reasoning involves data collection methods like interviews and observations. Through inductive reasoning, data is analyzed to produce a grounded theory, leading to a more comprehensive grand theory (Thomas, 2006). Qualitative research employs inductive reasoning to analyze and interpret data to generate new knowledge. (Kenaphoom, 2021).

### **3.2.2 Quantitative Research**

The quantitative research methods are based on natural science and are concerned with findings of universal laws and nature that shape individual and social behavior. The quantitative research approach is mainly associated with the positivism philosophy, which provides insight into future predictions based on current and past information. Quantitative studies are explanatory and descriptive, analyze the relationship among variables, and identify causes and effects based on theoretical background (Milliken, 2001). According to

Kenaphoom (2021), deductive reasoning, or "top-down" logic, consists of logically stemming certain conclusions from given premises. It establishes a vibrant association between groundings and corresponding conclusions. Quantitative research mainly deals with numerical data, objective facts, and statistics. It adopts a positivist perspective and follows a hypothetico-deductive approach. Moreover, quantitative research prioritizes the exploration of reality within the current phenomenon, relying on empirical data and employing deductive reasoning.

### **3.2.3 Research Approach Adopted for this study**

The current study employed the quantitative research methodology to make predictions, causal relationships and generalizing results to wider populations. As the current research quantifies influence, strength of association, and weighs the strength of evidence of effectiveness which is applied in quantitative research methods (Rana et al., 2021). The latter approach is comparable to the ones applied in other contexts that tried to forecast behavioral intention (Venkatesh et al., 2003; Ryu, Kim and Lee , 2009) and to 76% of publications studying eWOM.

The following points justify the selection of the quantitative methodology approach. First, the deductive approach presents a testable proposition or hypothesis about the relationship between several variables. Second, the researcher uses an existing theory to identify conditions under which the theory is likely to hold. Third, the deductive approach investigates and compares the theories to attain an advanced understanding of the subject. Fourth, it collects data, examines any variables, and performs suitable analysis. Fifth, the theory must be accepted or rejected in case the result analysis does not support the premise. Sixth, the theory is validated in case of result analysis support and is consistent with the premises of the current study. Lastly, the deductive approach was employed in this study because the research began with the theoretical development that led to the research strategy accordingly (McMahon, 2022).

On the other hand, the present study uses a deductive research approach to test the hypotheses generated from the review of previous literature. The deductive approach first involves theoretical development and subsequently devises a strategy accordingly. The deductive approach is dominant in natural science where laws present the basis of explanation, and prediction of phenomena and hence permit them to be controlled. There are characteristics of the deduction approach that include the causal relationship between concepts and variables. Secondly, it is related to the concept that needs to be operationalized

in a way that enables facts to be measured quantitatively. The final attributes of deduction are the generalization which is necessary to select a sample and sufficient size for it. The deductive approach is concerned with developing a hypothesis based on an existing theory and subsequently designing a research strategy. Deductive reasoning leads from the particular to the general. It can be explained by the means of hypothesis which then derive from the proposition of theory. The deductive approach follows a logical path where reasoning begins with a theory and leads to a hypothesis. The adopted hypothesis is tested versus an observation that leads to its confirmation or rejection (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016).

Nowadays, positivists are regarded as objectivists; in other words, items surrounding people exist and are meaningful, yet independent of the people's consciousness of them (Crotty, 1998). In this study, the role of the arch-scientist researcher is positivist and objective, thus independent of her interests, feelings, and values. The role is limited to gathering the data and interpreting the results without concern for how humans generate meaning. This exact role is coherent as well with the researcher's personality and personal stance.

### **3.3 Research Strategy**

The research strategy includes the direction and process of the research. Three main categories are commonly used for quantitative data collection: observation, self-completion, and interviewer completion. The data collection in quantitative research is executed through structured surveys and quantitative observations. The research strategy overview and justification have been provided in the subsequent section. Apart from this, when we utilize quantitative and qualitative research methods in a study, it is known as mixed-method research. However, this study employs quantitative research solely, prioritizing the exploration of reality within the current phenomenon and relying on empirical data and deductive reasoning. One notable advantage of quantitative research is its inherent objectivity, as the employed methodologies are purposefully designed to mitigate the impact of personal biases. Moreover, substantial sample sizes and rigorous statistical analyses facilitate the identification of significant relationships that may need to be more inaccessible in smaller or less methodical investigations (Bloomfield and Fisher, 2019).

Therefore, the current study used a deductive approach due to various reasons to achieve the research main objective. The first reason is that it aligns with positivism which is responsible for testing the existing knowledge based on theoretical development. Secondly, the quantitative approach has been used in the current study to examine the

relationship among variables which required the deductive approach to measure the causal relationship. Thirdly, the current study begins with the theoretical development and subsequently devises a research strategy accordingly to determine the acceptance or rejection of the hypotheses which require a deductive approach.

### **3.3.1 Survey**

A research design encompasses various methodologies, such as case study, survey, experimental, and action research. Surveys serve as snapshots, capturing viewpoints or situations and practices at a specific moment. They are conducted through structured questionnaires, enabling the researcher to make inferences. Quantitative techniques are often employed to analyze survey responses, aiming to identify significant findings. Surveys offer the advantage of exploring a wide range of variables, surpassing the limitations of experimental processes when carefully designed (Chege and Otieno, 2020). Hence, the present study employs a survey research design to collect and analyze the data for significant outcomes.

#### **3.3.1.1 Survey Method**

Various methods can be employed to gather data through questionnaires or surveys, including personal interviews, observation, electronic surveys, telephone interviews, and postal surveys. Observation involves a purposeful and systematic approach to uncovering phenomena using sensual abilities such as visual observation and auditory perception. Telephonic interviews are a cost-effective alternative to personal interviews and provide a reliable means of maintaining participant anonymity. Postal surveys offer advantages in terms of cost-effectiveness and maintaining participant anonymity.

Finally, electronic surveys are invaluable for collecting large-scale data, enabling researchers to gather substantial primary data efficiently. Technological tools such as Google Docs, Survey Pro, Survey Said, Survey Monkey, and Web Surveyor offer a cost-effective means of collecting online data from many participants, unlike traditional postal mail. Electronic surveys deliver notable advantages regarding rapid response cycles and distribution because they permit automated verification and data capture directly into databases, eliminating the need for manual data reconstruction. However, it is essential to note that surveys have limitations in capturing information reliant on participants' recall of past behaviors observed. Electronic surveys are categorized into two main types: email and web-based, each offering distinct advantages. Email surveys enable direct communication between the researcher and respondents. In contrast, web-based surveys streamline data

processing by automatically integrating responses into an analyzable database without requiring manual administration or data transfer into analysis software packages.

In the current study, questionnaire data were collected through an electronic survey, with the researcher utilizing Pollfish.com for the data collection. The decision to employ an electronic survey was motivated by the need to reach a broad sample from several countries in regards to the data collection. The researcher launched the questionnaire on the Pollfish.com platform and chose two distinct segments: Generation Z and Generation Y. It was a very convenient tool, particularly given the large sample size of  $n=300$ , that ensured an effective and time-efficient approach.

The researcher followed the recommendation of Song and Yoo (2016) who suggested a sample larger than 285 while including different consumer segments. Several researchers recommended a large sample for similar studies (Amaro and Duarte, 2017; Nemeč Rudež and Vodeb, 2015) and others recommended the sample to reflect a wide diversity of cultures, countries, and nationalities (Casaló, Flavián, and Guinalú, 2011; Öz, 2015). Thus, the current study opted for a sample of 150 Gen Z respondents and another equal sample of 150 Gen Y respondents, totaling 300 international respondents.

### ***3.3.1.2 Justification for Adopting the Survey method in this study***

The survey method has been chosen for the current study for the following reasons. First, there is the possibility to gather data on a particular subject by asking direct questions. Second, data that cannot be collected may be gathered through a question-answer process. Third, it is possible to reach a broad audience and different demographics with the survey. These features are energy-saving and save time and money for the researcher. Fourth, the current study is based on an international level. Hence, it is possible to increase the external validity of the research and representation level of sampling by applying surveys to broad geographical regions. Fifth, the survey technique is used to collect more accurate data. Well-planned surveys can enhance the accuracy of functional data. Sixth, the survey objectivity is higher than the interviews because of its process without signature. Seventh, the answer qualities entail comparability and standardization if the survey is standardized and thoroughly structured. Eighth, the questions and the predetermined answers are written in the survey, and respondents can control their answers. Hence, the data is expected to be more accurate than collected through interviews (Gürbüz, 2017).

Methodological choices encompass three main types: mono-method, mixed-method, and multi-method approaches. The mono-method entails using either quantitative or qualitative methods, while the multi-method approach encompasses mixed and multi-



method designs. In the multi-method approach, researchers use either a multi-method or multi-method quantitative study. Furthermore, the mixed method comprises complex mixed-method designs and simple mixed-method designs, combining two distinct methods for the collection of data (Al-Ababneh 2020). The methodological choice for the present study is a mono-method, where a quantitative research method is used to collect data. The questionnaire technique is only used to collect the participants' responses; thus, it is a single data collection technique.

According to the research framework, investigations can be classified into two temporal perspectives: longitudinal and cross-sectional. Longitudinal studies involve data collection over an extended period of time, while cross-sectional research addresses specific issues identified in the study at a single point in time. In the case of surveys and case studies, researchers utilize cross-sectional research methodologies (Al-Ababneh, 2020). This study adopted a cross-sectional research approach while the participants' perspectives and opinions were elicited through questions about the study's variables, aiming to comprehend how tourists search for eWOM using Instagram.

### **3.4 Questionnaire Development Procedure**

A questionnaire is a self-reported data collection instrument where each participant is part of the study. The questionnaire is used to collect information regarding research participants' perceptions, feelings, thoughts, behavioral intentions, and attitudes. The survey research is based on the questionnaire as the survey instrument. The online survey is widely used and administered due to several advantages. Questionnaires can also be administered in groups or individually as paper and pencil tests; the printed-out questionnaires are completed by the participant and physically given back to the researcher.

The modes of questionnaires include in-person questionnaires and mail questionnaires. Each mode has distinct and different advantages and disadvantages. The current study has launched an online questionnaire that only requires application access with practical features for research projects, i.e. Pollfish. It has further advantages, including the capability to generate crosstab reports if the premium features are bought. The respondents can complete the questionnaire at any time they receive the survey in-app notification and it is the best way to reach specific people internationally (Johnson and Christensen, 2020).

### 3.4.1 Specifying What Information Will be Sought

In Fig 3.1, the first step is related to determining the information requirement that dramatically impacts the development process of reliable survey instruments. The current step substantiates and highlights the significance of explorative research conducted in chapter 2. The literature review of previous empirical evidence on visual eWOM relationship with the customer booking intention towards HORECA in chapter 2 contributes to a deepened understanding of the subject domain. Chapter 2 focuses on exploring the manifestation of the visual eWOM perspective within social media. In particular, the overview of the selected construct (i.e. visual eWOM, customers booking intention, and role of social media) was a hypothesized relationship, resulting in a conceptual framework. Hence, the questionnaire's objective is to collect data from respondents regarding the constructs in the proposed framework and examine the interrelationship among the constructs.

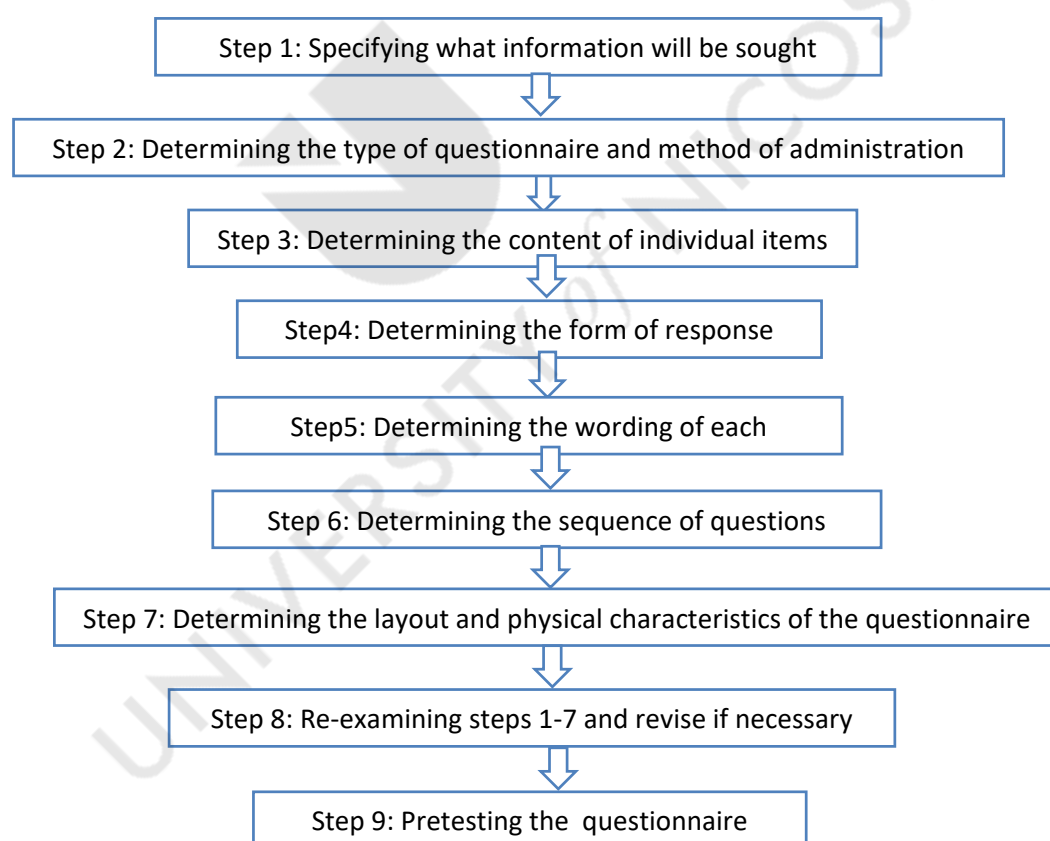


Figure 3. 1: Churchill and Iacobucci framework for methodological choices (2004)

### 3.4.2 Determining Type of Questionnaire and Method of Administration

The second step in Fig 3.1 is related to questionnaire and administration which involves: interviewer-administered and self-administered. The self-administered

questionnaire (SAQ) is entirely responsible for the respondents either using mail, the internet or printed questionnaires delivered to respondents by hand and collected data later on. On the contrary, the interviewer-administered questionnaires are held and secured by the researcher while interviewing them through face-to-face or telephone calls. Each kind of questionnaire has its benefits and consequences; hence, the choice of questionnaire depends on various factors pertinent to the study's objective.

Usually, the self-administered questionnaire facilitates convenient and inexpensive data collection from diverse, large, and representative respondents' samples who read and answer at their own pace. The questions require judgments, critical reflection, and an ethical decision-making process of evaluating a set of alternatives by applying a set of guiding principles. The code of conduct forms, in the context of ethical decision-making, present an innovative approach to improving the quality of self-administered questionnaires. It also provides a framework to guide decision-making ethically and systematically. It is more time efficient, requires less time and data can be collected from numerous respondents. Self-administered questionnaires also have significance due to their flexibility provided to respondents by giving them time to read and understand the questions, allowing them to provide well-thought-out responses. The questions in SAQs remain consistent to all respondents to ensure that each respondent receives the same set of questions.

The current study used SAQs sent to respondents online through Pollfish.com to gather their behavioral information. The questionnaire was prepared in English and covered all the aspects and variables to test the study's hypotheses. The respondents who were given access were tourists from different countries and use eWOM to receive information related to the tourism sector. The respondents who are not traveling for leisure soon or do not use social media platforms as an information source, were not allowed to proceed for further responses.

### **3.4.3 Determining the Content of Individual Items**

Fig. 3.1 includes the third step of questionnaire design that involves operationalizing all constructs within the proposed framework. Multiple items were adopted from reputed journal articles and modified to measure the construct. Each measurement item indicates the high reliability and validity levels in a research setting. The first version of the questionnaire comprised 66 items under the 11 variables; some variables were operationalized and demonstrated similar measures. Subsequently, the second version of the questionnaire survey was composed of 55 items, but it presented operationalization issues that could not

be sorted out. Finally, the third version was prepared, in which items were reduced to 44, and the operationalization issues were resolved. The 44 items including measures for frequency of exposure to influence customer booking intention (four items), visual eWOM (four items), information quality (four items), information credibility (four items), website quality (four items), popularity heuristics (four items), destination fascination (four items), destination brand image (four items), motivation (four items), innovativeness (four items) and user-generated content (four items).

The final version was pilot-tested with regular people: 19 from Generation Z and 24 from Generation Y. The aim was to get 30 responses to represent 10% of the final sample size  $n=300$  and have valid results but luckily more than 30 respondents filled the survey. The link for the pilot test using Google Forms was sent via WhatsApp to friends who personally gave their feedback at the end. For them, some words were complex and some questions felt repetitive. Thus, the researcher updated the unclear questions afterward, replaced some words with clearer synonyms, and added pictures to the questions to generate the final questionnaire. At the end, an open-ended question was added in case any respondent would like to add feedback.

Each question in the questionnaire has been supported by previous studies questionnaires given in Table 3.1 below which represents five columns. The first column entails the eleven variables of the study:

The questionnaire created for the current research is helpful to meet the research objectives. The instruments used in the current study were extracted from the existing literature that determined all the individual variables which aid in collecting precise insights from the respondents. The items collected for the variables including information quality, information credibility, website quality, innovativeness, user-generated content, destination fascination, destination brand image, motivation, eWOM and consumer purchase intention indicate strong reliability which are helpful to meet the objectives. As the study's aim is to investigate the impact of eWOM on consumer booking intention towards HORECA with the mediating role of Instagram; hence, the data questionnaire design is adequate and reliable to define the variables chosen in the framework to meet the research objectives.

Table 3. 1: Survey Grand design

| Variables                      | Relevant Items  | Sources                | Hypothesis Addressed  | Questionnaire Objectives  |
|--------------------------------|---|------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Information Quality</b>     | The reviews and recommendations about HORECA tourism services that people share through pictures and videos are TRUSTWORTHY.  | (Filieri et al., 2021) | <b>H1:</b> Information Quality conveyed through visual eWOM information favors customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.         | <b>QO1:</b> To examine the favorable influence of Information Quality through visual eWOM information on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.     |
|                                | Information provided by visuals on Instagram in the form of stories, reels, and posters regarding HORECA tourism services is ACCURATE.                                      | (Filieri et al., 2021) |   |   |
|                                | Visual eWOM in stories, reels, and posters offers a comprehensive view of HORECA's tourism services.  | (Filieri et al., 2021) |   |   |
|                                | I agree with the timeliness of information in visual eWOM in the form of stories, reels, and posters about HORECA tourism services (shared at the RIGHT TIME.)              | (Bhat 2020)            |   |   |
| <b>Information Credibility</b> | The information credibility shared by people in the form of stories, reels, and posters regarding visual eWOM for HORECA tourism services is RELIABLE.                      | Daowd et al. (2021)    | <b>H2:</b> The credibility information conveyed through visual eWOM information favors customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services. | <b>QO2:</b> To examine the favorable influence of Information Credibility through visual eWOM information on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services. |
|                                | The information in the form of stories, reels, and posters regarding visual eWOM about HORECA tourism services can be relied upon to make tourism decisions MORE FAVORABLE. | Daowd et al. (2021)    |   |   |
|                                | I have CONFIDENCE in the credibility of information shared in the form of stories, reels, and posters regarding HORECA tourism services.                                    | (Isogo et al., 2021)   |   |   |
|                                | I TRUST the visual eWOM of HORECA tourism services.   | Daowd et al. (2021)    |   |   |

|                        |  |   |  |   |
|------------------------|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Website Quality</b> | The websites for HORECA tourism services are USER-FRIENDLY and EASY TO NAVIGATE.   | (Aljabari et al., 2023)                   | <b>H3:</b> The website quality conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services. | <b>QO3:</b> To examine the favorable influence of Website Quality through visual eWOM information on customer's booking intentions towards HORECA services. |
|                        | The websites for HORECA tourism services are VISUALLY ATTRACTIVE.  | (Aljabari et al., 2023)                   |  |   |
|                        | The websites for HORECA tourism services provide RELEVANT and UP-TO-DATE INFO on promotions and travel deals.  | (Aljabari et al., 2023)                   |  |   |
|                        | The websites for HORECA tourism services provide an EASY BOOKING PROCESS.  | (Aljabari et al., 2023)                   |  |   |
| <b>Motivation</b>      | The positive feedback shared by people through visual eWOM MOTIVATES ME to visit HORECA services.  | (Hussein, Song and Niu, 2020)             | <b>H4:</b> The Motivation conveyed through visual eWOM information has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.       | <b>QO4:</b> To examine the favorable influence of Motivation through visual eWOM information on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.      |
|                        | Seeing captivating visuals and photographs of HORECA services shared through visual eWOM increases my desire to visit them.  | (Hussain, Song and Niu, 2020)             |  |   |
|                        | The written stories and narratives shared by people through visual eWOM about HORECA services motivate me to explore them myself.  | (Hussein, Song and Niu, 2020)             |  |   |
|                        | The excitement and enthusiasm expressed by others through visual eWOM regarding HORECA services inspired me to plan a visit.   | (Topornytska, Francois and Osinska, 2020) |  |   |
| <b>Innovativeness</b>  | The innovative features and offerings shared through visual eWOM enhance my interest in visiting HORECA services.  | (Isogo et al.,2021)                       | <b>H5:</b> Innovativeness conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.      | <b>QO5:</b> To examine the favorable influence of Innovativeness through visual eWOM information on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.  |
|                        | I am more interested in HORECA services for my travel plans when I see creative and unique experiences shared through visual eWOM.   | (Perera, Nayak and Long, 2019)            |  |   |
|                        | Experiencing novel and imaginative concepts like a treehouse setting dining or underwater dining (check picture below) shared through visual eWOM enhances my interest in exploring HORECA services. | (Perera, Nayak, and Long, 2019)           |  |   |

|                                |   |   |  |   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
|                                | Distinctive concepts in visual online recommendations related to HORECA services are APPEALING (ATTRACTIVE).                                    | (Perera Nayak and Long, 2019)             |  |   |
| <b>Destination Fascination</b> | The UNIQUE and CAPTIVATING ATTRACTIONS shared through visual eWOM make me fascinated/interested in HORECA services.                             | (Topornytska, Francois and Osinska, 2020) | <b>H6:</b> Destination Fascination conveyed through visual eWOM information favors customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.                | <b>Q06:</b> To examine the favorable influence of Destination Fascination through visual eWOM information on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services. |
|                                | The HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE and LANDMARKS shared through visual eWOM make me fascinated/interested by HORECA services.                          | (Topornytska, Francois and Osinska, 2020) |  |   |
|                                | The NATURAL BEAUTY and SCENIC LANDSCAPES shared through visual eWOM make me fascinated/interested by HORECA services.                           | (Topornytska, Francois and Osinska, 2020) |  |   |
|                                | The OVERALL CHARM and ALLURE shared through visual eWOM of HORECA services increase my fascination/interest and desire to visit them.           | (Siang, Yang and Liu, 2020)               |  |   |
| <b>Popularity Heuristics</b>   | The HIGH NUMBER OF LIKES, SHARES and ENGAGEMENT on visual eWOM of HORECA services makes me perceive them as popular among tourists.             | (Armstrong, 2010)                         | <b>H7:</b> The popularity heuristics conveyed through visual eWOM information favorably influence customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services. | <b>Q07:</b> To examine the favorable influence of Popularity Heuristics through visual eWOM information on customer's booking intentions towards HORECA services.   |
|                                | The WIDESPREAD PRESENCE of visual eWOM about HORECA services ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS makes me perceive them as popular among tourists.    | (Carlisle, Ivanov and Dijkmans, 2023)     |  |   |
|                                | The perception that HORECA services are popular choices among other tourists through visual eWOM influences my intention to visit them.         | (Carlisle, Ivanov and Dijkmans, 2023)     |  |   |
|                                | The positive reviews and recommendations from other tourists through visual eWOM influence my perception of HORECA services as popular choices. | (Alanazi, 2016)                           |  |   |
| <b>Destination Brand Image</b> | The UNIQUE and DISTINCTIVE identity associated with the brand image of HORECA   | (Bhat 2020)                               | <b>H8:</b> Positive destination brand image, conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable   |   |

|                               |   |   |   |   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
|                               | services captured in visual eWOM makes me more interested in visiting them.   |   | influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.   | <b>QO8:</b> To examine the favorable influence of Destination Brand Image through visual eWOM information on customer's booking intentions towards HORECA services. |
|                               | The strong and positive brand image portrayed through visual eWOM enhances my perception of HORECA services as desirable places to visit.                                   | (Bhat 2020)                                   |   |   |
|                               | The consistent and positive messaging shared through visual eWOM about the brand image of HORECA services contributes to my positive perception of their quality and value. | (Filieri et al., 2020)                        |   |   |
|                               | The brand image presented through visual eWOM creates a sense of trust and confidence in the overall experience and offerings of HORECA services.                           | (Filieri et al., 2020)                        |   |   |
| <b>User-generated content</b> | The reviews, ratings, and recommendations provided by people through visual eWOM influence my perception of HORECA services and their offerings.                            | (Javed, Rashidin and Xiao, 2021)              | <b>H9:</b> User generated content conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services. | <b>QO9:</b> To examine the favorable influence of user-generated content through visual eWOM information on customer's booking intentions towards HORECA services.  |
|                               | The user-generated content related to HORECA services shared through visual eWOM helps me gather authentic and reliable info.   | (Javed, Rashidin and Xiao, 2021)              |   |   |
|                               | The user-generated content shared through visual eWOM creates a sense of community and engagement, making me feel connected and inspired to explore HORECA services.        | (Fedorov, Fraternali and Tagliasacchi., 2014) |   |   |
|                               | The user-generated visual content, such as photos and videos, provides me with a realistic portrayal of the atmosphere and experiences in HORECA services.                  | (Fedorov, Fraternali and Tagliasacchi, 2014)  |   |   |
| <b>Visual eWOM</b>            | The user-generated content and feedback shared by other Instagram users significantly impact my perception of HORECA services and their offerings.                          | (Mathur, Khandelwal and Mittal 2019)          |   |   |
|                               | The insights and recommendations shared by influencers and popular Instagram accounts   | (Mathur, Khandelwal and Mittal 2019)          |   |   |



|                           |  |                             |  |  |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|--|
|                           | significantly influence my perception of HORECA services and their offerings.  |                             |  |  |
|                           | The user-generated content related to HORECA services shared on Instagram helps me gather authentic and reliable info.                                     | (Oliveira and Casais, 2019) |  |  |
|                           | Hashtags used by users and Pin location of content shared on Instagram provide a reliable reflection when discovering new HORECA services and experiences. | (Oliveira and Casais, 2019) |  |  |
| <b>Customer Intention</b> | The visual eWOM content reflecting enjoyable activities and attractions in HORECA services motivates me to plan a trip to experience them myself.          | (Filieri et al., 2021)      |  |  |
|                           | The recommendations and endorsements from other tourists through visual eWOM impact my intention to choose HORECA services for my travel plans.            | (Filieri et al., 2021)      |  |  |
|                           | The positive feedback shared through visual eWOM about HORECA services influences my intention to visit and explore them.                                  | (Abubakar et al., 2017)     |  |  |
|                           | The positive reviews and ratings shared through visual eWOM influence my intention to prioritize HORECA services over other travel options.                | (Abubakar et al., 2017)     |  |  |

### ***3.4.3.1 Operationalization of Information Quality***

The information quality scale consists of four items and is based on instruments proposed by Filieri et al. (2021) and Bhat (2020). The modification is performed cautiously, particularly the rewording of items as required to accommodate this research context. To ensure, all items are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". The overall responses represent the higher levels of information quality. Before finalizing the survey incorporating all the items, the current study used pilot testing, in which Cronbach's alpha value was  $>.70$ , more significant than the standard value, indicating high reliability and validity. The overall information quality composite measure is set on the four items. The current research adapts the scales to measure information quality to Filieri et al. (2021) and Bhat (2020) because their scale demonstrates convergent and discriminant validity.

### ***3.4.3.2 Operationalization of Information Credibility***

The widely adopted definition by McKnight and Kacmar (2021) is that information is conceptualized as a person's belief in the information presented through visual eWOM. The credibility affects the public's decisions and actions. The credibility of information on social media can be considered a person's confidence in source information, affecting their decisions and actions.

The information credibility has widely been used in various research fields in HORECA and other sectors (Bilal, Ghani and Idrees 2022; Muda and Hamza, 2021; Lamia, Ghidouche and Seraphin, 2021; Siddiqui et al., 2021). Owing to the pervasive nature of social media, various academic contributions investigate the favorable influence of visual eWOM on customers booking intention using information credibility measures (Savitri et al. 2022; Lundin, 2021; Daowd et al., 2021; Ismagilova et al., 2020).

The information credibility scale consists of four items and is based on instruments proposed by Daowd et al. (2021) and Izogo et al. (2021). The modification is performed cautiously, particularly the rewording of items as required to accommodate this research context. To be aligned with the current literature, all items are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". The overall responses represent the higher levels of information credibility. Before finalizing the survey incorporating all the items, the current study used pilot testing, in which Cronbach's alpha value was  $>.70$ , more significant than the standard value, indicating high reliability and validity. The overall information credibility composite measure is set on the four items. The

current research adapts the scales to measure information quality as Daowd et al. (2021) and Izogo et al. (2021) because their scale demonstrates convergent and discriminant validity.

#### ***3.4.3.3 Operationalization of Website Quality***

The most commonly used definition by Mutambik et al. (2022) is website quality, which refers to a website's overall value and user experience, including design, functionality, content, accessibility, speed, and security. A high-quality website should provide users with an enjoyable, efficient, and trustworthy experience.

The website quality has been used in various research fields in HORECA and other sectors (Shang and Bao, 2022; Aggarwal and Aakash, 2020; Setyaning and Nugroho, 2020; Zhou and Jia, 2018; Hermawan, 2022). Due to the pervasive role of social media, various academic contributions (Siripipattanakul et al. 2022; Cadorniga et al. 2022; Jongmans et al. 2022; Kumar et al. 2020) investigate the favorable influence of visual eWOM on customers booking intention using website quality measures.

The website quality scale consists of four items and is based on instruments proposed by Aljabari et al. (2023) and Rahaman et al. (2022). The modification is performed cautiously, particularly the rewording of items as required to accommodate this research context. To ensure the literature, all items are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". The overall responses represent the higher levels of website quality. Before finalizing the survey incorporating items, the current study used pilot testing, in which Cronbach's alpha value was  $>.70$ , greater than the standard value, indicating high reliability and validity. The overall website quality composite measure is set on the four items. The current research adapts the scales to measure website quality to Aljabari et al. (2023) and Rahaman et al. (2022) because their scale demonstrates convergent and discriminant validity.

#### ***3.4.3.4 Operationalization of Motivation***

The most useful definition of the eWOM perspective by Tohidi (2021) is that motivation is conceptualized as an individual's sharing of information about a product, service, or brand in an online setting, as pertains to eWOM, which refers to what drives their decision. Consumers are motivated to participate in eWOM for various reasons, such as being helpful to others - they may share information about a brand to assist others.

Motivation has been used in various research fields in HORECA and other sectors (Zhou et al., 2019; Kanje et al., 2020). Due to the increasing role of social media, various academic contributions investigate the favorable influence of visual eWOM on customers

booking intention using motivation measures (Hussain, Song, and Niu, 2020; Lee and An, 2018; Mathews et al. 2021; Koufie and Kesa, 2020; Rosario, Valck and Sotgui, 2019).

The motivation scale consists of four items and is based on instruments proposed by Hussain, Song, and Niu (2020) and Topornytska, Francois, and Osinska (2020). The modification is performed cautiously, mainly when items are rewritten as required to accommodate this research context. To ensure the literature, all items are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". The overall responses represent the higher levels of motivation. Before finalizing the survey incorporating items, the current study used pilot testing, in which Cronbach's alpha value was  $>.70$ , greater than the standard value, indicating high reliability and validity. The overall motivation composite measure is set on the four items. The current research adapts the scales to measure motivation to Al-Mzary (2019) and Topornytska, Francois, and Osinska (2020) because their scale demonstrates convergent and discriminant validity.

#### ***3.4.3.5 Operationalization of Innovativeness***

The widely accepted definition given by Kamaruddeen (2019) is that innovation is creating and adopting new ideas that bring about change and increase competitiveness and sustainability. This requires imagination and the skill to bring these new concepts to life within a company's business practices.

Innovativeness has been used in various research fields in HORECA and other sectors (Mahmood, Khwaja, and Jusoh, 2019; Shaqman, Hashim, and Yahya, 2022; Bhat 2020). Due to the increasing role of social media, various academic contributions investigate the favorable influence of visual eWOM on customers' booking intention using innovativeness measures (Dobrinic, Gregurec, and Dobrinić, 2021; Nguyen and Chaudhuri, 2019; Ali, Hussin, and Dahlan, 2019; Habib, Hamadne and Khan, 2021).

The innovativeness scale consists of four items and is based on instruments proposed by Izogo et al. (2021) and Perera, Nayak, and Long (2019). The modification is performed cautiously, particularly the rewording of items as required to accommodate this research context. To ensure the literature, all items are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". The overall responses represent the higher levels of innovativeness. Before finalizing the survey incorporating items, the current study used pilot testing in which Cronbach's alpha value was  $>.70$ , more significant than the standard value, indicating high reliability and validity. The overall innovativeness composite measure is set on the four items. The current research adapts the scales to measure

innovativeness as per Izogo et al. (2021) and Perera, Nayak, and Long (2019) because their scale demonstrates convergent and discriminant validity.

#### **3.4.3.6 Operationalization of Destination Fascination**

Destination fascination (DF) is commonly utilized in the tourism sector. It is a type of attention captured without effort and arises from exploring and restoring the natural environment in environmental psychology. A destination is described as a remote location that provides travelers with compatibility and fulfillment of their travel goals (Urdea and Constantin, 2021).

The destination fascination has been used in various research fields in HORECA and other sectors (Ong and Ito 2019; Urdea and Constantin, 2021; Kaplan 1995; Liu et al., 2017; Alebaki, Lontakis and Koutsouris, 2020; Yang and Luo, 2021). Due to the increasing role of social media, various academic contributions investigate the favorable influence of visual eWOM on customers booking intention using destination fascination measures (Aktan et al. 2022; Stylidis, Kim, and Kim, 2022; Pessoa, Oliveira, and Souza, 2022; Kankhuni and Ngwira 2022).

The destination fascination scale consists of four items and is based on instruments proposed by Topornytska, Francois, and Osinska (2020) and Siang, Yang, and Liu (2020). The modification is performed cautiously, mainly when items are rewritten as required to accommodate this research context. To ensure the literature, all items are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". The overall responses represent the higher levels of destination fascination. Before finalizing the survey incorporating items, the current study used pilot testing, in which Cronbach's alpha value was  $>.70$ , more significant than the standard value, indicating high reliability and validity. The overall destination fascination composite measure is set on the four items. The current research adapts the scales to measure destination fascination as Topornytska, Francois, and Osinska (2020) and Siang, Yang, and Liu (2020) because their scale demonstrates convergent and discriminant validity.

#### **3.4.3.7 Operationalization of Popularity Heuristics**

Filieri et al. (2021) gave the most useful definition of visual eWOM popularity heuristics, which refers to any online information about the number of consumers buying, reviewing, liking, or using a product or service. This includes the number of followers of a celebrity, the number of reviews for a particular accommodation, and the number of likes.

Popularity heuristics have been used in various research fields in HORECA and other sectors (Li, 2019; Wang, 2021; Booka et al. 2018). Due to the increasing role of social media, various academic contributions investigate the favorable influence of visual eWOM on customers booking intention using popularity heuristics measures (Zhao et al., 2020; Moore and Lafreniere, 2019; Carlisle, Ivanov and Dijkmans, 2023; Sharma, Thomas and Paul, 2021).

The popularity heuristics scale consists of four items and is based on instruments proposed by Armstrong (2010), Carlisle, Ivanov, and Dijkmans (2023), and Alanazi (2016). The modification is performed cautiously, mainly when items are rewritten as required to accommodate this research context. To ensure the literature, all items are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". The overall responses represent the higher levels of popularity heuristics. In finalizing the survey incorporated items, the current study used pilot testing, in which Cronbach's alpha value was  $>.70$ , more significant than the standard value, indicating high reliability and validity. The overall popularity heuristics composite measure is set on the four items. The current research adapts the scales to measure popularity heuristics as per Armstrong (2010), Carlisle, Ivanov, and Dijkmans (2023), and Alanazi (2016) because their scale demonstrates convergent and discriminant validity.

#### ***3.4.3.8 Operationalization of Destination Brand Image***

The widely accepted definition by Elfitra, Saragih, and Khoerunisa (2019) is that the destination brand image is "a set of brand associations in the minds of consumers, helping consumers recall the brand in memory". The destination brand image has been used in various research fields related to HORECA and other sectors (Shafiee, Tabaeian, and Khoshfetrat, 2020; Anggraeni and Harris, 2019; Al-Dmour et al., 2021; Skinner, 2021). Due to the increasing role of social media, various academic contributions investigate the favorable influence of visual eWOM on customers' booking intention using destination brand image measures (Wang et al., 2019; Shafiee, Tabaeian and Khoshfetrat, 2020; Widayati et al. 2020).

The destination brand image scale consists of four items and is based on instruments proposed by Bhat (2020) and Filieri et al. (2020). The modification is performed cautiously, particularly the rewording of items as required to accommodate this research context. To ensure the literature, all items are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". The overall responses represent the higher levels of destination brand image. After finalizing the survey incorporating items, the current study

used pilot testing, in which Cronbach's alpha value was  $>.70$ , greater than the standard value, indicating high reliability and validity. The overall destination brand image composite measure is set on the four items. The current research adapts the scales to measure destination brand image as Bhat (2020) and Filieri et al. (2020) because their scale demonstrates convergent and discriminant validity.

#### ***3.4.3.9 Operationalization of User-generated Content***

The most relevant and useful definition by Hofman-Kohlmeyer (2020) of user-generated content (UGC) refers to unique and brand-specific content formed by consumers and shared on various platforms, such as social media. The UGC has been used in various research fields related to HORECA and other sectors (Bolin, 2021; Stackla, 2021; Lu et al., 2020; Oliveira, Araujo and Tam, 2020; Kitsios et al., 2021). Due to the increasing role of social media, various academic contributions investigate the favorable influence of visual eWOM on customers booking intention using user-generated content measures (Bandinelli 2020; Xu et al. (2021); Pleijers 2021).

The user-generated content scale consists of four items and is based on instruments proposed by Javed, Rashidin and Xiao (2021) and Fedorov, Fraternali and Tagliasacchi (2014). The modification is performed cautiously, particularly the rewording of items as required to accommodate this research context. To ensure the literature, all items are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". Overall, the responses represent the higher levels of user-generated content. To finalize the survey incorporated items, the current study used pilot testing in which Cronbach's alpha value was  $>.70$ , more significant than the standard value, indicating high reliability and validity. The overall user-generated content composite measure is set on the four items. The current research adapts the scales to measure UGC to Javed, Rashidin and Xiao (2021) and Fedorov, Fraternali, and Tagliasacchi (2014) because their scale demonstrates convergent and discriminant validity.

#### ***3.4.3.10 Operationalization of Visual eWOM***

The widely accepted definition by Slamet and Albab (2023, p.176) of eWOM is "the dynamic and ongoing information exchange process between potential, actual, or former consumers regarding a product, service, brand, or company, which is available to a multitude of individuals and institutions via the Internet".

Visual eWOM has been used in various research fields related to HORECA and other sectors (Rai and Tripathi, 2020; Trana and Strutton, 2020; Sutherland, 2021). Due to the increasing role of social media, various academic contributions investigate the favorable

influence of visual eWOM on customers booking intention using user-generated content measures (Castro 2016; Alen, Sanzhar and Aiya, 2022; Then and Felisa, 2021; Sampat and Sabat, 2021).

The visual eWOM scale consists of four items and is based on instruments proposed by Mathur, Khandelwal and Mittal (2019), and Oliveira and Casais (2019). The modification is performed cautiously, particularly the rewording of items as required to accommodate this research context. To ensure the literature, all items are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". The overall responses represent the higher levels of visual eWOM. Finalizing the survey and incorporating all items, the current study used pilot testing, in which Cronbach's alpha value was  $>.70$ , greater than the standard value, indicating high reliability and validity. The overall visual eWOM composite measure is set on the four items. The current research adapts the scales to measure visual eWOM to Mathur, Khandelwal, and Mittal (2019) and Oliveira and Casais (2019) because their scale demonstrates convergent and discriminant validity.

#### ***3.4.3.11 Operationalization of Customer intention***

The most useful definition given by Rustagi and Prakash (2022) is that customer intention is often used as an indicator of future behavior, and it can be influenced by several factors, as discussed in chapter 2. In the HORECA industry, purchase intention is essential because it can directly impact revenue and growth.

Customer intention has been used in various research fields related to HORECA and other sectors (Sudrajat and Lestari, 2020; Kim, Song and Youn, 2020; Liewin and Genoveva, 2021). Due to the increasing role of social media, various academic contributions investigate the favorable influence of visual eWOM on customers' booking intention using customer intention measures (Costa, 2017; Grzegorz, 2022).

The customer intention scale consists of four items and is based on instruments proposed by Filieri et al. (2021) and Abubakar et al. (2017). The modification is performed cautiously, particularly the rewording of items as required to accommodate this research context. To ensure the literature, all items are measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". The overall responses represent the higher levels of visual eWOM. Finalizing the survey incorporating items, the current study used pilot testing, in which Cronbach's alpha value was  $>.70$ , more significant than the standard value, indicating high reliability and validity. The overall customer intention composite measure is set on the four items. The current research adapts the scales to measure



customer intention similar to Filieri et al. (2021) and Abubakar et al. (2017) because their scale demonstrates convergent and discriminant validity.

#### **3.4.4 The form of response**

The fourth step in Fig 3.1 represents the form of response determination following the operationalization of constructs within the proposed framework is critical. The two main kinds of response or question format include open-unstructured survey-embedded open-ended questions with respondents allowed to phrase their answers and structured survey-embedded closed-ended questions with predetermined response options. The current study employed exceptionally structured surveys and acquired information online because it reduces the time effort and eliminates the interviewer's bias.

Furthermore, it is also essential to decide on the scaling technique itemized rating scale, which includes staples, semantic differentials, and the Likert scale. The current study adopts the Likert scale to gather information from the respondents. The Likert scale is well suited for online methods of data collection and self-administered questionnaires as it is easy to administer, construct, and understand by the respondents.

#### **3.4.5 Wrongdoing of Each Question**

The fifth step of Fig 3.1 is the wrongdoing of each question involved during the questionnaire development. The current step is significant in the development process due to its pronounced effect on results. The wording alters the results and responses from the respondents. Poor wording may lead to error, bias, and incorrect answers, making data analysis challenging (Lundmark et al., 2016).

The researcher put the questionnaire through a rigorous assessment process to ensure the quality and clarity of each question. Notably, jargon and slang were avoided throughout the questionnaire, and simple words were used to prevent misunderstanding and for simplicity and transparency (Connors, Krupnikov, and Ryan, 2019). Ambiguous and double-barreled questions were eliminated. The questions were phrased precisely and clearly to convey the intended meaning. Instead, neutral wording was used since a poor question enhances confusion among respondents, makes results biased, and adversely affects the response rates. The reverse coding items were not included as they needed clarification on respondents and caused them to answer based on overall attitude.

### **3.4.6 Sequence of Questions**

In Fig 3.1, the sixth step is the question sequence or order that is essential for the success of the research. The main body of the questionnaire contains items measuring the nature of exposure to visual eWOM antecedents and customer booking intention towards HORECA services. The existing literature suggests that qualifying questions should be set first and opening questions about exposure to HORECA or using Instagram or social media apps. Hence, respondents with no exposure to social media apps or HORECA were excluded from the list of respondents. Besides, the questionnaire's main body with similar questions was grouped, and items were arranged based on topics.

The socio-demographic questions were not added since the demographic profile details were already collected by Pollfish.com. Demographic details play a crucial role in any study because they identify various characteristics of respondents, including gender, age, income, geographic location, race, and more. Collecting demographic data enables a deeper understanding of the target audience, facilitating the allocation of promotional resources more efficiently and cost-effectively. This data helps identify individuals who can utilize or are inclined to use an offering, allowing for targeted marketing strategies.

### **3.4.7 Layout and Physical Characteristics of Questionnaire**

In Fig 3.1, the seventh step is about the layout and physical characteristics of the questionnaire in which an exciting and efficient survey design is essential to increase the respondent's willingness to participate in the survey and provide complete and accurate information. The current study has collected data through an online survey platform called Pollfish.com. The latter is a website tool used in the collection of data for different kinds of surveys. The researcher chose Pollfish because of its extensive features to support the process of creating a visually appealing survey design in terms of spacing i.e one question per page, style i.e every question had a picture like a screenshot from an Instagram post; structure, text font size that adapts to mobile screens. The researcher also used a wide variety of Pollfish tools, i.e. all questions require an answer before proceeding to the next question to ensure complete survey responses. Finally, the survey was organized section by section. The first section comprised a consent form, providing the detailed purpose of the survey followed by conceptualizations, discussed in the previous step, that were ordered logically. Conclusively, the questionnaire was designed in such a way that it appears attractive and easy to read.

The Pollfish tool was used as a practical and effective alternative to gather data from respondents which included international tourists given specific age brackets enabling the researcher to reach them with ease by investing funds. Pollfish is a reliable tool that targets a broad spectrum of an audience of more than 650 million respondents, then provides the data in a few hours to the researcher in different formats: PDF, excel spreadsheet, and CSV. Once the survey is live on Pollfish.com, respondents get an in-app notification and will be invited to fill out the survey voluntarily on their mobile devices. If they wish to fill it out, they can or otherwise opt-out at the beginning or anytime during the survey. After the respondents complete the survey, they will be compensated with a nonfinancial benefit. Pollfish's unique partnership model bypasses traditional survey panels by collaborating directly with app developers. Developers craft tailored, non-monetary incentives (e.g., news app subscription access, fitness app workout sessions...) integrated within their apps to attract genuine user participation for valuable market research, preventing the formation of professional survey respondents.

As for the invitations, Pollfish's unique methodology ensures that they connect with real online individuals, randomly selected based on the PI specific targeting criteria. By integrating seamlessly with partner apps and websites, Pollfish delivers surveys organically to people in targeted demographics while they naturally engage with their favorite apps. Along with advanced features and capabilities, this approach supports the effective distribution of surveys. Pollfish utilizes a new survey methodology called Random Device Engagement (RDE). By delivering the survey inside popular mobile apps, RDE utilizes the same neutral environment as RDD, and an audience who are not taking premeditated surveys, by reaching them inside mobile apps they were using anyway. By integrating directly with apps, Pollfish is able to collect unique user information to manage and track respondents across devices using their mobile ad ID. While they don't collect any PII, Pollfish is still able to complete a respondent profile during their initial opt-in phase, including everything from their basic demographic information to their age, marital status, race, and geographic location. This allows Pollfish to distribute surveys to a randomized group of people who fit the targeting criteria of a given survey in a process called Random Device Engagement. With in-app surveys occurring only with engaged users, they have the option to opt in or out at the moment and their responses are naturally occurring in real-time. If they opt in, they could get a small, appropriate perk that is specific to the app they are using. If they opt out, they can take it the next time they're invited to participate.

It is worth mentioning that Pollfish has already been used in scientific research for numerous topics that require an international pool of respondents (Lindqvist and Kävrestad, 2023; Ukpabi, Olaleye and Karjaluo, 2021) and for topics related to social media passion and Facebook addiction (Mylonopoulos and Theoharakis, 2019 and 2023). Without that collection platform, it would be so hard to reach international tourists from numerous countries or at least even reach them in a short time.

### **3.4.8 Re-examining Steps 1-7 and Revise if Necessary**

In Fig 3.1, the eighth step is related to re-examination which entails the final draft of the questionnaire. The researcher's responsibility at this stage is related to several re-examinations and incorporating the solution in case of issues found. The re-examination is essential before the pre-testing of the survey to ensure the clarity of language, sort out jargon issues, and resolve general wrongdoings such as bias induction and ambiguity. The researcher will eliminate possible errors before pre-testing and conducting discussions with professionals.

### **3.4.9 Pretesting Questionnaire**

The last and ninth step given in Fig 3.1 is about the questionnaire pretest. The first part of the questionnaire represents the purpose of the study and the potential participants required to participate in creating research information. Subsequently, the participants were asked to read two closed-ended questions regarding their exposure to eWOM and their use of Instagram and other social media platforms to seek information related to the HORECA industry. Failing to meet the inclusion criteria implies not continuing, and respondents were sent to the end of the survey. Otherwise, the respondents started the survey and were asked to fill in the information related to all visual eWOM antecedents, visual eWOM itself, and customers' booking intention towards HORECA services. They were asked to answer the questions about the condition they had been assigned in sequence. The final version of the survey can be found in Appendix A.

## **3.5 Population and Sampling**

A population is a group of individuals who share common characteristics and are identified as the intended target for data collection in a research study. The population size for the present study includes travelers from many countries and also those who use eWOM in social media platforms as an information source to find their next trip's destination and services. In 2022, the global number of international tourists experienced a significant

increase compared to the previous year, approximately doubling in volume. This recovery came after a steep decline caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, According to Eurostat (2023), Europe emerged as the region with the highest arrival of inbound travelers, accounting for a total of 594.5 million tourist arrivals. Additionally, Eurostat (2023) demonstrates the share of the global travel and tourism industry's contribution to Europe's total gross domestic product (GDP) approximately halved in 2020 compared to the previous year. However, there was a slight recovery in 2021, with the industry's GDP contribution showing a modest increase compared to 2020 (Statista, 2023). France is Europe's top most-visited country, with 66.6 million global tourists in 2022. Spain, having 26.3 million visitors, is the second most visited country (Hughes, 2023). Italy had 16.6 million tourist arrivals in 2022 (Statista, 2023), and Germany contributed 13 million trips to destinations in developing countries (Jus and Nikolova, 2021).

According to Saleh (2022), the Middle East experienced a notable decline of 73 percent in inbound visitor numbers in 2020, mainly attributed to the global COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown measures implemented worldwide. However, a significant recovery was anticipated in 2022, with a projected growth rate of over 100 percent. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2018), tourism in North Africa and the Middle East region accounted for approximately six percent of global tourist arrivals. Specifically, the MENA region welcomed over 60 million tourism arrivals that year, with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) hosting 15.8 million visitors. In 2018, the UAE ranked as MENA's most competitive tourism destination. Booking.com was popular among MENA tourists. However, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the sector, causing travel difficulties and restrictions (Statista, 2022). In 2023, Morocco ranked as the third most visited Arab country, receiving 14.5 million visitors despite the devastating earthquake (Perry, 2024). Saudi Arabia claimed the top spot with 18 million tourists, while the UAE followed closely with 15 million (Brinza, 2023).

Given the geographical proximity among countries in the Asia-Pacific region, it is unsurprising that travelers from this region have a strong fondness for exploration. As traveling became increasingly convenient in 2023, travelers dedicate 68% of their time to researching local travel review sites such as TripAdvisor in Singapore. Among Singaporean travelers, 50% are preparing for a single trip, while 30% are gearing up for two summer trips, as Travel Daily News reported. On the other hand, Australians devote 60% of their time to meticulously planning their trips, with TripAdvisor as a valuable resource (Tjoe, 2022).

As for the inbound travel in 2023, Singapore welcomed 13.6 million visitors, surpassing the Singapore Tourism Board's (STB) projected 4 to 6 million visitors. While this figure represented one-third of the pre-pandemic visitor count in 2019, it marked a significant recovery after international travel reached a standstill in 2020 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic (Asia, 2023). Australia's international visitation is experiencing a steady recovery, with 3.4 million trips to the country recorded by the end of December 2022. This indicates positive progress in attracting international travelers to Australia, reflecting a growing interest in visiting the country despite the challenges posed by the global pandemic (Tourism Research Australia, 2023). Malaysia welcomed approximately 20 million tourists, marking a significant milestone in 2023. Furthermore, Thailand welcomed 28 million tourists (Center, 2024; Statista, 2024b).

Table 3. 2: Inbound Tourism across region 2023 (Self-generated Table)

(Center, 2024; Germany Travel, 2023; Ming, 2024; Qatar News Agency, 2023; Road Genius, 2024; Saudi Gazette, 2024; Statista, 2024a; Statista, 2024b; Visit Britain, 2024)

| <b>Region</b>               | <b>Country</b> | <b>Number of tourist arrivals</b> |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>Europe</b>               | France         | 41.9 million                      |
|                             | Spain          | 70.9 million                      |
|                             | Italy          | 85.7 million                      |
|                             | Germany        | 53.8 million                      |
| <b>MENA and Middle East</b> | Saudi Arabia   | 100 million                       |
|                             | UAE            | 17.2 million                      |
|                             | Morocco        | 11 million                        |
|                             | Qatar          | 4 million                         |
| <b>Asia-Pacific</b>         | Singapore      | 13.6 million                      |
|                             | Malaysia       | 20 million                        |
|                             | Thailand       | 28 million                        |
|                             | Australia      | 14 million                        |

### 3.5.1 Sampling Technique

Sampling aims to obtain a demonstrative sample, which consists of a small subset of cases or units from a larger population, allowing the researchers to study the small group and generalize regarding the larger group. To achieve this, reemphasize using techniques that result in highly demonstrative samples, meaning samples that closely resemble the population.

Probability and non-probability sampling are the two sampling techniques (Pace, 2021). Probability sampling is a type in which every unit within a population has a measurable probability of being selected for inclusion in the sample. The primary objective of using probability sampling is to generate a sample that accurately represents the population's features from which it is derived. It is important to note that random sampling does not guarantee a perfect representation of the population in every instance. However, it ensures that most random samples closely resemble the population most of the time. Furthermore, by employing probability sampling, it becomes possible to calculate the probability of a particular sample accurately reflecting the population.

In contrast, non-probability sampling is a method in which each unit within a population does not have a quantifiable probability of being selected (Berndt, 2020). As opposed to probability sampling, nonprobability sampling does not adhere to a mathematically random selection process when choosing units from the population. Consequently, nonrandom samples often yield results that do not accurately represent the population. This limitation in representativeness severely restricts our generalization of findings from nonprobability samples to the larger population. However, in quantitative research, a commonly employed sampling approach is probability sampling, which is based on mathematical probability theories (Berndt, 2020).

There are four types of probability sampling: simple random, systematic, stratified, and cluster. Among the four samplings, the present study employed stratified sampling to select the sample from the population. Stratified random sampling involves the initial division of a population into distinct subpopulations or strata, which are defined based on specific population features (e.g., gender and age groups). The purpose of this division is to create homogeneous groups within the population. Once the population is stratified, the researcher selects a random sample from each stratum. Compared to simple random sampling, stratified sampling generally yields samples that are more representative of the overall population, provided the stratum information accurately reflects the population's

characteristics. By ensuring representation from each stratum, stratified sampling accounts for the diversity present within the population, resulting in more accurate generalizations. Hence, the use of a stratified sampling technique to select the sample from the population (Rahman et al., 2022) can allow researchers conducting studies with international respondents to be divided into regions for example, and then the researcher decides on countries for the chosen sample to distribute questionnaires.

The researcher collected data from Gen-Y and Gen-Z to analyze the difference and similarity of these two generations in terms of their presence in social media platforms which in turn affect the purchase intention towards HORECA. Hence, the stratified sampling based on probability has been chosen to gather data from two distinct groups with equal sample size to understand their perception derived from social media platforms and towards purchasing intention.

### **3.5.2 Sample Size**

The sample size is the number of individuals and observations employed for a study, which is the subset of the data points selected from the larger population to analyze the data and find outcomes. The sample size is essential in research, as it can affect the generalizability and reliability of the findings. Two main kinds of sampling techniques include non-probability sampling and probability sampling. In probability sampling, each participant has an equal chance to participate, however, non-probability does not provide an equal chance and sample selection is based on particular characteristics of the population.

The current study used a stratified sampling technique based on probability sampling technique that involves the division of a population into smaller strata based on member-shared attributes and characteristics. It also involves dividing the entire population into homogeneous groups according to their age. The study employed a stratified random sampling which divided the population into small groups of shared characteristics (travelers and using eWOM as information source), subsequently collected data equally from 42 different countries around the world. The total sample size of the study consisted of  $n=300$  equally divided respondents between Generation 'Y' and Generation 'Z. After selecting the sample size of 150 for each generation on Pollfish, the system sends random notifications to its matching partner apps' subscribers from all over the world that fit the age/generation category specified. Once all the 300 respondents fill out the questionnaire, the survey ends.

Various studies (Pauline and Sedneva, 2019; Tabassum, Khwaja, and Zaman, 2020; Lee, Min, and Yuan, 2021) have examined the influence of eWOM on purchase intention across



two generations. While several studies by Wahyuningsih et al. (2022) and Hisham et al. (2020) have chosen different sample sizes, 577 vs 100 samples respectively, which inform the different sample sizes depending on the study's domain. Another study analyzing eWOM and its impact on purchase decisions, on “Millennial and Z” Generations, used only n=107 as a sample size (Slamet and Ahmad Ulil, 2023).

The researcher followed the recommendation of Song and Yoo (2016) who suggested a sample larger than 285 while including different consumer segments. Several researchers recommended a large sample for similar studies (Amaro and Duarte, 2017; Nemeč Rudež and Vodeb, 2015) and others recommended the sample to reflect a wide diversity of cultures, countries, and nationalities (Casaló, Flavián, and Guinalú, 2011; Öz, 2015). Therefore, the sample size in the current study is 300 similar to the study of Tabassum, Khwaja, and Zaman (2020), equally divided between the generations Y and Z, which is sufficient to represent the diverse population and estimate the influence of eWOM on tourists' intentions toward HORECA services. To be eligible, participants were required to be familiar with looking at eWOM and using Instagram to search for information about the HORECA services they would visit in the future.

### **3.6 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the present study include;

#### **3.6.1 Inclusion Criteria**

- Tourists from around the world who would travel abroad for leisure
- Travelers who use eWOM and Instagram as their information search tools to identify HORECA services.

#### **3.6.2 Exclusion Criteria**

- Travelers who use means for information searches other than social media platforms and eWOM in the HORECA industry e.g. like travel agencies, physical WOM etc.
- People aged less than 18
- People aged more than 42

### 3.7 Data Analysis

Statistics serve as valuable tools for interpreting the findings of research studies. The choice of appropriate statistical techniques depends on the research question and the nature of the data. The first step in statistical analysis is organizing and entering the data into a file accessible to a data analysis program. The present study used SPSS for data analysis.

Analysis techniques encompass various methods, such as correlation analysis, t-tests, descriptive statistics, and multiple variance analysis. Data analysis involves essential aspects like measures and measurement. Descriptive statistics provide insights into the data, including measures of central tendency such as the mean, the median, and the mode. Measures of variability, such as variance and standard deviation, indicate the spread of the data. Measures of relationship, such as Pearson product-moment correlation and Spearman rank-order correlation, examine the associations between variables. Inferential statistics are employed to assess the reliability and validity of the data, including hypotheses testing and multiple regression analysis, to draw conclusions based on the findings (Meyers, Gamst, and Guarino, 2009).

According to Bader and Jones (2021), the dominant method for testing interactions is mediated multiple regression. Using Hayes process macros, the mediated multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the mediating role of visual eWOM in the relationship between eWOM antecedents (information quality, information credibility, website quality, motivation, innovativeness, destination fascination, destination brand image, user-generated content, and popularity heuristics) and customer booking intention towards HORECA services.

Based on the proposed conceptual framework, the researcher conducted nine separate mediated multiple regression models for customers' booking intention. In all nine models, nine individual independent variables have been tested against the mediated variable as visual eWOM and the dependent variable as customers' booking intention towards HORECA; the equations are as such:

**Model 1: Impact of information quality on visual eWOM in Instagram**

$$ROI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 IQ + \varepsilon$$

**Model 2: Impact of information credibility on visual eWOM in Instagram**

$$ROI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 IC + \varepsilon$$

**Model 3: Impact of motivation on visual eWOM in Instagram**

$$ROI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 MO + \varepsilon$$

**Model 4: Impact of website quality on visual eWOM in Instagram**

$$ROI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 WQ + \varepsilon$$

**Model 5: Impact of innovativeness on visual eWOM in Instagram**

$$ROI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 INN + \varepsilon$$

**Model 6: Impact of popularity heuristics on visual eWOM in Instagram**

$$ROI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 PH + \varepsilon$$

**Model 7: Impact of destination fascination on visual eWOM in Instagram**

$$ROI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 DF + \varepsilon$$

**Model 8: Impact of destination brand image on visual eWOM in Instagram**

$$ROI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 DI + \varepsilon$$

**Model 9: Impact of user-generated content on visual eWOM in Instagram**

$$ROI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 UGC + \varepsilon$$

### **3.8 Reliability and Validity of Instrument**

Validity is the extent to which a measuring instrument accurately assesses the intended quality or behavior it aims to measure, reflecting its effectiveness in performing its intended function. Validity is evaluated through the appropriate and meaningful understanding of data gathered from the measuring instrument during analysis. Validity tests play a crucial role in assessing the suitability of the scale's expressions for measuring the specific research objectives (Clark and Watson, 2019). Ensuring the validity of a measuring instrument is a challenging yet essential task, surpassing the importance of assessing its reliability. To ensure valuable outcomes from research, it is imperative that the measuring instrument accurately measures what it claims to measure. By employing a validated measuring instrument, the findings obtained from the analysis are ensured to be valid (Flake and Fried, 2020).

Reliability pertains to the consistency and stability of the measuring utilized over time. It refers to the ability of the instrument to produce similar consequences when applied in different occasions (Sürücü and Maslakci, 2020). It is essential to acknowledge that the same results may not be obtained each time due to variations during the application of the measuring instrument, as well as changes in the sample and population being studied. Nevertheless, a strong positive correlation among the instrument's results indicates reliability. Assessing the reliability of the instrument is crucial for obtaining valid study outcomes. Therefore, researchers must ensure the reliability of the instrument they employ. Various methods are employed to know scale reliability in empirical research, with utilized

approaches including internal consistency tests, alternative forms, and test-retest reliability (Chetwynd, 2022).

While validity and reliability are interconnected, they have different properties for instrument measurement. An instrument can be reliable but not valid; however, if an instrument is valid, it is reliable as well. A test may exhibit reliability but must accurately capture the desired measured quality or behavior. Consequently, researchers must assess both the reliability and validity of the measuring tool used in the study. The instrument must meet both of these criteria; otherwise, interpreting the research findings would be unreliable and inaccurate (Sürücü and Maslakci, 2020).

The present study tests the reliability and validity of instruments used in the research using confirmatory validity and internal consistency tests to test the instrument's reliability. While validating personality and psychopathology questionnaires, researchers frequently employ confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), mainly when dealing with tests that measure multiple dimensions. To accomplish this, a covariance matrix is computed based on the scores of a sample of individuals. CFA is sub-utilized to examine whether the collected data support the assumed factor pattern or structure. CFA is implemented using SEM, an advanced statistical technique to test intricate theoretical models using empirical data. It is important to note that CFA is precisely employed for the measurement component of these models (Prudon, 2015).

On the other hand, internal consistency reliability refers to the degree of consistency in data results across different tests. This reliability method assesses the relationship between factors within the test and other related factors. The Cronbach alpha coefficient is commonly employed as a measure of internal consistency. In the case of the Likert scale, it is recognized as the most acceptable measure of consistency. For exploratory or pilot studies, it is recommended to have a reliability value equal to or greater than 0.70. Generally, a reliability value of 0.90 or more indicates strong reliability, while a range of 0.70 to 0.90 signifies high reliability. A range of 0.50 to 0.70 suggests moderate reliability, while a value of 0.50 and below indicates low reliability (Sideridis, Saddaawi, and Al-Harbi, 2018).

### **3.9 Ethical Consideration**

The current study's ethical considerations are of utmost importance, given its involvement with human participants and the nature of the research. The primary objective was to strike a balance between the study's requirements and the protection and well-being of the participants. Before commencing the study, a research proposal underwent

institutional review by the university's ethics committee to evaluate the proposed study's merit and identify any critical issues requiring careful attention.

Participants' dignity was respected through obtaining informed consent, ensuring they were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential benefits. Anonymity was safeguarded as the researcher will not have access to any names of the respondents. The site Pollfish.com releases the answers to the questionnaire with basic demographic info; however without any respondent's name thus it is completely anonymous to the researcher. Only basic demographics that the respondents approved to release were released mainly: age, gender, occupation, marital status, race, number of children, educational level, employment status, career, income level, and city. Participants were also informed about their right to withdraw from the study at any point without the need for justification.

Data collected from the study were stored securely on a computer protected by a password. Any offline data was secured in a locked file cabinet to avoid any unauthorized access.

### **3.10 Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter presents guidelines on research philosophy and the chosen research approach. It offers a rationale for adopting a quantitative research approach, elucidating the methodological aspects such as data collection procedures, population selection, sample size determination, sampling strategy, and data analysis tools employed by the researcher. The study used quantitative methods and deductive reasoning to formulate and test the hypotheses. Furthermore, the chapter provides a comprehensive explanation of the ethical considerations. Special attention was given to ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the study's participants, thus safeguarding their privacy and personal information.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**



UNIVERSITY of NICOSIA

## 4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the data collection methodology used to achieve the research objectives. The primary data has been gathered using questionnaires which have been distributed worldwide representing seventeen countries from the European region, thirteen countries from the Asian region, one country from each of the Eurasia region, the Oceania region, and South America respectively, two countries from North America and seven countries from the African region (Appendix B). The collected data has been coded into SPSS to test the proposed research hypotheses. This chapter emphasizes on the statistical analysis conducted which includes analysis of the demographics of respondents, reliability of research instrument, descriptive statistics, frequency distribution, multiple regression analysis, independent sample T-Test, and Hayes Process Macros for testing the mediating role of visual eWOM. This chapter is divided into subsections, providing the reader with a step-by-step guide to statistical testing.

### 4.1 Demographics of Respondents

The socio-demographic backgrounds of respondents have been analyzed as Figure 4.1 shows the gender distribution pie-chart indicates that 168 (56%) of the survey respondents were males whereas the remaining 132 (44%) were female respondents. The participants' genders have been well distributed for Generation 'Y': 78(59.1%) were male, and 54(40.9%) were female. The participation distribution among genders for Generation 'Z': 90(53.6%) were male, 78(46.4%) were female.

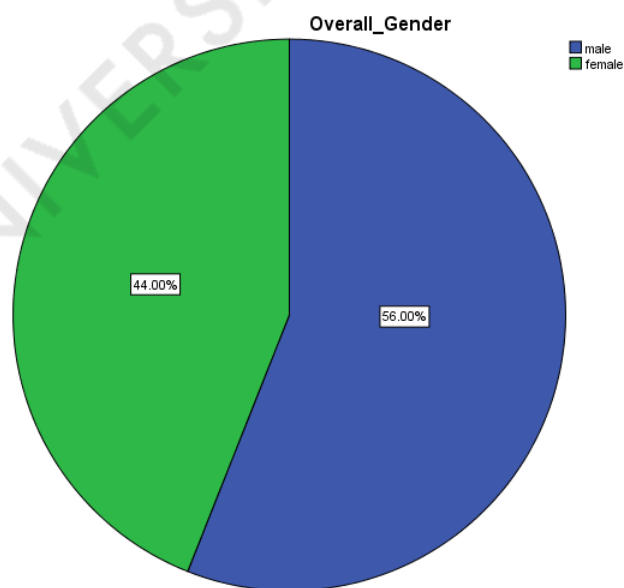


Figure 4. 1: Gender Distribution

The overall participants have been distributed among different ethnic groups as shown below in Figure 4.2. The ethnicity distribution demonstrates: 17(5.7%) were Arab, 103(34.3%) were Asian, 84(28%) were black, 2(0.7%) were Hispanic, 1(0.3%) was Latino, 5(1.7%) were multi-racial, 79(26.3%) were white, 3(1%) were in other ethnic groups and 6(2%) did not prefer to say.

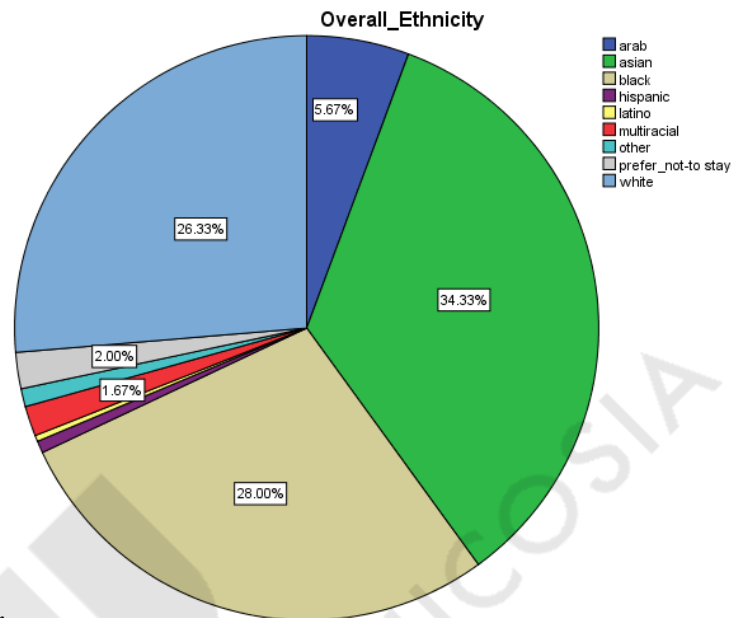


Figure 4. 2: Ethnicity Distribution

The participation has been distributed among different ethnic groups for generation 'Y': 7(5.3%) were Arab, 39(29.9%) were Asian, 30(22.7%) were black, 1(0.3%) was Hispanic, 1(0.3%) was Latino, 2(0.7%) were multi-racial, 48(16%) were white, 2(0.7%) were in other ethnic groups and 2(0.7%) did not prefer to say. While the participation has been distributed among different ethnic groups for generation 'Z': 10(6%) were Arab, 64(38.1%) were Asian, 54(32.1%) were black, 1(0.3%) was Hispanic, 0(0%) none was Latino, 3(1.8%) were multi-racial, 31(18.5%) were white, 4(2.4%) were in other ethnic groups and 2(0.7%) did not prefer to say.

As for employment, it has been distributed among the overall participants in both generations, as depicted in Figure 4.3 below. The related employment distribution pie-chart indicates: 177(59%) were waged employees, 10(3.3%) were homemakers, 1(0.3%) was military, 65(21.7%) were self-employed, 13(4.3%) were unemployed, 4(1.3%) were in other kinds of employment and 29(9.7%) were still students.



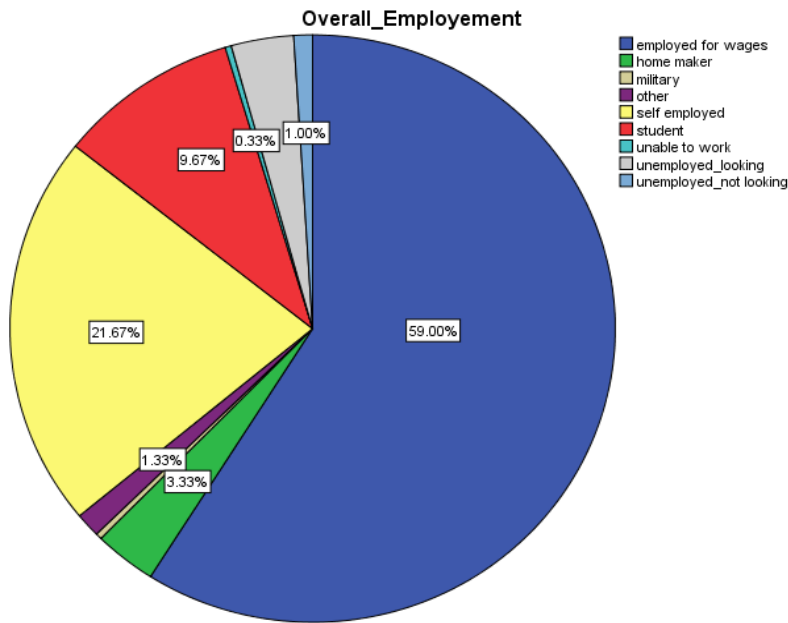


Figure 4. 3: Employment Distribution

The education has been distributed among the overall participants given below in Figure 4.4; related employment distribution for both generations encompassed: 1(0.3%) had completed their elementary school, 1(0.3%) was in middle school, 41(13.7%) were in high school, 24(8%) received vocational training, 182(60.7%) held bachelor degree, 50(16.7%) held a postgraduate degree and 1(0.3%) was in the others education activities.

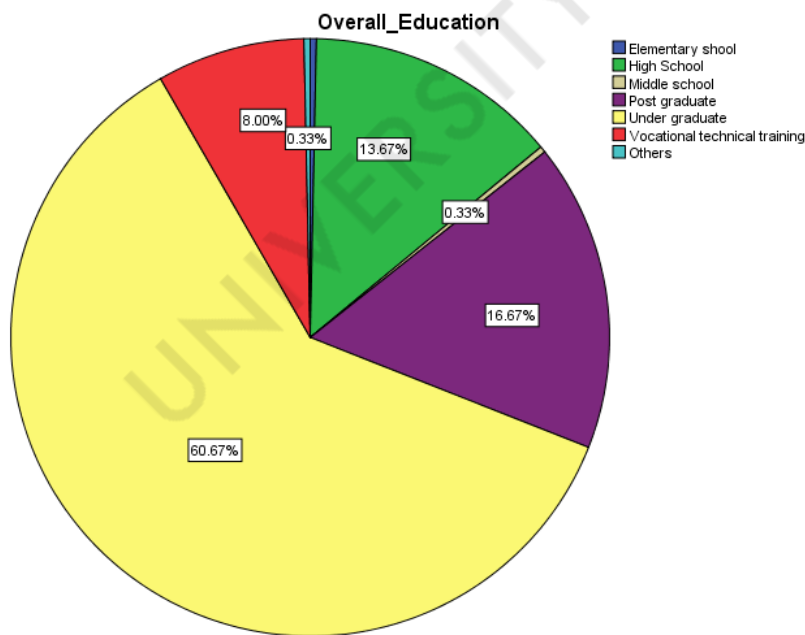


Figure 4. 4: Education Distribution

The marital status was distributed among the participants as shown below in Figure 4.5. Related marital distribution encompasses: 135(45%) were single, 2(0.7%) were

divorced, 37(12.3%) were living with a partner, 117(39%) were married, 6(2%) preferred not to say, and 3(2.3%) were separated.

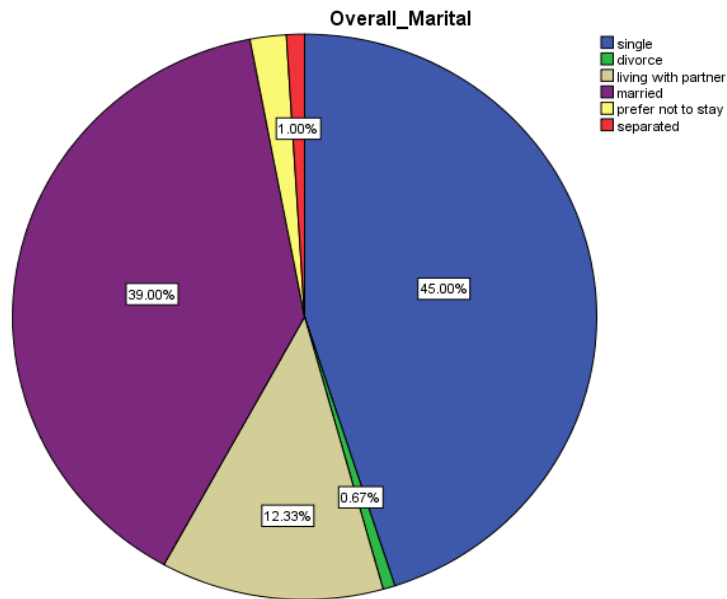


Figure 4. 5: Marital Distribution

The social classes were distributed among the participants, as shown below in Figure 4.6. Related social class distribution encompasses: 159(53%) belonged to the low-income class, 54(18%) belonged to the middle-income class, 80(26.7%) belonged to the high-income class, and 7(2.3%) did not prefer to say anything.

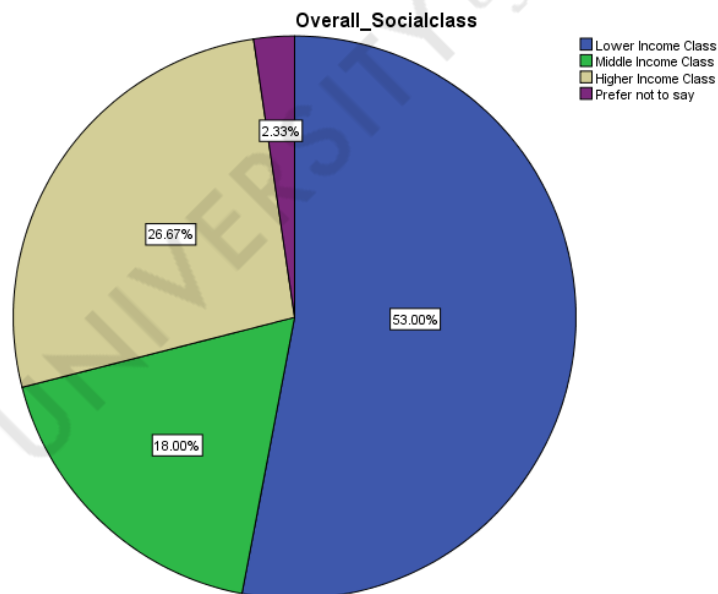


Figure 4. 6: Social Class Distribution

## 4.2 Reliability and Validity of Instrument

The reliability test using Cronbach's  $\alpha$  .70 has been conducted in Table 4.1 to confirm the multi-item scale used in the questionnaire. The information quality has been tested with four items, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  overall value accounted for 0.791. Hence, it is highly reliable and ensures internal consistency. The correct item-total correlation values ranged from 0.58 to 0.623. which are higher than 0.30, indicating that these four items measure the same construct of information quality. The value for  $\alpha$  has been checked for deleted items to verify sensitivity. None of the items was deleted based on the low alpha level in the case of deleted items. The statistical analysis represents a substantially higher value of 0.60. The value of four items is higher than 0.60, indicating that the questions are adequate.

Table 4. 1: Reliability test of Instrument (Information Quality)

| Information Quality  | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Correlated Item Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted | Overall |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| The reviews and recommendations about HORECA tourism services that people share through pictures and videos are TRUSTWORTHY.           | 11.95                      | 3.911                          | 0.623                             | 0.731                            | 0.791   |
| Information provided by visuals on Instagram in the form of stories, reels, and posters regarding HORECA tourism services is ACCURATE. | 12.04                      | 3.671                          | 0.592                             | 0.745                            |         |
| Visual eWOM in the form of stories, reels and posters offers a COMPREHENSIVE view of HORECA tourism services.                          | 12.04                      | 3.724                          | 0.586                             | 0.747                            |         |
| I agree with the timeliness of information in visual eWOM in the form of stories, reels and posters about HORECA tourism services      | 11.98                      | 3.712                          | 0.606                             | 0.737                            |         |

The information credibility has been tested in Table 4.2 below with four items, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value accounted for 0.759. Hence, it is highly reliable and ensures internal consistency. The correct item-total correlation values ranged from 0.52 to 0.59 which are higher than 0.30, indicating that these four items measure the same construct of information credibility. The value for  $\alpha$  has been checked for deleted items to verify sensitivity. None of the items was deleted based on the low alpha level in the case of deleted items. The statistical analysis represents a substantially higher value of 0.60. The value of the four items is higher than 0.60, indicating that the questions are adequate.

Table 4. 2: Reliability test of Instrument (Information Credibility)

| Reliability Test   |                            |                                |                                   |                                  | Overall |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Information Credibility  | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Correlated Item Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted |         |
| The information credibility shared by people in the form of stories, reels and posters regarding visual eWOM for HORECA tourism services is RELIABLE.                      | 12.3                       | 3.471                          | 0.561                             | 0.701                            | 0.759   |
| The information in the form of stories, reels and posters regarding visual eWOM about HORECA tourism services can be relied upon to make tourism decisions MORE FAVORABLE. | 12.11                      | 3.619                          | 0.525                             | 0.72                             |         |
| I have CONFIDENCE in the credibility of information shared in the form of stories, reels and posters regarding HORECA tourism services.                                    | 12.27                      | 3.322                          | 0.59                              | 0.684                            |         |
| I TRUST the visual eWOM of HORECA tourism services.  | 12.2                       | 3.445                          | 0.552                             | 0.705                            |         |

The website quality has been tested in Table 4.3 with four items, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value accounted for 0.722. Hence, it is highly reliable and ensures internal consistency. The correct item-total correlation values ranged from 0.423 to 0.597 which are higher than 0.30, indicating that these four items measure the same construct of website quality. The value for  $\alpha$  has been checked for deleted items to verify sensitivity. None of the items was deleted based on the low alpha level in the case of deleted items. The statistical analysis represents a substantially higher value of 0.60. The value of four items is higher than 0.60, indicating that the questions are adequate.

Table 4. 3: Reliability test of Instrument (Website Quality)

| Reliability Test  |                            |                                |                                   |                                  | Overall |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Website Quality   | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Correlated Item Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted |         |
| The websites for HORECA tourism services are USER-FRIENDLY and EASY TO NAVIGATE.                              | 12.6700                    | 3.045                          | .529                              | .650                             | 0.722   |
| The websites for HORECA tourism services are VISUALLY ATTRACTIVE.   | 12.6567                    | 3.036                          | .423                              | .709                             |         |
| The websites for HORECA tourism services provide RELEVANT and UP-TO-DATE INFO on promotions and travel deals. | 12.8600                    | 2.870                          | .495                              | .667                             |         |
| The websites for HORECA tourism services provide an EASY BOOKING PROCESS.                                     | 12.9033                    | 2.623                          | .597                              | .602                             |         |

The motivation has been tested in Table 4.4 with four items, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value accounted for 0.773. Hence, it is highly reliable and ensures internal consistency. The correct item-total correlation values ranged from 0.525 to 0.625. which are higher than 0.30,

indicating that these four items measure the same construct of motivation. The value for  $\alpha$  has been checked for deleted items to verify sensitivity. None of the items was deleted based on the low alpha level in the case of deleted items. The statistical analysis represents a substantially higher value of 0.60. The value of the four items is higher than 0.60, indicating that the questions are adequate.

Table 4. 4: Reliability test of Instrument (Motivation)

| Reliability Test  |                            |                                |                                   |                                  | Overall |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Motivation  | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Correlated Item Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted |         |
| The positive feedback shared by people through visual eWOM MOTIVATES ME to visit HORECA services.                                 | 12.8567                    | 3.113                          | .625                              | .690                             | 0.773   |
| Seeing captivating visuals and photographs of HORECA services shared through visual eWOM increases my desire to visit them.       | 12.6700                    | 3.553                          | .525                              | .742                             |         |
| The written stories and narratives shared by people through visual eWOM about HORECA services motivate me to explore them myself. | 12.9533                    | 3.155                          | .541                              | .736                             |         |
| The excitement and enthusiasm expressed by others through visual eWOM regarding HORECA services inspire me to plan a visit.       | 12.9300                    | 3.049                          | .611                              | .697                             |         |

The innovativeness has been tested in Table 4.5 with four items, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value accounted for 0.726. Hence, it is highly reliable and ensures internal consistency. The correct item-total correlation values ranged from 0.462 to 0.558 which are higher than 0.30, indicating that these four items measure the same innovativeness construct. The value for  $\alpha$  has been checked for deleted items to verify sensitivity. None of the items was deleted based on the low alpha level in the case of deleted items. The statistical analysis represents a substantially higher value than 0.60. The value of the four items is higher than 0.60, indicating that the questions are adequate.

Table 4. 5: Reliability test of Instrument (Innovativeness)

| Reliability Test   |                            |                                |                                   |                                  | Overall |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Innovativeness   | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Correlated Item Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted | 0.726   |
| The innovative features and offerings shared through visual eWOM enhance my interest in visiting HORECA services.  | 13.1300                    | 2.715                          | .558                              | .639                             |         |
| I am more interested in HORECA services for my travel plans when I see creative and unique experiences shared through visual eWOM.   | 12.9867                    | 2.736                          | .526                              | .660                             |         |
| Experiencing novel and imaginative concepts like a treehouse setting dining or underwater dining (check the picture below) shared through visual eWOM enhances my interest in exploring HORECA services. | 12.9000                    | 3.067                          | .462                              | .695                             |         |
| Distinctive concepts in visual online recommendations related to HORECA services are APPEALING (ATTRACTIVE).   | 12.9633                    | 2.979                          | .519                              | .664                             |         |

The destination fascination in Table 4.6 has been tested with four items, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value accounted for 0.718. Hence, it is highly reliable and ensures internal consistency. The correct item-total correlation values ranged from 0.453 to 0.540 which are higher than 0.30, indicating that these four items measure the same construct of destination fascination. The value for  $\alpha$  has been checked for deleted items to verify sensitivity. None of the items was deleted based on a low alpha level in the case of deleted items. The statistical analysis represents a substantially higher value than 0.60. The value of four items is higher than 0.60, indicating that the questions are adequate.

Table 4. 6: Reliability test of Instrument (Destination Fascination)

| Reliability Test  |                            |                                |                                   |                                  | Overall |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Destination Fascination   | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Correlated Item Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted | 0.718   |
| The UNIQUE and CAPTIVATING ATTRACTIONS shared through visual eWOM make me fascinated/interested in HORECA services.                   | 12.9100                    | 2.905                          | .502                              | .651                             |         |
| The HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE and LANDMARKS shared through visual eWOM make me fascinated/interested by HORECA services.                | 13.1367                    | 2.540                          | .453                              | .687                             |         |
| The NATURAL BEAUTY and SCENIC LANDSCAPES shared through visual eWOM make me fascinated/interested by HORECA services.                 | 13.0933                    | 2.600                          | .540                              | .623                             |         |
| The OVERALL CHARM and ALLURE shared through visual eWOM of HORECA services increase my fascination/interest and desire to visit them. | 13.0700                    | 2.761                          | .518                              | .639                             |         |

The popularity heuristic has been tested in Table 4.7 with four items, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value accounted for 0.744. Hence, it is highly reliable and ensures internal consistency. The correct item-total correlation values ranged from 0.477 to 0.575 which are higher than 0.30, indicating that these four items measure the same construct of popularity heuristic. The value for  $\alpha$  has been checked for deleted items to verify sensitivity. None of the items was deleted based on a low alpha level in the case of the deleted item. The statistical analysis represents a substantially higher value than 0.60. The value of the four items is higher than 0.60, indicating that the questions are adequate.

Table 4. 7: Reliability test of Instrument (Popularity Heuristic)

| Reliability Test  |                            |                                |                                   |                                  | Overall |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Popularity Heuristic  | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Correlated Item Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted |         |
| The HIGH NUMBER OF LIKES, SHARES and ENGAGEMENT on visual eWOM of HORECA services makes me perceive them as popular among tourists.             | 12.6000                    | 3.385                          | .549                              | .679                             | 0.744   |
| The WIDESPREAD PRESENCE of visual eWOM about HORECA services ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS makes me perceive them as popular among tourists.    | 12.3900                    | 4.152                          | .575                              | .658                             |         |
| The perception that HORECA services are popular choices among other tourists through visual eWOM influences my intention to visit them.         | 12.4567                    | 3.961                          | .551                              | .667                             |         |
| The positive reviews and recommendations from other tourists through visual eWOM influence my perception of HORECA services as popular choices. | 12.1833                    | 4.478                          | .477                              | .708                             |         |

The destination brand image has been tested in Table 4.8 with four items, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value accounted for 0.765. Hence, it is highly reliable and ensures internal consistency. The correct item-total correlation values ranged from 0.492 to 0.618 which are higher than 0.30, indicating that these four items measure the same construct of destination brand image. The value for  $\alpha$  has been checked for deleted items to verify sensitivity. None of the items was deleted based on a low alpha level in the case of the deleted item. The statistical analysis represents a substantially higher value than 0.60. The value of the four items is higher than 0.60, indicating that the questions are adequate.

Table 4. 8: Reliability test of Instrument (Destination Brand Image)

| Reliability Test  |                            |                                |                                   |                                  | Overall |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Destination Brand Image   | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Correlated Item Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted | 0.765   |
| The UNIQUE and DISTINCTIVE identity associated with the brand image of HORECA services captured in visual eWOM makes me more interested in visiting them.                   | 12.5633                    | 3.658                          | .555                              | .712                             |         |
| The strong and positive brand image portrayed through visual eWOM enhances my perception of HORECA services as desirable places to visit.                                   | 12.7700                    | 3.542                          | .492                              | .747                             |         |
| The consistent and positive messaging shared through visual eWOM about the brand image of HORECA services contributes to my positive perception of their quality and value. | 12.6933                    | 3.371                          | .591                              | .692                             |         |
| The brand image presented through visual eWOM creates a sense of trust and confidence in the overall experience and offerings of HORECA services.                           | 12.7133                    | 3.342                          | .618                              | .677                             |         |

The user-generated content has been tested in Table 4.9 with four items, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value accounted for 0.751. Hence, it is highly reliable and ensures internal consistency. The correct item-total correlation values ranged from 0.527 to 0.580 which are higher than 0.30, indicating that these four items measure the same construct of UGC. The value for  $\alpha$  has been checked for deleted items to verify sensitivity. None of the items was deleted based on the low alpha level in the case of deleted items. The statistical analysis represents a substantially higher value than 0.60. The value of the four items is higher than 0.60, indicating that the questions are adequate.

Table 4. 9: Reliability test of Instrument (User Generated Content)

| Reliability Test   |                            |                                |                                   |                                  | Overall |
|--|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| User Generated Content   | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Correlated Item Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted | 0.751   |
| The reviews, ratings, and recommendations provided by people through visual eWOM influence my perception of HORECA services and their offerings.                     | 12.5800                    | 3.254                          | .527                              | .702                             |         |
| The user-generated content related to HORECA services shared through visual eWOM helps me gather authentic and reliable info.  | 12.6500                    | 3.258                          | .580                              | .674                             |         |
| The user-generated content shared through visual eWOM creates a sense of community and engagement, making me feel connected and inspired to explore HORECA services. | 12.7100                    | 3.203                          | .543                              | .693                             |         |
| The user-generated visual content, such as photos and videos, provides me with a realistic portrayal of the atmosphere and experiences in HORECA services            | 12.6600                    | 3.121                          | .533                              | .700                             |         |



The visual eWOM using Instagram has been tested in Table 4.10 with four items, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value accounted for 0.774. Hence, it is highly reliable and ensures internal consistency. The correct item-total correlation values ranged from 0.505 to 0.645. which are higher than 0.30, indicating that these four items measure the same construct of the Visual eWOM using Instagram. The value for  $\alpha$  has been checked for deleted items to verify sensitivity. None of the items was deleted based on the low alpha level in the case of deleted items. The statistical analysis represents a substantially higher value than 0.60. The value of the four items is higher than 0.60, indicating that the questions are adequate.

Table 4. 10: Reliability test of Instrument (Visual eWOM)

| Reliability Test  |                            |                                |                                   |                                  | Overall |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Visual eWOM   | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Correlated Item Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted |         |
| The user-generated content and feedback shared by other Instagram users significantly impact my perception of HORECA services and their offerings.                  | 11.7067                    | 5.399                          | .586                              | .708                             | 0.774   |
| The insights and recommendations shared by influencers and popular Instagram accounts significantly influence my perception of HORECA services and their offerings. | 12.0267                    | 4.494                          | .645                              | .676                             |         |
| The user-generated content related to HORECA services shared on Instagram helps me gather authentic and reliable info.  | 11.6433                    | 5.956                          | .577                              | .719                             |         |
| Hashtags used by users and Pin location of content shared on Instagram provide a reliable reflection when discovering new HORECA services and experiences.          | 11.8933                    | 5.647                          | .505                              | .749                             |         |

The consumer intention has been tested in Table 4.11 with four items, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value accounted for 0.769. Hence, it is highly reliable and ensures internal consistency. The correct item-total correlation values ranged from 0.482 to 0.625 which are higher than 0.30, indicating that these four items measure the same construct of consumer intention. The value for  $\alpha$  has been checked for deleted items to verify sensitivity. None of the items was deleted based on the low alpha level in the case of deleted items. The statistical analysis represents a substantially higher value than 0.60. The value of the four items is higher than 0.60, indicating that the questions are adequate.

Table 4. 11: Reliability test of Instrument (Consumer Intention)

| Reliability Test  |                            |                                |                                   |                                  | Overall |
|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| Consumer Intention  | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Correlated Item Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha If Item Deleted | 0.769   |
| The visual eWOM content reflecting enjoyable activities and attractions in HORECA services motivates me to plan a trip to experience them myself. | 12.9333                    | 3.099                          | .482                              | .759                             |         |
| The recommendations and endorsements from other tourists through visual eWOM impact my intention to choose HORECA services for my travel plans.   | 12.7400                    | 2.755                          | .625                              | .685                             |         |
| The positive feedback shared through visual eWOM about HORECA services influences my intention to visit and explore them.                         | 12.6167                    | 2.913                          | .567                              | .716                             |         |
| The positive reviews and ratings shared through visual eWOM influence my intention to prioritize HORECA services over other travel options.       | 12.7300                    | 2.659                          | .611                              | .692                             |         |

### 4.3 Frequency Distribution

Frequency distribution provides a summary of the distribution of the values in the dataset and helps to identify trends, patterns, and central tendencies. The first variable is pertinent to information quality, as mentioned in Table 4.12, where the participants were asked four questions. More than 48% of people agreed that reviews and recommendations, the information provided by visuals on Instagram, visual eWOM in reels or posters, and timeliness of information in visual eWOM regarding HORECA tourism are trustworthy, accurate, comprehensive, and shared at the right time, respectively.

Table 4. 12: Frequency Distribution (Information Quality)

| Information Quality   | SD  | D   | N    | A    | SA   | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|--------------------|
| The reviews and recommendations about HORECA tourism services that people share through pictures and videos are TRUSTWORTHY.                                  | 1   | 1.7 | 13   | 59.7 | 24.7 | 4.05 | 0.72               |
| Information provided by visuals on Instagram in the form of stories, reels, and posters regarding HORECA tourism services is ACCURATE.                        | 0.7 | 5.3 | 16   | 52.7 | 25.3 | 3.96 | 0.82               |
| Visual eWOM in stories, reels, and posters offers a COMPREHENSIVE view of HORECA tourism services.  | 1   | 4.7 | 15   | 55.3 | 24   | 3.96 | 0.81               |
| I agree with the timeliness of information in visual eWOM in the form of stories, reels and posters about HORECA tourism services (shared at the RIGHT TIME.) | 0.3 | 3.3 | 19.3 | 48   | 29   | 4.02 | 0.80               |

The variable in Table 4.13 represents the information credibility, for which the participants were asked four questions. More than 50% of respondents agreed that information credibility shared through visual eWOM in reels and posters regarding

HORECA tourism services is reliable, favorable, and develops trust and confidence in customers.

Table 4. 13: Frequency Distribution (information credibility)

| Information Credibility  | SD  | D   | N    | A    | SA   | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|--------------------|
| The information credibility shared by people in the form of stories, reels and posters regarding visual eWOM for HORECA tourism services is RELIABLE.                      | 0.3 | 3.7 | 17.7 | 53.3 | 25   | 3.99 | 0.77               |
| The information in the form of stories, reels and posters regarding visual eWOM about HORECA tourism services can be relied upon to make tourism decisions MORE FAVORABLE. | 0.7 | 2   | 11   | 51   | 35.3 | 4.18 | 0.75               |
| I have CONFIDENCE in the credibility of information shared in the form of stories, reels and posters regarding HORECA tourism services.                                    | 0.3 | 4   | 17   | 50   | 28.7 | 4.02 | 0.80               |
| I TRUST the visual eWOM of HORECA tourism services.  | 0.3 | 3.7 | 14   | 50   | 32   | 4.09 | 0.79               |

The variable in Table 4.14 represents the website quality for which four questions have been asked to each participant. The website quality distribution demonstrates that more than 40% of respondents agreed that websites for HORECA tourism services are user-friendly and easy to navigate, visually attractive, provide relevant and up-to-date information, and an easy-to-book process.

Table 4. 14: Frequency Distribution (Website Quality)

| Website Quality   | SD  | D   | N    | A    | SA   | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|--------------------|
| The websites for HORECA tourism services are USER-FRIENDLY and EASY TO NAVIGATE.                              | 0.3 | 1   | 5.3  | 49   | 44.3 | 4.36 | 0.66               |
| The websites for HORECA tourism services are VISUALLY ATTRACTIVE.   | 0.3 | 2.7 | 6.3  | 40.7 | 50   | 4.37 | 0.75               |
| The websites for HORECA tourism services provide RELEVANT and UP-TO-DATE INFO on promotions and travel deals. | 0.7 | 2   | 11.3 | 51.7 | 34.3 | 4.17 | 0.75               |
| The websites for HORECA tourism services provide an EASY BOOKING PROCESS.                                     | 0.3 | 2   | 16   | 48   | 33.7 | 4.12 | 0.76               |

The variable in Table 4.15 represents the motivation for which four questions have been asked from each respondent. The motivation distribution demonstrates that more than 45% of respondents agreed that positive feedback, captivating visuals, written stories, excitement and enthusiasm shared by people through visual eWOM motivate, increase desire, motivate to explore, and inspire to visit HORECA services, respectively.

Table 4. 15: Frequency Distribution (Motivation)

| Motivation  | SD  | D | N   | A    | SA   | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|-----|---|-----|------|------|------|--------------------|
| The positive feedback shared by people through visual eWOM MOTIVATES ME to visit HORECA services.                                 | 0.3 | 2 | 9.7 | 45.3 | 42.7 | 4.28 | 0.74               |
| Seeing captivating visuals and photographs of HORECA services shared through visual eWOM increases my desire to visit them.       | 0.3 | 1 | 4.7 | 39.7 | 54.3 | 4.46 | 0.66               |
| The written stories and narratives shared by people through visual eWOM about HORECA services motivate me to explore them myself. | 0.7 | 2 | 14  | 45   | 38.3 | 4.18 | 0.79               |
| The excitement and enthusiasm expressed by others through visual eWOM regarding HORECA services inspired me to plan a visit.      | 0.7 | 2 | 12  | 46.7 | 38.7 | 4.20 | 0.77               |

The variable in Table 4.16 represents the innovativeness, for which the respondents have been asked four questions. The innovativeness distribution demonstrates that more than 41% of respondents agreed that innovative features, unique experiences, novel and innovative concepts, and distinctive concepts shared through visual eWOM enhance customer interest and appeal to visit HORECA services.

Table 4. 16: Frequency Distribution (Innovativeness)

| Innovativeness   | SD  | D   | N   | A    | SA   | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|--------------------|
| Airbnb recently introduced the Barbie mansion house. The innovative features and offerings shared through visual eWOM enhance my interest in visiting HORECA services.                                   | 0.3 | 3   | 9.7 | 50.7 | 36.3 | 4.19 | 0.75               |
| I am more interested in HORECA services for my travel plans when I see creative and unique experiences shared through visual eWOM.   | 0.3 | 3   | 7.7 | 40.3 | 48.7 | 4.34 | 0.77               |
| Experiencing novel and imaginative concepts like a treehouse setting dining or underwater dining (check the picture below) shared through visual eWOM enhances my interest in exploring HORECA services. | 0.3 | 1.7 | 5   | 41   | 52   | 4.42 | 0.69               |
| Distinctive concepts in visual online recommendations related to HORECA services are APPEALING (ATTRACTIVE).   | 0.3 | 0.7 | 8   | 44.3 | 46.7 | 4.36 | 0.68               |

The variable in Table 4.17 represents the destination fascination, about which four questions have been asked of the respondents. The destination fascination distribution indicates that more than 43% of respondents strongly agreed that unique and captivating attractions, historical significance and landmarks, natural beauty and scenic landscapes, and overall charm and allure shared through eWOM visuals increase fascination, interest, and desire to visit HORECA services.

Table 4. 17: Frequency Distribution (Destination Fascination)

| Destination Fascination   | SD  | D   | N    | A    | SA   | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|--------------------|
| The UNIQUE and CAPTIVATING ATTRACTIONS shared through visual eWOM make me fascinated/interested in HORECA services.                   | 0.3 | 0.3 | 4.3  | 39.7 | 55.3 | 4.49 | 0.63               |
| The HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE and LANDMARKS shared through visual eWOM make me fascinated/interested by HORECA services.                | 0.3 | 4   | 9.3  | 41.3 | 45   | 4.26 | 0.81               |
| The NATURAL BEAUTY and scenic LANDSCAPES shared through visual eWOM make me fascinated/interested by HORECA services.                 | 0.3 | 1   | 10.3 | 44   | 44.3 | 4.31 | 0.72               |
| The OVERALL CHARM and ALLURE shared through visual eWOM of HORECA services increase my fascination/interest and desire to visit them. | 0.3 | 0.7 | 7.7  | 48   | 43.3 | 4.33 | 0.67               |

The variable in Table 4.18 represents the popularity heuristics for which the respondents have been asked four questions. The popularity heuristics distribution indicates that more than 36% of respondents agreed that the high numbers of likes, shares, engagement, widespread presence of HORECA services, perception of HORECA services, and positive reviews and recommendations shared through visual eWOM are perceived as popular among tourists, and they influence intention and perception to visit HORECA services as popular choices.

Table 4. 18: Frequency Distribution (Popularity Heuristic)

| Popularity Heuristics   | SD  | D   | N    | A    | SA   | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|--------------------|
| The HIGH NUMBER OF LIKES, SHARES and ENGAGEMENT on visual eWOM of HORECA services makes me perceive them as popular among tourists.             | 2.7 | 7   | 19   | 36   | 35.3 | 3.94 | 1.03               |
| The WIDESPREAD PRESENCE of visual eWOM about HORECA services ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS makes me perceive them as popular among tourists.    | 0.7 | 2.3 | 11.7 | 51.7 | 33.7 | 4.1  | 0.76               |
| The perception that HORECA services are popular choices among other tourists through visual eWOM influences my intention to visit them.         | 0.7 | 4   | 15.7 | 45.3 | 34.3 | 4.08 | 0.84               |
| The positive reviews and recommendations from other tourists through visual eWOM influence my perception of HORECA services as popular choices. | 0.3 | 2.3 | 7    | 41.7 | 48.7 | 4.36 | 0.74               |

The variable in Table 4.19 represents the destination brand image for which four questions have been asked of the respondents. The destination brand image distribution demonstrates that more than 40% of respondents agreed that the unique and distinctive identity, positive brand image, consistent and positive messaging and brand image shared through visual eWOM developed interest, and positive perception, and created a sense of overall trust and confidence regarding HORECA services.

Table 4. 19: Frequency Distribution (Destination Brand Image)

| Destination Brand Image   | SD  | D   | N    | A    | SA   | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|--------------------|
| The UNIQUE and DISTINCTIVE identity associated with the brand image of HORECA services captured in visual eWOM makes me more interested in visiting them.                   | 0.3 | 1   | 10   | 40.7 | 48   | 4.35 | 0.72               |
| The strong and positive brand image portrayed through visual eWOM enhances my perception of HORECA services as desirable places to visit.                                   | 0.3 | 3.7 | 14.3 | 44.7 | 37   | 4.14 | 0.81               |
| The consistent and positive messaging shared through visual eWOM about the brand image of HORECA services contributes to my positive perception of their quality and value. | 0.7 | 3   | 10   | 46.3 | 40   | 4.22 | 0.79               |
| The brand image presented through visual eWOM creates a sense of trust and confidence in the overall experience and offerings of HORECA services.                           | 0.3 | 4   | 8.7  | 49.3 | 37.7 | 4.20 | 0.78               |

The variable in Table 4.20 represents the user-generated content for which four questions have been asked from the respondents. The user-generated content distribution shows that more than 45% of respondents agreed that user-generated content consisting of reviews, ratings, and recommendations shared through visual eWOM influence perception, help in gathering authentic info, help portray a realistic atmosphere and feel connected and inspired towards HORECA services.

Table 4. 20: Frequency Distribution (User Generated Content)

| User Generated Content   | SD  | D   | N    | A    | SA   | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|--------------------|
| The reviews, ratings, and recommendations people provide through visual eWOM influence my perception of HORECA services and their offerings.                         | 0.3 | 2.7 | 8.3  | 45.3 | 43.3 | 4.28 | 0.75               |
| The user-generated content related to HORECA services shared through visual eWOM helps me gather authentic and reliable info.  | 0.3 | 1.7 | 10   | 52   | 36   | 4.21 | 0.71               |
| The user-generated content shared through visual eWOM creates a sense of community and engagement, making me feel connected and inspired to explore HORECA services. | 0.3 | 2.7 | 12.3 | 50.3 | 34.3 | 4.15 | 0.76               |
| The user-generated visual content, such as photos and videos, provides me with a realistic portrayal of the atmosphere and experiences in HORECA services            | 0.7 | 2.7 | 8.3  | 50.3 | 37.7 | 4.20 | 0.79               |

The variable in Table 4.21 represents the visual eWOM for which four questions have been asked from the respondents. The Visual eWOM using Instagram distribution indicates that more than 38% of respondents agreed that user-generated content, insights, recommendations, and pin location of content shared by other Instagram users and influencers develop perceptions, help to gather reliable information, and discover new HORECA services and experiences.

Table 4. 21: Frequency Distribution (visual eWOM)

| Visual eWOM using Instagram   | SD  | D   | N    | A    | SA   | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|--------------------|
| The user-generated content and feedback shared by other Instagram users significantly impact my perception of HORECA services and their offerings.                  | 2.7 | 4   | 11   | 48.7 | 33.3 | 4.05 | 0.94               |
| The insights and recommendations shared by influencers and popular Instagram accounts significantly influence my perception of HORECA services and their offerings. | 4.7 | 7.7 | 20   | 40.3 | 26.3 | 3.73 | 1.13               |
| The user-generated content related to HORECA services shared on Instagram helps me gather authentic and reliable info.  | 0.7 | 3.3 | 13.3 | 49.3 | 33.3 | 4.11 | 0.80               |
| Hashtags used by users and the Pin location of content shared on Instagram provide a reliable reflection when discovering new HORECA services and experiences.      | 0.7 | 9   | 22.7 | 38.7 | 29   | 3.86 | 0.95               |

The variable in Table 4.22 represents the consumer intention for which four questions have been asked from the respondents. The consumer intention distribution indicates that more than 44% of respondents agreed that visual eWOM content, including activities, other tourists' visuals, positive feedback shared, and positive ratings, influences customers' intention to prioritize and visit HORECA services over other travel options.

Table 4. 22: Frequency Distribution (Consumer Booking Intentions)

| Consumer Intention  | SD  | D   | N    | A    | SA   | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|--------------------|
| The visual eWOM content reflecting enjoyable activities and attractions in HORECA services motivates me to plan a trip to experience them.      | 0.7 | 1   | 12.7 | 61.7 | 24   | 4.07 | 0.68               |
| The recommendations and endorsements from other tourists through visual eWOM impact my intention to choose HORECA services for my travel plans. | 0.3 | 1.3 | 9    | 50   | 39.3 | 4.26 | 0.70               |
| The positive feedback shared through visual eWOM about HORECA services influences my intention to visit and explore them.                       | 0.7 | 1   | 4.7  | 46   | 47.7 | 4.39 | 0.68               |
| The positive reviews and ratings shared through visual eWOM influence my intention to prioritize HORECA services over other travel options.     | 0.3 | 1.7 | 11   | 44   | 43   | 4.27 | 0.74               |

### 4.3.1 Differences between Generation Y and Generation Z

The following table 4.23 shows the mean and standard deviation between the 'Y' and 'Z' generations. The mean states the average value of a variable within groups. The mean value serves as the measure of central tendency for the variables, while the standard deviation informs about the spread around the mean value. The low standard deviation value indicates less dispersion around the mean or consistent and stable variable. On the contrary, the high standard deviation value indicates the significant dispersion around the mean value

or across central tendency. The mean value of the eleven variables in the table shows their consistency, central tendency, or characteristics of individual variables within the group. Differences between generation Y and generation Z have been presented by making comparisons of each variable with their mean and standard deviation.

The mean value and standard deviation of information quality across generations 'Y' and 'Z' include ( $\mu=4.06$ ), ( $\mu=3.95$ ), ( $SD=.59$ ), and ( $SD=.64$ ) respectively. The mean value and standard deviation of information credibility across generations 'Y' and 'Z' include ( $\mu=4.17$ ), ( $\mu=4.00$ ), ( $SD=.57$ ), and ( $SD=.60$ ) respectively. The mean value and standard deviation of website quality across generations 'Y' and 'Z' include ( $\mu=4.33$ ), ( $\mu=4.19$ ), ( $SD=.48$ ) and ( $SD=.57$ ) respectively. The mean value and standard deviation of motivation across generations 'Y' and 'Z' include ( $\mu=4.35$ ), ( $\mu=4.22$ ), ( $SD=.50$ ) and ( $SD=.62$ ) respectively. The mean value and standard deviation of innovativeness across generations 'Y' and 'Z' include ( $\mu=4.36$ ), ( $\mu=4.30$ ), ( $SD=.50$ ) and ( $SD=.56$ ) respectively. The mean value and standard deviation of destination fascination across generations 'Y' and 'Z' include ( $\mu=4.46$ ), ( $\mu=4.25$ ), ( $SD=.45$ ) and ( $SD=.55$ ) respectively. The mean value and standard deviation of popularity heuristics across generations 'Y' and 'Z' include ( $\mu=4.17$ ), ( $\mu=4.10$ ), ( $SD=.57$ ) and ( $SD=.68$ ) respectively. The mean value and standard deviation of the destination image across generations 'Y' and 'Z' include ( $\mu=4.23$ ), ( $\mu=4.22$ ), ( $SD=.57$ ) and ( $SD=.61$ ), respectively. The mean value and standard deviation of user-generated content across generations 'Y' and 'Z' include ( $\mu=4.24$ ), ( $\mu=4.19$ ), ( $SD=.52$ ) and ( $SD=.61$ ) respectively. The mean value and standard deviation of the visual eWOM using Instagram across generations 'Y' and 'Z' include ( $\mu=3.99$ ), ( $\mu=3.89$ ), ( $SD=.72$ ) and ( $SD=.75$ ) respectively. The mean value and standard deviation of the consumer intention across generations 'Y' and 'Z' include ( $\mu=4.28$ ), ( $\mu=4.22$ ), ( $SD=.48$ ) and ( $SD=.58$ ) respectively.

Table 4. 23: Difference between "Generation Y" and "Generation Z"

| Variable Name           | Generation Y   |                           | Generation Z   |                           |
|-------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
|                         | Mean ( $\mu$ ) | Standard Deviation (S.D.) | Mean ( $\mu$ ) | Standard Deviation (S.D.) |
| Information Quality     | 4.06           | .59                       | 3.95           | .64                       |
| Information Credibility | 4.17           | .57                       | 4.00           | .60                       |
| Website Quality         | 4.33           | .48                       | 4.19           | .57                       |
| Motivation              | 4.35           | .50                       | 4.22           | .62                       |
| Innovativeness          | 4.36           | .50                       | 4.30           | .56                       |



|                         |      |     |      |     |
|-------------------------|------|-----|------|-----|
| Destination Fascination | 4.46 | .45 | 4.25 | .55 |
| Popularity Heuristics   | 4.17 | .57 | 4.10 | .68 |
| Destination Image       | 4.23 | .57 | 4.22 | .61 |
| User-generated content  | 4.24 | .52 | 4.19 | .61 |
| Visual eWOM             | 3.99 | .72 | 3.89 | .75 |
| Consumer Intention      | 4.28 | .48 | 4.22 | .58 |

#### 4.4 Bivariate Correlation

The Pearson Bivariate correlation given in Table 4.24 shows the strength of the association between consumer intention and all explanatory variables including information quality, information credibility, website quality, motivation, innovativeness, destination brand image, destination fascination, popularity heuristics, and user-generated content. The correlation coefficient of information quality, information credibility, website quality, and destination fascination against customer intention reported a coefficient between ( $r=.591$ ) and ( $r=.628$ ), indicating a moderate association among themselves with a value coefficient closer to 0.5.

On the other hand, the correlation coefficient of the visual eWOM, motivation, innovativeness, popularity heuristics, UGC, and destination image against customer intention reported a coefficient between ( $r=.660$ ) and ( $r=.724$ ), which indicates a strong association among themselves with a value coefficient closer to the value of 1.

Table 4. 24: Pearson Bivariate correlation

|      | CINT   | INFQ   | VWOM   | CRED   | WEBQ   | MOT    | INN    | DESF   | POPH   | DESI   | UGC    |
|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| CINT | 1      | .628** | .660** | .616** | .591** | .672** | .676** | .625** | .683** | .724** | .707** |
| INFQ | .628** | 1      | .604** | .800** | .633** | .669** | .626** | .547** | .576** | .568** | .598** |
| VWOM | .660** | .604** | 1      | .635** | .535** | .616** | .629** | .559** | .698** | .707** | .688** |
| CRED | .616** | .800** | .635** | 1**    | .654** | .694** | .619** | .542** | .540** | .574** | .619** |
| WEBQ | .591** | .633** | .535** | .654   | 1      | .648** | .617** | .614** | .489** | .554** | .550** |
| MOT  | .672** | .669** | .616** | .694** | .648** | 1      | .721** | .686** | .648** | .696** | .685** |
| INN  | .676** | .626** | .629** | .619** | .617** | .721** | 1      | .677** | .680** | .673** | .684** |
| DESF | .625** | .547** | .559** | .542** | .614** | .686** | .677** | 1      | .599** | .599** | .627** |
| POPH | .683** | .576** | .698** | .540** | .489** | .648** | .680** | .599** | 1      | .734** | .728** |
| DESI | .724** | .568** | .707** | .574** | .554** | .696** | .673** | .599** | .734** | 1      | .687** |
| UGC  | .707** | .598** | .688** | .619** | .550** | .685** | .684** | .627** | .728** | .687** | 1      |

## 4.5 Regression Analysis of Models

The linear Ordinary least square (OLS) regression has been conducted to test 9 models, where testing aimed to analyze the statistically significant relationship between nine variables on visual eWOM using Instagram. The regression analysis has been used to test the impact of information quality, information credibility, website quality, popularity heuristics, destination brand image, destination fascination, motivation, innovativeness, and user-generated content on visual eWOM using Instagram.

Table 4.25 below represents the B-value, standard error, coefficients of B-value, t-statistics, and significance level for each variable linear association. The P-value is based on the hypothesis; if the P-value is less than 0.05, it shows the significance level of the interval. The t-statistics also serve based on the hypothesis where the t-stat is greater than 2, demonstrating the significant level of the interval. The P-value of information quality accounted for  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which is the significance level of the interval having a predictor value ( $\beta = .720$ ) in supporting the hypothesis that information quality is significantly associated with the visual eWOM using Instagram. Similarly, model 2 represents information credibility. The P-value accounted for  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which is less than the standard significance level, indicating that information credibility has been affected significantly with ( $\beta = .792$ ) on the visual eWOM using Instagram. Moreover, model 3 represents the website's quality. The P-value accounted for  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which is less than the standard significance level, indicating that website quality has affected significantly with ( $\beta = .734$ ) the visual eWOM using Instagram.

Further, model 4 represents motivation, which P-value shows accounted for  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which is less than the standard significance level, indicating that motivation has affected significantly ( $\beta = .795$ ) the visual eWOM using Instagram. Besides, model 5 represents innovativeness. The P-value accounted for  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which is less than the standard significance level, indicating that innovativeness has affected significantly with ( $\beta = .866$ ) the visual eWOM using Instagram. Model 6 represents the destination fascination, with a P-value of  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which is less than the standard significance level, indicating that innovativeness has significantly affected ( $\beta = .796$ ) the visual eWOM using Instagram.

In addition, model 7 represents the popularity heuristics, whose P-value accounted for  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which is less than the standard significance level, indicating that popularity heuristics has affected significantly with ( $\beta = .813$ ) the visual eWOM using Instagram. Model 8 represents the destination image whose P-value accounted for  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which is less

than the standard significance level, indicating that the destination image has significantly affected ( $\beta=.879$ ) the visual eWOM using Instagram. Finally, model 9 represents the user-generated content whose P-value accounted for  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which is less than the standard significance level, indicating that user-generated content has significantly affected the visual eWOM using Instagram with ( $\beta=.893$ ).

Table 4. 25: Ordinary Least Square Regression to generate models

| Model Name | Predicting Variable     | R-Value | R Square Value | Significance (p-Value) | Beta Value | Interpretation |
|------------|-------------------------|---------|----------------|------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Model 1    | Information Quality     | .604    | .365           | .000                   | .720       | Significant    |
| Model 2    | Information Credibility | .635    | .403           | .000                   | .792       | Significant    |
| Model 3    | Website Quality         | .535    | .286           | .000                   | .734       | Significant    |
| Model 4    | Motivation              | .616    | .379           | .000                   | .795       | Significant    |
| Model 5    | Innovativeness          | .629    | .396           | .000                   | .866       | Significant    |
| Model 6    | Destination Fascination | .559    | .313           | .000                   | .796       | Significant    |
| Model 7    | Popularity Heuristics   | .698    | .487           | .000                   | .813       | Significant    |
| Model 8    | Destination Image       | .707    | .449           | .000                   | .879       | Significant    |
| Model 9    | User Generated Content  | .688    | .473           | .000                   | .893       | Significant    |

## Discussion

Linear regression analysis has been used to test each model where all of the variables, and eWOM antecedents indicated a significant relationship with the visual eWOM using Instagram. The first model is related to the information which shows a significant association with the visual eWOM. Findings from the studies of Sardar et al. (2021); Cho and Shin (2020); and Ukpabi and Karjaluo (2018) validated the study's findings and suggested that information quality is significantly associated with the customer's booking intention towards HORECA services. First, the study by Sardar et al. (2021) states that customer purchase intention can be influenced by eWOM generated by the comments of consumers on social networking sites. Notwithstanding, the eWOM information adoption is influenced by various factors. The study also investigates the impact of eWOM antecedents including information quality and other related factors that influence customer's booking intention through the mediating role of eWOM adoption. For this purpose, the primary data has been collected from university students in Karachi, Pakistan. The findings demonstrate that information quality significantly affected the eWOM adoption. Additionally, eWOM

adoption also significantly mediated between the information quality and customer's booking intention.

The second study by Cho and Shin (2020) has examined the structural relationship among SNS engagement, customer brand engagement, and SNS characteristics. The primary data based on the survey panel has been used to verify the hypotheses. The results demonstrate that information quality was positively associated with SNS participation, and SNS participation positively affected the eWOM adoption. Additionally, SNS participation and eWOM adoption affected behavioral engagement. The third study by Ukpabi and Karjaluoto (2018) investigated the eWOM drivers that play a crucial role in travel planning as travelers evaluate travel products based on past reviews. The findings indicated that content, source quality, user, and response are the critical determinants of eWOM.

Furthermore, the findings from the studies of Ben (2019), Daowd et al. (2021), Savitri et al. (2022), Lundin (2021), and Leon, Loi, and Woon (2021) validated this study's findings indicating that information/source credibility through visual eWOM has a favorable influence on customer's booking intention towards HORECA services.

## 4.6 Mediating role of Visual eWOM using Instagram

### 4.6.1 Model 1

Hayes' output of regression values is given below in table 4.26 in which R-Square for this model 1 is 0.36, which indicates that the information quality has 36% of the variation in predicting visual eWOM using Instagram.

Table 4. 26: Model 1 Hayes Process Macros (Information Quality)

| Model Summary                     | Outcome Variable            | Model               | Coeff | T     | p   | LLCI | ULCI |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|
| R-Sq= .36<br>F= 170.97<br>P= .000 | Visual eWOM using Instagram | Constant            | 1.05  | 4.74  | .00 | .619 | 1.49 |
|                                   |                             | Information Quality | .72   | 13.07 | .00 | .611 | .82  |

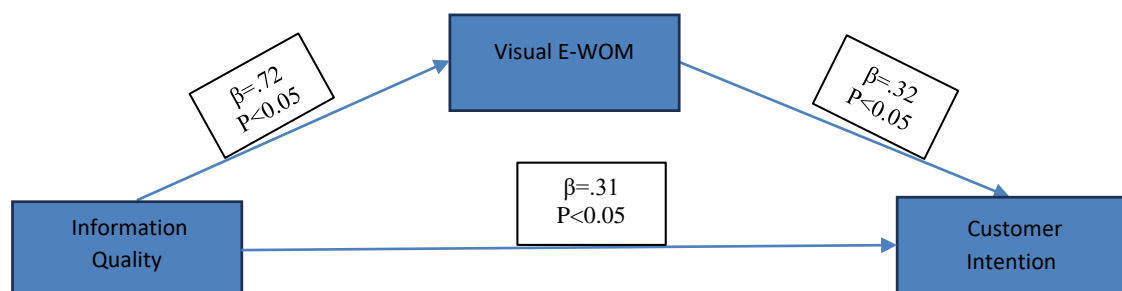


Figure 4. 7: Model 1 Testing mediating role of Visual eWOM using Instagram with information quality

F- The F-value is 170.97, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. The  $\beta = .72$ ,  $t = 13.07$ , and  $P\text{-value} = .00$ . Hence, the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'a' where information quality is significantly associated with the visual eWOM using Instagram.

Table 4.27 below shows the R-Square for this model is 0.51, indicating that information quality and visual eWOM using Instagram explains 51% of the variations in consumer intention. F- The F-value is 160.27, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. Moreover,  $\beta = .32$ ,  $t = 8.76$ , and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'b' where the visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant association with consumer intention. In the path 'c'  $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $t = 7.15$ , the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , indicating that information quality is directly associated with consumer intention. Moreover,  $\beta = .23$ , and there is no '0' between LLCI and ULCI, which indicates that the visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant indirect mediating effect between the information quality and consumer intention. Therefore, the information quality directly and indirectly affects consumer intention.

Table 4. 27: Direct and Indirect Effect in Model 1 (Information Quality)

| Model Summary                  | Outcome Variable   | Model                       | Coeff | T     | P   | LLCI | ULCI |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|
| R-Sq=.51<br>F=160.27<br>P= .00 | Consumer Intention | Constant                    | 1.72  | 11.74 | .00 | .43  | 2.01 |
|                                |                    | Visual eWOM using Instagram | .32   | 8.76  | .00 | .25  | .39  |
|                                |                    | Information Quality (D.E.)  | .31   | 7.15  | .00 | .22  | .40  |
|                                |                    | Information Quality (I.E.)  | .23   |       |     | .15  | .32  |

## Discussion

Four studies by Tran, Nguyen, and Luong 2022; Zhao et al. 2020; Perera, Nayak, and Long 2019; Filieri and McLeay, 2013) validate the current study findings by suggesting the significant influence of information quality on customer intention through visual eWOM. The first study demonstrates that information quality and eWOM have a complex relationship and can be negative and positive. However, high-quality information can positively affect the visual eWOM adoption and increase credibility and trust, leading to favorable recommendations and a positive reputation for a brand. The findings given in terms of review quality which enhance the brand credibility thereafter create a brand trust. Yet, the information quality becomes uneven in various platforms which undermine the consumer trust and adversely affect the purchase intention. Hence, the second study

examined the impact of information quality on purchase intention through eWOM. The findings demonstrate that information quality positively affects trust, which in turn positively affects the purchase intention. The third study also validates our research findings and suggests that eWOM primarily influences tourists' intentions or decisions through visual eWOM. The user-generated content, popularity of the destination, and visual heuristics affect tourists' intention to make decisions and visit informed destinations. Moreover, the study investigated the eWOM influence on e-purchase. The eWOM has been considered as the independent variable while purchase intention as the dependent variable. Using the primary data analysis, the study found that eWOM has a significant and positive impact on purchase intention. The information quality was witnessed as the crucial indicator in persuading and encouraging customers. The fourth study investigated the influence factor on information adoption of travelers from online reviews. The findings reveal that information, accuracy, information relevance, product ranking, information timeliness and information value-added are strong predictors of information adoption of travelers on accommodations.

The findings also suggest that travelers adopt both central route as information quality and peripheral route as product ranking in case of information process from online reviews. Conversely, Filieri et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between eWOM and customer booking intention towards HORECA. The findings demonstrate that eWOM primarily affected the tourist's intention and decisions through visual eWOM. The eWOM antecedents including user-generated images, visual heuristics, and popularity of destination significantly affect customer intention. However, the information quality had no impact on the customer booking intention towards HORECA services, rejecting our study's findings.

#### 4.6.2 Model 2

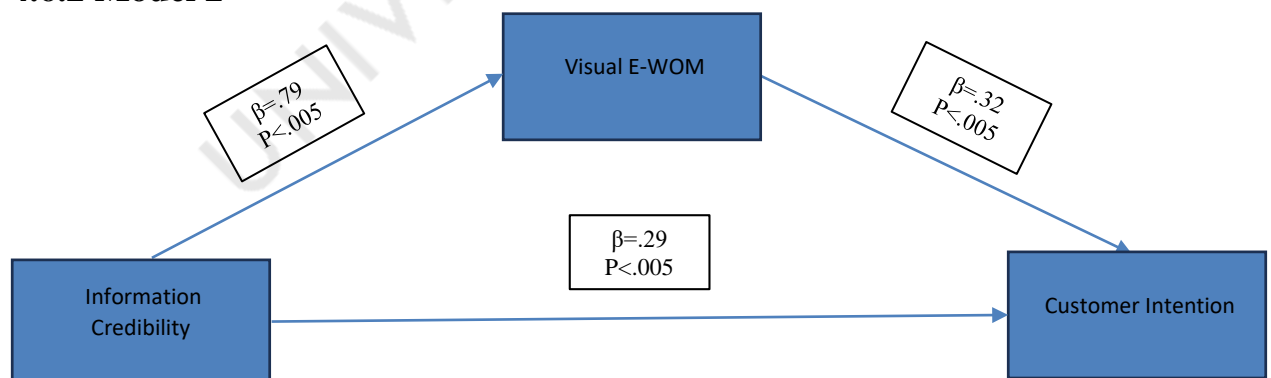


Figure 4. 8: Model 2 Testing mediating role of Visual eWOM using Instagram with Information credibility

Regression values are given below in table 4.28, and the R-Square for this model is 0.40, which indicates that the information credibility has 40% of the variance in predicting variation in explaining visual eWOM using Instagram. The F-value is 201.46, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. The  $\beta = .79$ ,  $t = 14.19$  and P-value = .00. Hence, the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'a' where information credibility is significantly associated with visual eWOM using Instagram.

Table 4. 28: Model 2 Hayes Process Macros (Information Credibility)

| Model Summary                    | Outcome Variable            | Model                   | Coeff | T     | p    | LLCI | ULCI |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| R-Sq= .40<br>F= 201.46<br>P= .00 | Visual eWOM using Instagram | Constant                | .71   | 3.09  | .002 | .25  | 1.16 |
|                                  |                             | Information Credibility | .79   | 14.19 | .00  | .68  | .90  |

Table 4.29 below shows the R-Square for this model is 0.50, which indicates that the information credibility and the visual eWOM using Instagram explain 50% of the variation in consumer intention. F- The F-value is 148.92, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. Moreover,  $\beta = .32$ ,  $t = 8.50$ , and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'b' where the visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant association with consumer intention. In the path 'c'  $\beta = .29$ ,  $t = 6.19$  and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , that indicates that information credibility has a direct significant association with consumer intention. Moreover,  $\beta = .23$ , and there is no '0' between LLCI and ULCI, which indicates that the visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant indirect mediating effect between the information credibility and consumer intention. Therefore, the information credibility directly and indirectly affects consumer intention.

Table 4. 29: Direct and Indirect Effect in Model 2 (Information Credibility)

| Model Summary                  | Outcome Variable   | Model                          | Coeff | T     | P   | LLCI | ULCI |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|
| R-Sq=.50<br>F=148.92<br>P= .00 | Consumer Intention | Constant                       | 1.73  | 11.13 | .00 | 1.42 | 2.04 |
|                                |                    | Visual eWOM using Instagram    | .32   | 8.50  | .00 | .25  | .40  |
|                                |                    | Information credibility (D.E.) | .29   | 6.19  | .00 | .20  | .39  |
|                                |                    | Information credibility (I.E.) | .23   |       |     | .1   | .32  |

## Discussion

Findings from several studies (Thomas, Wirtz, and Weyerer, 2019; Ladhari and Michaud, 2015; Savitri et al. 2022; Lundin, 2021) align with our study's findings, indicating that information credibility through visual eWOM significantly influences customer's booking intention towards HORECA. In the first study, the information credibility determinants and their impact on consumer intention have been examined. The findings demonstrate that product rating, quantity and completeness of online reviews and argument quality and accuracy, and website reputation significantly affect the review credibility, positively influencing consumer purchase intention. The findings substantiate our study's findings by suggesting that information credibility significantly affects purchase intention. The second study investigated eWOM for its impact on hotel booking intentions. The result demonstrates the significant effect of eWOM on the hotel booking intentions of the customer. This result is also accepted or aligned with our findings in that the role of social media platforms incorporating Facebook also significantly mediated between eWOM or online reviews and customer intention. The online reviews or comments significantly influenced the attitude and trust of the hotel. Social media also has a significant role in decision making towards HORECA services. The third study also examined the relationship between eWOM and customer purchasing intention. It has stressed information credibility and its effect on eWOM information for consumers. The findings demonstrate that credibility is crucial in determining the customer's booking intention towards HORECA. The last study investigated the role of trustworthiness which can be considered as a proxy for source credibility in eWOM communication and its impact on customers' booking intention. The findings demonstrate that source credibility is significantly associated with the customer's booking intention towards HORECA services. Additionally, eWOM significantly mediated between source credibility and consumer purchase intention of a hotel stay.

### 4.6.3 Model 3

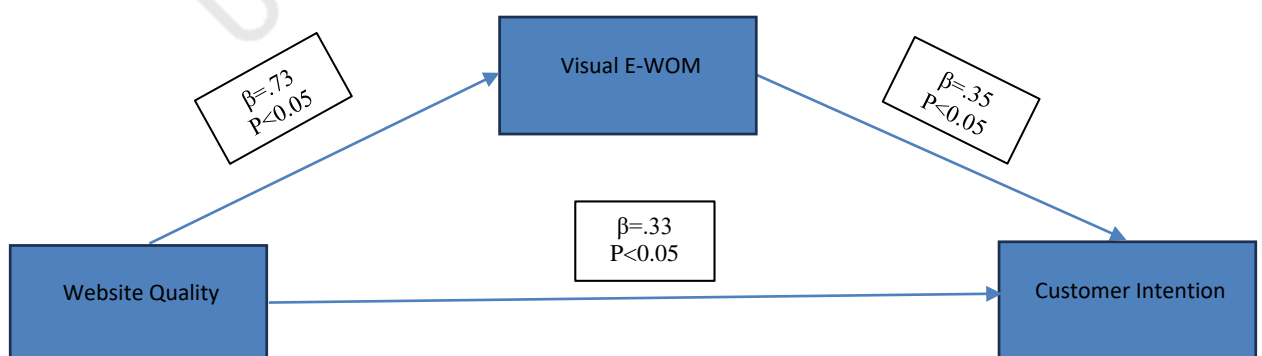


Figure 4. 9: Model 3 Testing mediating role of Visual eWOM using Instagram with Website Quality



Regression values are given below in the table 4.30 in which R-Square for this model is 0.28, which indicates that the website quality has 28% of the variance in explaining visual eWOM using Instagram. The F-value is 119.36, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. The  $\beta = .73$ ,  $t = 10.92$  and  $P\text{-value} = .00$ . Hence, the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'a' where website quality is significantly associated with the visual eWOM using Instagram.

Table 4. 30: Model 3 Hayes Process Macros (Website Quality)

| Model Summary                    | Outcome Variable            | Model           | Coeff | T     | p    | LLCI | ULCI |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| R-Sq= .28<br>F= 119.36<br>P= .00 | Visual eWOM using Instagram | Constant        | .81   | 2.81  | .005 | .24  | 1.38 |
|                                  |                             | Website Quality | .73   | 10.92 | .00  | .60  | .86  |

The table below 4.31 shows the R-Square for this model is .51, indicating that website quality and visual eWOM using Instagram both explain 51% of the variation in consumer intention. F- The F-value is 157.83, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. Moreover,  $\beta = .35$ ,  $t = 10.09$ , and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'b' where the visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant association with consumer intention. In the path 'c'  $\beta = .33$ ,  $t = 6.95$ , and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , that indicates that website quality is directly associated with consumer intention. Moreover,  $\beta = .25$ , and there is no '0' between LLCI and ULCI, which indicates that the visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant indirect mediating effect between website quality and consumer intention. Therefore, website quality has both direct and indirect effects on consumer intention.

Table 4. 31: Direct and Indirect Effect in Model 3 (Website Quality)

| Model Summary                  | Outcome Variable   | Model                       | Coeff | T     | P   | LLCI | ULCI |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|
| R-Sq=.51<br>F=157.83<br>P= .00 | Consumer Intention | Constant                    | 1.44  | 8.23  | .00 | 1.10 | 1.79 |
|                                |                    | Visual eWOM using Instagram | .35   | 10.09 | .00 | .25  | .42  |
|                                |                    | Website Quality (D.E.)      | .33   | 6.95  | .00 | .23  | .42  |
|                                |                    | Website Quality (I.E.)      | .25   |       |     | .17  | .34  |

## Discussion

Findings from several studies (Nurhadi, Suryani, and Fauzi 2023; Balacenko, 2011; Sparks and Browning, 2011; Setyaning and Nugroho, 2020) validated our study's findings, indicating that website quality has favorable influence on customer's booking intention

towards HORECA services through visual eWOM. The first study investigated the website's strength for brand image, eWOM, and purchase decisions that was conducted in Indonesia, Surabaya, and Jakarta. The rationale behind the study was conducted to understand the role of social media and websites, and its impact on purchase decisions and brand awareness. The findings demonstrate that website quality positively impacts brand awareness in social media, brand image, and purchase intention. The second study mentioned above examined the impact of website quality on online buyers' perception in the hotel industry. The results demonstrate that ease of booking and ease of information search were perceived as the essential website quality attributes in online booking. Additionally, the website quality enhances the brand awareness which in turn affects eWOM which significantly mediated the impact on purchase intention. The growing reliance on the internet creates possibilities to make choices about tourism products which prompt research on eWOM in the decision making. For this purpose, the third study investigated the roles of critical factors that influence consumer choice and perceptions of trust. The findings demonstrate that consumers appear to be more influenced by the negative information from eWOM. Notwithstanding, the positive information increases consumer trust and intention to book. The findings suggest that consumers rely on easy-to-process information to evaluate hotel-based reviews. Therefore, eWOM significantly influenced consumer decision making while booking stemmed from consumer purchase intentions. The fourth study stated that website quality and eWOM engagement are interrelated concepts. The website quality affects the user's experience and can influence the visual eWOM engagement. The findings of the fourth study indicated that website quality including content and design significantly affected the customer's sharing of visual eWOM, such as videos and photos on social media platforms. It was also found that website quality including customer reviews and menu information enhances visual eWOM engagement. A high-quality website can enhance the interest of customers in addition to retaining them. Finally, the last study reported that website quality affected participation, and participation influenced eWOM leading to increased customer booking intention towards HORECA services.

#### 4.6.4 Model 4

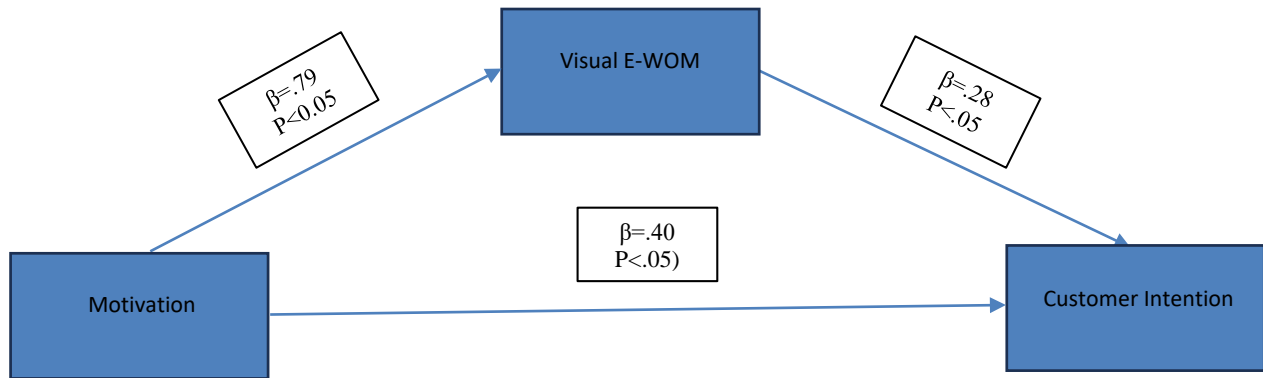


Figure 4. 10: Model 4 Testing mediating role of Visual eWOM using Instagram with consumer motivation

Regression values are given below in the table 4.32 in which R-Square for this model is 0.37, which indicates that the motivation has 37% of the variation in predicting visual eWOM using Instagram. The F-value is 181.75, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. The  $\beta=.79$ ,  $t=13.48$ , and  $P\text{-value}=.00$ . Hence, the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'a' where motivation is significantly associated with the visual eWOM using Instagram.

Table 4. 32: Model 4 Hayes Process Macros (Consumer motivation)

| Model Summary                    | Outcome Variable            | Model      | Coeff | T     | P    | LLCI | ULCI |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| R-Sq= .37<br>F= 181.75<br>P= .00 | Visual eWOM using Instagram | Constant   | .53   | 2.08  | .003 | .03  | 1.03 |
|                                  |                             | Motivation | .79   | 13.48 | .00  | .67  | .91  |

Table 4.33 shows the R-Square for this model is .54, which indicates that the motivation and visual eWOM using Instagram explains 54% of the variation in explaining consumer intention. F- The F-value is 181.16, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. Moreover,  $\beta=.28$ ,  $t=8.04$ , and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'b' where visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant association with consumer intention. Path 'c'  $\beta=.40$ ,  $t=8.6$ , and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , indicating that motivation is directly associated with consumer intention. Moreover,  $\beta=.23$ , and there is no '0' between LLCI and ULCI, which indicates that visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant indirect mediating effect between motivation and consumer intention. Therefore, motivation has both direct and indirect effects on consumer intention.

Table 4. 33: Direct and Indirect Effect in Model 4 (Consumer motivation)

| Model Summary                  | Outcome Variable   | Model                       | Coeff | T    | P   | LLCI | ULCI |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------|------|-----|------|------|
| R-Sq=.54<br>F=181.16<br>P= .00 | Consumer Intention | Constant                    | 1.38  | 8.68 | .00 | 1.07 | 1.70 |
|                                |                    | Visual eWOM using Instagram | .28   | 8.04 | .00 | .21  | .36  |
|                                |                    | Motivation (D.E.)           | .40   | 8.6  | .00 | .31  | .49  |
|                                |                    | Motivation (I.E.)           | .23   |      |     | .15  | .31  |

## Discussion

Findings from the studies of Koufie and Kesa 2020; Syed, Shah, and Ahmad 2021; Lee and Tussyadiah 2010); Hussain, Song, and Niu 2019; Aramendia-Muneta 2022) all validated our findings, indicating that motivation through visual eWOM has a favorable influence on customer's intention towards HORECA services. The first study demonstrates that motivation for sharing dining experiences on social media has been discussed in determining millennial consumers' purchase intention and behavior. The results validate the effect of eWOM on millennial behavior and purchase intention. The most critical motivation factor was the food and service quality in the choice of restaurant. The leading motivation involves altruism for sharing positive and negative word of mouth on social media. The combined effect of social media platforms, access to information, and millennial consumers for online engagement contribute to transforming the hospitality industry. The second study's findings also validated our study's hypothesis and findings, which state that social media and motivation have a significant role in building consumer purchase intention.

The third study explored the role of intrinsic motivation on consumer intention. Self-determination theory has been used to address competence, relatedness, and autonomy. The findings demonstrate the significant association between the motivation and consumer intention that accept our results. According to the fourth study, motivation is more relevant to social media. The results indicate that multiple social media platforms have a significant impact on readers' evaluation. Moreover, the study's findings demonstrate that e-commerce provides significant opportunities in web-based marketing to shift consumer behavior and to replace conventional WOM. The fifth study investigated the visual information influence on motivational eWOM in the travel industry. The findings demonstrate that people increasingly rely on internet information and visual information, such as photos and videos as a powerful tool in shaping their motivation for travel.

The sixth study discussed the motivation and behavior on social media platforms while sharing eWOM on different social media platforms. The data was collected from 30 experienced travelers through interviews related to motivation for eWOM, their emotions, and platform features. The findings suggest that tourists have different motivations for eWOM depending on their experiences. Tourists who have positive emotions share various experiences, record their lives, express their emotions, build their self-image, and help others. However, the negative emotions of travelers indicated seeking revenge, reminding others regarding their experiences, negative emotions, and seeking help. Therefore, the findings indicated the significant impact of eWOM on customers' behavior and booking intention towards HORECA services. Finally, the last study explored the intrinsic motivation behind positive fake eWOM on social media. The findings demonstrated that fake positive eWOM is primarily driven by satisfaction of social intention and social needs. The social enhancement and social comparison positively affected the eWOM.

#### 4.6.5 Model 5

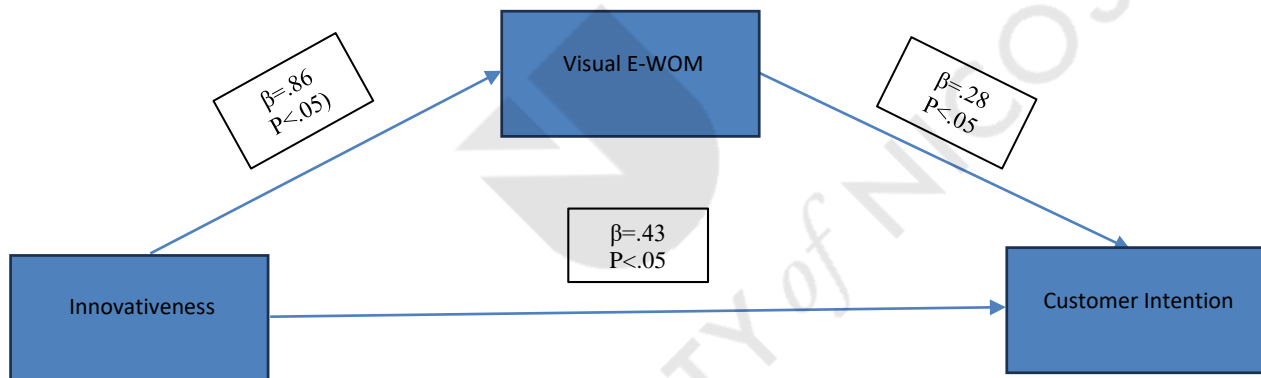


Figure 4. 11: Model 5 Testing mediating role of Visual eWOM using Instagram with Innovativeness

Regression values are given below in the table 4.34 in which R-Square for this model is .39, indicating that innovativeness explains 39% of the variation in explaining visual eWOM using Instagram. F- The F-value is 195.38, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. The  $\beta=.86$ ,  $t=13.97$  and  $P\text{-value}=.00$ . Hence, the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'a' where innovativeness has a significant association with the visual eWOM using Instagram.

Table 4. 34: Model 5 Hayes Process Macros (Innovativeness)

| Model Summary                    | Outcome Variable            | Model          | Coeff | T     | p   | LLCI | ULCI |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|
| R-Sq= .39<br>F= 195.38<br>P= .00 | Visual eWOM using Instagram | Constant       | .18   | .68   | .49 | -.34 | .71  |
|                                  |                             | Innovativeness | .86   | 13.97 | .00 | .74  | .98  |

Table 4.35 below shows the R-Square for this model is 0.54, which indicates that the innovativeness and visual eWOM using Instagram explain 54% of the variation in consumer intention. F- The F-value is 180.64, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. Moreover,  $\beta = .28$ ,  $t = 7.75$ , and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'b' where the visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant association with consumer intention. In the path 'c'  $\beta = .43$ ,  $t = 8.6$ , and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , that indicates that innovativeness has a direct significant association with consumer intention. Moreover,  $\beta = .24$ , and there is no '0' between LLCI and ULCI, which indicates that the visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant indirect mediating effect between innovativeness and consumer intention. Therefore, innovativeness has both direct and indirect effects on consumer intention.

Table 4. 35: Direct and Indirect Effect in Model 5 (Innovativeness)

| Model Summary                  | Outcome Variable   | Model                       | Coeff | T    | P   | LLCI | ULCI |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------|------|-----|------|------|
| R-Sq=.54<br>F=180.64<br>P= .00 | Consumer Intention | Constant                    | 1.25  | 7.36 | .00 | .92  | 1.59 |
|                                |                    | Visual eWOM using Instagram | .28   | 7.75 | .00 | .21  | .35  |
|                                |                    | Innovativeness (D.E.)       | .43   | 8.60 | .00 | .33  | .53  |
|                                |                    | Innovativeness (I.E.)       | .24   |      |     | .16  | .33  |

## Discussion

Findings from the studies by (Khan and Wahab 2023; Hmoud et al. 2022; Chen and Chen, 2016; Nguyen and Chaudhuri 2019; Ali, Hussin and Dahlan 2019; Habib, Hamadneh, and Khan 2021) all validated the current study findings, indicating that innovativeness through visual eWOM has a favorable influence on customer's intention towards HORECA services. The first study investigated the perceived innovativeness to determine its impact on customer engagement. The data has been collected through surveys using a three-wave time-lagged design from 564 respondents related to various restaurants. The results demonstrate that innovativeness is directly and indirectly associated with customer engagement, which supports our findings.

In the second study, social media has to be considered to have a critical role in influencing customer purchase decisions. It also provides companies with opportunities to enhance sales and customer base by encouraging attitudes towards a brand. The factors influencing purchase intention based on social media have been investigated. The proposed model has been investigated using partial least squares. The findings demonstrate that attractiveness

impacts the consumer purchase intention through the mediating role of attitude towards a brand.

In the third study, innovation is essential to attain a competitive advantage. Social media provides innovation in the whole innovation process with 2.0 web technologies. The influence happened because the spread of their opinions and experiences in the eWOM format shapes the brand image. It is essential to make new products viral that are required to be investigated, and hence the fourth study examined the eWOM instances on social media. The results suggest that more innovative products generated more eWOM volume during less positive sentiments. Besides, the results suggest that product innovativeness affects eWOM metrics in different product categories. The product's innovativeness can enhance the product success measured by the purchase intention through the mediating role of eWOM channels including forums and microblogs. In the fifth study, the research objective is to investigate the factors that lead to the consumer engagement with eWOM through the lens of consumer behavior and motives. The findings demonstrate that innovativeness and other factors identified to determine the eWOM engagement which in turn affect the consumer intention.

The sixth study has investigated the impact of eWOM in the service industry and its influence on innovativeness, marketing strategies, and customer's booking intention. The results are based on primary data collected from a well-known restaurant, indicating that innovativeness, consumer behavior, and marketing strategies are significantly associated with eWOM.

#### 4.6.6 Model 6

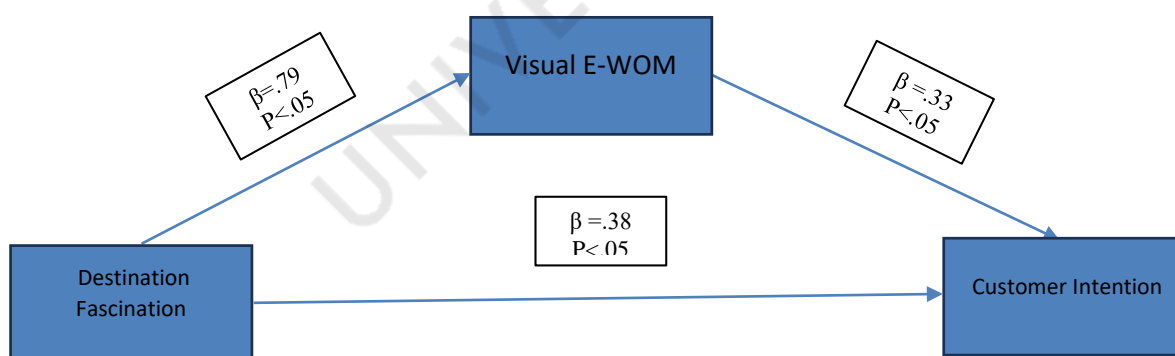


Figure 4. 12: Model 6 Testing mediating role of Visual eWOM using Instagram with Destination Fascination

Regression values are given below in the table 4.36 in which R-Square for this model is 0.31, which indicates that the destination fascination explains 31% of the variation in explaining visual eWOM using Instagram. The F-value is 135.51, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$

shows that the model is statistically significant. The  $\beta=.79$ ,  $t=11.64$  and  $P\text{-value}=.00$ . Hence, the  $P\text{-value}$  is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'a' where destination fascination is significantly associated with the visual eWOM using Instagram.

Table 4. 36: Model 6 Hayes Process Macros (Destination Fascination)

| Model Summary                   | Outcome Variable            | Model                   | Coeff | T     | P   | LLCI | ULCI |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|
| R-Sq=.31<br>F= 135.51<br>P= .00 | Visual eWOM using Instagram | Constant                | .47   | 1.59  | .11 | -.11 | 1.06 |
|                                 |                             | Destination Fascination | .79   | 11.64 | .00 | .66  | .93  |

Table 4.37 below shows the R-Square for this model is 0.53, indicating that Instagram's destination fascination and visual eWOM using Instagram both explain 53% of the variation in consumer intention. F- The F-value is 168.27, and the  $P\text{-value}$   $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. Moreover,  $\beta=.33$ ,  $t=9.4$ , and the  $P\text{-value}$  is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'b' where the visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant association with consumer intention. In the path 'c',  $\beta=.38$ ,  $t=7.75$ , and the  $P\text{-value}$  is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates that destination fascination has a direct significant association with consumer intention. Moreover,  $\beta=.26$ , and there is no '0' between LLCI and ULCI, which indicates that the visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant indirect mediating effect between destination fascination and consumer intention. Therefore, destination fascination has both direct and indirect effects on consumer intention.

Table 4. 37: Direct and Indirect Effect in Model 6 (Destination Fascination)

| Model Summary                  | Outcome Variable   | Model                          | Coeff | T    | P   | LLCI | ULCI |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|-------|------|-----|------|------|
| R-Sq=.53<br>F=168.27<br>P= .00 | Consumer Intention | Constant                       | 1.27  | 7.02 | .00 | .91  | 1.63 |
|                                |                    | Visual eWOM using Instagram    | .33   | 9.44 | .00 | .26  | .39  |
|                                |                    | Destination Fascination (D.E.) | .38   | 7.75 | .00 | .28  | .48  |
|                                |                    | Destination Fascination (I.E.) | .26   |      |     | .18  | .35  |

## Discussion

Findings from the studies of (Beerli and Martín, 2004; Liu et al., 2017; Stankov et al., 2019; Alebaki, Liontakis and Koutsouris, 2020; Aktan et al. 2022; Kankhuni and Ngwira, 2022; Siang, Yang and Liu, 2020) all validated our study's findings indicating that destination fascination through visual eWOM has a favorable influence on customers intention towards HORECA services. In the first study, the factors influencing the



destination image that form the post-visit images of the destination have been explored. The results reveal that sources of information influence the evaluation of pre- and post-visit, perception building, accumulated tourist experiences, and sociodemographic attributes. This evidence substantiates our study findings by suggesting that destination fascination has a role in consumer intention. In the second study, destination fascination has been discussed based on attention restoration theory that provides the literature review to sort five dimensions. In-depth interviews conducted from 13 participants with 30 items under six dimensions. Moreover, 470 survey responses have been collected. The findings demonstrate that six dimensions were significantly associated with destination loyalty using a test of criterion-related validity. The destination fascination can be applied in managing tourism experiences with their positioning and use information flow for monitoring works. Destination fascination can also be applied in managing tourism experience by destination management organizations.

Many factors associated with the destination fascination are crucial that derive the consumer intention and their decision making to visit a particular HORECA destination. In the third study, traditional Bulgarian food has been assessed as the choice factor for the tourists' destination. The data was collected from the survey of respondents, comprising a sample size of 150. The findings revealed that destination fascination is characterized by the cultural heritage, the historical resources, and the local cuisine. These factors influencing the consumption of traditional foods include the drinking habits of destination residents, local cuisine accessibility, and destination image. Therefore, the findings validated our study's findings by suggesting that destination fascination is associated with consumer purchase intention. The fourth study demonstrates that destination fascination is essential in the HORECA industry due to its impact on customers' decision-making. The destination that captivates customers provides personalized, unforgettable, and unique experiences, leading to positive eWOM, repeat visits, and customer retention.

Online reviews and eWOM has the significance to shape the consumer behavior towards purchase intention in any sector. The fifth study states that eWOM is a critical source of information for travelers while considering a destination. The individuals are likely to share emotions and positive experiences with the rest of the people through electronic channels. The positive eWOM about a particular place or destination enhances its attractiveness and attracts more visitors, hence increasing destination fascination. Moreover, the positive eWOM can enhance the destination's reputation and attract more tourists seeking memorable and unique experiences. On the contrary, the negative eWOM can reduce a

destination's appeal and decrease the destination's fascination. The sixth study investigated the role of natural soundscape in building destination fascination. The primary data was collected from the African destination on Instagram. The findings demonstrate that natural soundscape engagement positively affects the tourist's perception leading to unforgettable experiences and eWOM. Besides, the results indicate that memorable tourism experiences positively affect eWOM and satisfaction.

#### 4.6.7 Model 7

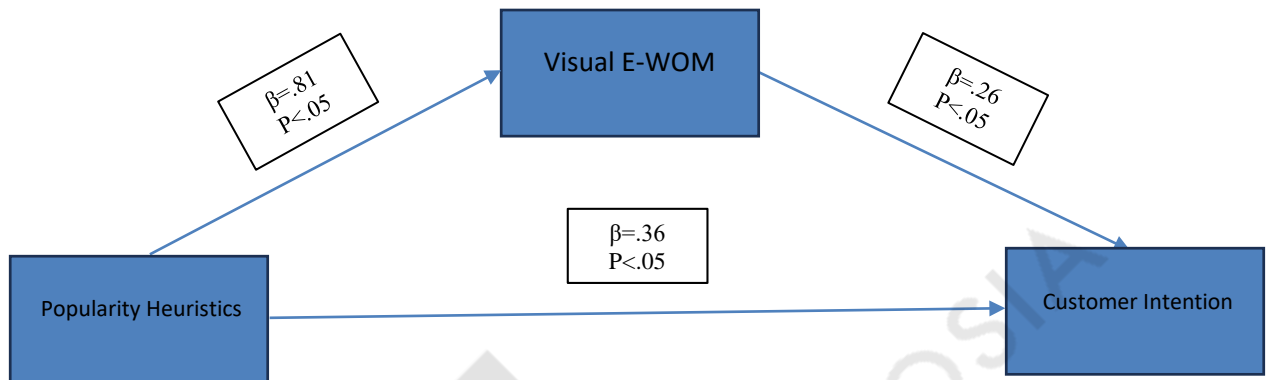


Figure 4. 13: Model 7 Testing mediating role of Visual eWOM using Instagram with Popularity Heuristics

Regression values are given below in the table 4.38 in which R-Square for this model is 0.48, indicating that popularity heuristics explains 48% of the variation in visual eWOM using Instagram. The F-value is 282.43, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. The  $\beta = .81$ ,  $t = 16.80$  and  $P\text{-value} = .00$ . Hence, the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'a' where popularity heuristics has a significant association with the visual eWOM using Instagram.

Table 4. 38: Model 7 Hayes Process Macros (Popularity Heuristics)

| Model Summary                    | Outcome Variable            | Model                 | Coeff | T     | p    | LLCI | ULCI |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| R-Sq= .48<br>F= 282.43<br>P= .00 | Visual eWOM using Instagram | Constant              | .57   | 2.84  | .004 | .17  | .97  |
|                                  |                             | Popularity Heuristics | .81   | 16.80 | .00  | .71  | .90  |

Table 4.39 below shows the R-Square for this model is .53, indicating that Instagram's popularity heuristics and visual eWOM using Instagram both explain 53% of the variation in consumer intention. F- The F-value is 169.36, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. Moreover,  $\beta = .26$ ,  $t = 6.46$ , and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'b' where the visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant association with consumer intention. In the path 'c',  $\beta = .36$ ,  $t = 7.83$  and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates that popularity heuristics has a direct significant association with

consumer intention. Moreover,  $\beta=.21$  and there is no '0' between LLCI and ULCI, which indicates that the visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant indirect mediating effect between popularity heuristics and consumer intention. Therefore, the popularity of heuristics directly and indirectly affects consumer intention.

Table 4. 39: Direct and Indirect Effect in Model 7 (Popularity Heuristics)

| Model Summary                 | Outcome Variable   | Model                        | Coeff | T     | P   | LLCI | ULCI |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|
| R-Sq=.53<br>F=169.36<br>P=.00 | Consumer Intention | Constant                     | 1.69  | 11.88 | .00 | 1.41 | 1.98 |
|                               |                    | Visual eWOM using Instagram  | .26   | 6.46  | .00 | .18  | .34  |
|                               |                    | Popularity Heuristics (D.E.) | .36   | 7.83  | .00 | .27  | .46  |
|                               |                    | Popularity Heuristics (I.E.) | .21   |       |     | .12  | .31  |

## Discussion

Findings from the studies of (Tan et al. 2021; Filieri et al. 2021; Lopes et al. 2023; Wang, Li, and Yang 2021; Katharina and Vilma 2012; Lu and Chi 2018) all validated our study's findings indicating that popularity heuristics through visual eWOM has a favorable influence on customer's intention towards HORECA services. The first study states that the growing trend of social media advertising and digital users becomes the essential channel for sustaining and attracting consumers. The heuristic systematic model has been used to investigate the impact of systematic advertisement cues, including heuristic cues, persuasiveness, and informativeness, on consumer purchase intention. The findings demonstrate that persuasiveness and informativeness significantly contribute to consumer purchase intention and awareness. The results also suggest the co-occurrence of systematic information processing and heuristics in the social media advertising context. The findings validated our study result, which indicates the positive significant association of popularity heuristics with consumer intention.

The second study states that the use of eWOM is increasing for deciding on various products and services. The verbal and visual eWOM cues have been investigated to determine their impact on consumer intention and behavior. The results suggest that eWOM affects tourists' decisions and intentions through visual cues. Moreover, performance, visuals, and popularity heuristics influence the tourists' intention to visit the destination and its attraction, further validating our findings. The third study examined the moderating role of advertisement between social media advertising and consumer intention. The data analysis demonstrated that mass-consumption products are the most purchased through

online social media advertising. The results further state that relevant attributes to advertising and online advertising on social networks significantly influence customers' purchase intention. As accommodation sharing is an increasing trend across the globe with the development of the sharing economy. For this purpose, the fourth study investigated the relationship between the eWOM attributes of popularity. Three heuristic attributes, such as house, review, and host were identified as influencing accommodation popularity.

The findings demonstrate the significant impact of heuristics attributes on customer's intentions through visual eWOM. The fifth study explored the relationship between (anonymous and semi-anonymous eWOM) and its impact on customer's intention and popularity heuristics. The findings demonstrate that customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services are significantly associated with online reviews. The study found that customers derive their attitudes towards HORECA by considering the opinions of others, online reviews, and comparing different restaurants based on information. Finally, the sixth study investigated the impact of cues on food choice decisions in restaurants through judgment heuristics. The findings highlighted that server-delivered scarcity messages affected evaluation and purchase intention; however, menu-based cues did not affect purchase intention. Additionally, story-based reviews and vivid favored men's item choice, and restaurant expectations increased purchase likelihood.

#### 4.6.8 Model 8

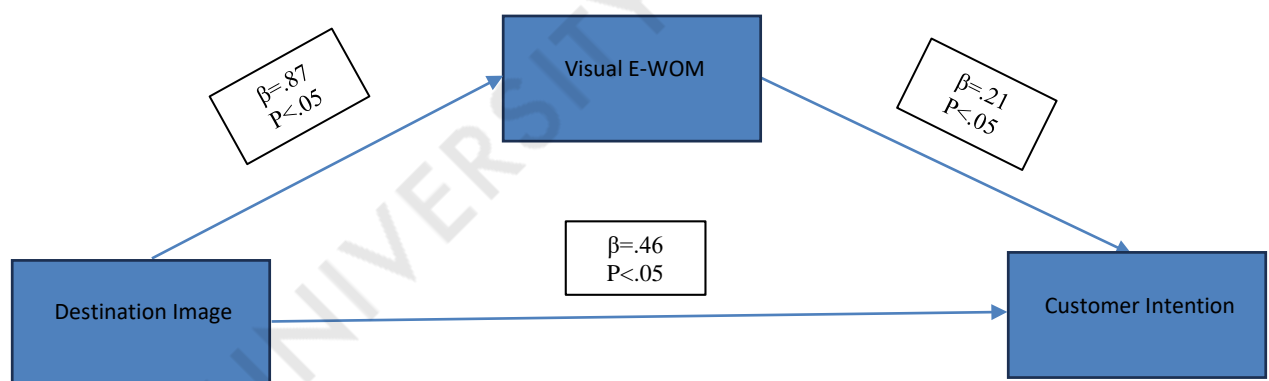


Figure 4. 14: Model 8 Testing mediating role of Visual eWOM using Instagram with Destination Image

Regression values are given below in the table 4.40, in which the R-Square for this model is .49, which indicates the destination image explains that 49% of the variation in visual eWOM using Instagram. F- The F-value is 297.10, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. The  $\beta=.87$ ,  $t=17.83$  and  $P\text{-value}=.00$ . Hence, the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'a' where the destination image is significantly associated with the visual eWOM using Instagram.

Table 4. 40: Model 8 Hayes Process Macros (Destination Image)

| Model Summary                  | Outcome Variable            | Model             | Coeff | T     | p   | LLCI | ULCI |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|
| R-Sq=.49<br>F= 297.10<br>P=.00 | Visual eWOM using Instagram | Constant          | .22   | 1.01  | .30 | -.20 | .65  |
|                                |                             | Destination Image | .87   | 17.83 | .00 | .77  | .97  |

Table 4.41 below shows the R-Square for this model is 0.56, indicating that destination image and visual eWOM using Instagram both explain 56% of the variation in consumer intention. F- The F-value is 195.48, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. Moreover,  $\beta=.21$ ,  $t=5.52$ , and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'b' where visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant association with consumer intention. In the path 'c',  $\beta=.46$ ,  $t=9.53$  and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates that the destination image has a direct significant association with consumer intention. Moreover,  $\beta=.19$  and there is no '0' between LLCI and ULCI, which indicates that the visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant indirect mediating effect between destination image and consumer intention. Therefore, the destination image directly and indirectly affects consumer intention.

Table 4. 41: Direct and Indirect Effect in Model 8 (Destination Image)

| Model Summary                 | Outcome Variable   | Model                       | Coeff | T    | P   | LLCI | ULCI |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-------|------|-----|------|------|
| R-Sq=.56<br>F=195.48<br>P=.00 | Consumer Intention | Constant                    | 1.42  | 9.64 | .00 | 1.13 | 1.71 |
|                               |                    | Visual eWOM using Instagram | .21   | 5.52 | .00 | .13  | .29  |
|                               |                    | Destination Image (D.E.)    | .46   | 9.53 | .00 | .36  | .56  |
|                               |                    | Destination Image (I.E.)    | .19   |      |     | .10  | .28  |

## Discussion

Findings from the studies of (Wantara and Irawati 2021; Heras-Pedrosa et al. 2020 ; Huang and Liu 2018; Shafiee, Tabaeian and Khoshfetrat 2020; Stankov et al., 2019; Duman and Sacli, 2023; Noori, 2019; El-Baz, Elseidi and El-Maniaway 2022), all validated our study's findings indicating that destination brand image through visual eWOM has a favorable influence on customer's booking intention towards HORECA services. The Islamic spot witnessed a decrease in visits due to COVID-19, and after a year the government decided to open these spots with safety provisions. Hence, the first study examined the impact of destination image on revisit intention and customer satisfaction in Indonesia. The data was collected through a questionnaire using SEM to test the hypotheses. The finding

shows that destination image plays a crucial role in tourist satisfaction and has a positive impact on the intention of visiting tourists again.

The second study was conducted using a mixed-method approach, which included the official social media accounts of people belonging to the regions of Valencia, Catalonia and Andalusia. The results exhibit that social media platforms were considered strategic for achieving tourists' engagement and enhancing brand image, further validating our findings.

The third study investigated the brand image impact in the hotel sector on customer's decision-making. The findings demonstrate that brand image plays a critical role in the decision-making process for accommodation. The guests associate with certain features and decide based on images that appeal to them when they encounter a brand name. Furthermore, the branding helps entrepreneurs related to HORECA to maintain their profitability, raise the average price, generate more revenue, increase their financial performance, and achieve desirable profitability.

The fourth study examined the perceived tourist image that affects customer satisfaction and helps in destination selection. The brand image shapes customer's perception of the goods and services provided and succeeds in the industry's competition. The fifth study investigated the impact of brand image on tourists' destination selection. The findings show that destination selection can be influenced by the cultural heritage, the local cuisine, and the country's resources. Besides, the study contributes to the marketing potential of the tourism industry by highlighting local food as a critical aspect of the HORECA sector in tourists' destination selection.

Finally, the last study investigated the relationship between destination selection, destination image, and local cuisine elements and determined the destination image impact on their relationship. The results indicate that destination brand image and local cuisine significantly affected destination selection. In addition, the local cuisine significantly impacts the destination brand image, while destination image significantly mediates between local cuisine and destination selection. The findings concluded on the fact that destination brand image significantly affects the food industry.

#### 4.6.9 Model 9

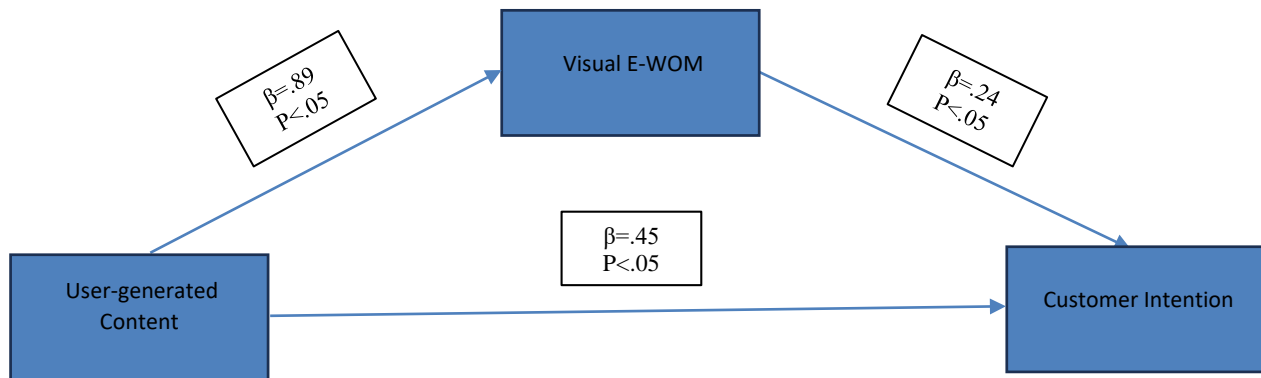


Figure 4. 15: Model 9 Testing mediating role of Visual eWOM using Instagram with UGC

Regression values are given below in the table 4.42 in which R-Square for this model is .47, indicating that the user-generated content explains 47% of the variation in visual eWOM using Instagram. F- The F-value is 267.82, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. The  $\beta = .89$ ,  $t = 16.36$  and  $P\text{-value} = .00$ . Hence, the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'a' where user-generated content is significantly associated with the visual eWOM using Instagram.

Table 4. 42: Model 9 Hayes Process Macros (User-generated content)

| Model Summary                    | Outcome Variable             | Model                  | Coeff | T     | p   | LLCI | ULCI |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|
| R-Sq= .47<br>F= 267.82<br>P= .00 | Visual eWOM using Instagram. | Constant               | .17   | .74   | .45 | -.28 | .63  |
|                                  |                              | User-generated content | .89   | 16.36 | .00 | .78  | 1.00 |

Table 4.43 below shows the R-Square for this model is .55, indicating that user-generated content and visual eWOM using Instagram both explain 55% of the variation in consumer intention. F- The F-value is 186.90, and the P-value  $0.00 < 0.05$  shows that the model is statistically significant. Moreover,  $\beta = .24$ ,  $t = 6.21$ , and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates path 'b' where visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant association with consumer intention. In the path 'c',  $\beta = .45$ ,  $t = 9.0$  and the P-value is  $0.00 < 0.05$ , which indicates that user-generated content has a direct significant association with consumer intention. Moreover,  $\beta = .21$  and there is no '0' between LLCI and ULCI, which indicates that the visual eWOM using Instagram has a significant indirect mediating effect between user-generated content and consumer intention. Therefore, user-generated content has both direct and indirect effects on consumer intention.

Table 4. 43: Direct and Indirect Effect in Model 9 (User Generated Content)

| Model Summary                  | Outcome Variable   | Model                         | Coeff | T    | P   | LLCI | ULCI |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-------|------|-----|------|------|
| R-Sq=.55<br>F=186.90<br>P= .00 | Consumer Intention | Constant                      | 1.42  | 9.64 | .00 | 1.13 | 1.71 |
|                                |                    | Visual eWOM using Instagram   | .24   | 6.21 | .00 | .16  | .31  |
|                                |                    | User-generated content (D.E.) | .45   | 9.00 | .00 | .35  | .55  |
|                                |                    | User-generated content (I.E.) | .21   |      |     | .13  | .30  |

## Discussion

Findings from the studies of (Yasir et al. 2021; Manap and Adzharudin 2013; Germon, Sokolova and Bam 2017; Xu, Lovett and Law 2022; Chiappa, Gallarza and Dall’Aglia 2018; Bilo, Budimir and Hrustex 2022; Najar and Rather 2021; Xu et al. 2021) all validated our study’s findings that user-generated content through visual eWOM has a favorable influence on customer’s intention towards HORECA services.

The first study investigated user-generated content to determine its impact on customer intention towards the hospitality industry. The indirect relationship between the variables has been examined. The result reveals that user-generated content significantly impacts customer intention related to the hospitality industry. The second study examined social media and whether leverage on UGC by social media services strategically positions tourism-based products and services. The research has focused on the role of social media in the tourism and hospitality industry. The results state that UGC contributes as the additional source of information that travelers consider as the information search instead of considering it as the only source of information.

The third study examined the use of Instagram user-generated content by travel agencies and its impact on community engagement. Instagram-related data has been collected from three sources: Voyage Privé, Airbnb, and Very Chic. The results demonstrate that successful content is the one shared by regular users and non-Instagram bloggers exposing their travel experiences. The fourth study’s findings suggest that UGC affects the tourist’s decision-making process, and it strives with conventional travel information providers. The study examined the factors influencing the traveler’s decision-making while choosing a suitable destination. The study uses SEM and collected data comprising 425 respondents from Shanghai, China. The results show that UGC positively influences destination image formation. The UGC is significantly associated with the customer’s



decision-making. The use of social media content was found to be a critical factor in building destination images, mediated by destination images.

The fifth study reported that negative comments and reviews can harm the tourism-related business reputation. The seventh study examines the UGC impact on tourist behavior through the mediating role of guests' attitudes in Jammu and Kashmir, India. The findings demonstrate that UGC can impact tourists' emotions toward their destination and provide basic factual information related to travel products and destinations, hence increasing the knowledge. Additionally, guest attitude also significantly mediated between UGC and customer booking intention towards HORECA services.

Finally, the last study examined the structural relationship among destination image, satisfaction, revisit intention, and WOM publicity, and their impact on tourists' retention behavior. The findings show that UGC indirectly affects tourist retention by satisfaction and destination image. In addition, the results show that emotional and factual UGC positively affected tourists' perceived value of the destination, but emotional UGC has a more significant influence.

## **4.7 Differences between “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”**

### **4.7.1 Independent Sample T-Test**

Levene's test for equality of variance and t-test for equality of means are statistical tests used to assess whether the means or variances significantly differ between two or more groups. The P-value of information quality in Table 4.44 is  $.42 > .05$ , more than the significance level, indicating that the variance between the two generations is equal. Moreover, the t-stat of information quality is  $1.5 < 2$ , which is less than the standard value and indicates that the means between the two generations are equal.

The P-value of information credibility in Table 4.44 is  $.57 > .05$ , more than the significance level, indicating that the variance between the two generations is equal. Also, the t-stat of information credibility is  $2.3 > 2$ , greater than the standard value and indicates that the means between the two generations are unequal.

The P-value of website quality in Table 4.44 is  $.69 > .05$ , more than the significance level, indicating that the variance between the two generations is equal. Furthermore, the t-stat of website quality is  $2.2 > 2$ , greater than the standard value, indicating that the means between the two generations are unequal.

The P-value of motivation in Table 4.44 is  $.13 > .05$ , which is more than the significance level, indicating that the variance between the two generations is equal. Moreover, the t-stat of motivation is  $1.9 = 2$ , equal to the standard value and indicating that the two generations' mean is unequal.

The P-value of innovativeness in Table 4.44 is  $.81 > .05$ , which is more than the significance level, indicating that the variance between the two generations is equal. The t-stat of innovativeness is  $0.9 < 2$ , which is equal to the standard value and indicates that the means between the two generations are equal.

The P-value of destination fascination in Table 4.44 is  $.15 > .05$ , which is more than the significance level, indicating that the variance between the two generations is equal. Moreover, the t-stat of destination fascination is  $3.5 > 2$ , greater than the standard value, indicating that the means between the two generations are unequal.

The P-value of popularity heuristics in Table 4.44 is  $.10 > .05$ , more than the significance level, indicating that the variance between the two generations is equal. The t-stat of popularity heuristics in Table 4.44 is  $.98 < 2$ , which is less than the standard value and indicates that the means between the two generations are equal.

The P-value of the destination image in Table 4.44 is  $.76 > .05$ , which is more than the significance level, indicating that the variance between the two generations is equal. Moreover, the t-stat of the destination image is  $.11 < 2$ , which is less than the standard value and indicates that the means between the two generations are equal.

The P-value of user-generated content in Table 4.44 is  $.23 > .05$ , more than the significance level, indicating that the variance between the two generations is equal. Moreover, the t-stat of user-generated content is  $.63 < 2$ , which is less than the standard value and indicates that the means between the two generations are equal.

The P-value of the visual eWOM in Table 4.44 is  $.53 > .05$ , which is more than the significance level, indicating that the variance between the two generations is equal. Moreover, the t-stat of the visual eWOM using Instagram is  $1.05 < 2$ , which is less than the standard value and indicates that the means between the two generations are equal.

The P-value of consumer intention in Table 4.44 is  $.11 > .05$ , more than the significance level, indicating that the variance between the two generations is equal. Moreover, the t-stat of the consumer intention is  $.97 < 2$ , which is less than the standard value and indicates that the means between the two generations are equal.

Table 4. 44: Independent Sample T-Test with equal and unequal variance

|                         |                  | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | T-test for Equality of Means |         |                 |                 |                       |   |        |
|-------------------------|------------------|---|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|--------|
|                         |                  | F                                       | Sig. | T                            | Df      | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% confidence interval of the difference |        |
|                         |                  |   |      |                              |         |                 |                 |                       | Lower                                     | Upper  |
| Information Quality     | Equal variances  | .637                                    | .426 | 1.499                        | 298     | .135            | .10863          | .07249                | -.0340                                    | .2512  |
|                         | Unequal Variance |   |      | 1.513                        | 290.458 | .131            | .10863          | .07178                | -.03265                                   | .24991 |
| Information Credibility | Equal variances  | .315                                    | .575 | 2.348                        | 298     | .020            | .16180          | .06891                | .02618                                    | .29741 |
|                         | Unequal Variance |   |      | 2.362                        | 287.216 | .019            | .16180          | .06851                | .02696                                    | .29663 |
| Website Quality         | Equal variances  | .152                                    | .697 | 2.215                        | 298     | .028            | .13880          | .06266                | .01548                                    | .26212 |
|                         | Unequal Variance |   |      | 2.261                        | 296.609 | .024            | .13880          | .06138                | .01800                                    | .25959 |
| Motivation              | Equal variances  | 2.262                                   | .134 | 1.924                        | 298     | .055            | .12838          | .06674                | -.00296                                   | .25972 |
|                         | Unequal Variance |   |      | 1.971                        | 297.633 | .050            | .12838          | .06512                | .00022                                    | .25654 |
| Innovativeness          | Equal variances  | .056                                    | .813 | .907                         | 298     | .365            | .05709          | .06294                | -.06677                                   | .18095 |
|                         | Unequal Variance |   |      | .921                         | 293.826 | .358            | .05709          | .06202                | -.06497                                   | .17914 |
| Destination Fascination | Equal variances  | 2.029                                   | .155 | 3.554                        | 298     | .000            | .21226          | .05972                | .09473                                    | .32978 |
|                         | Unequal Variance |   |      | 3.641                        | 297.525 | .000            | .21226          | .05830                | .09752                                    | .32699 |
| Popularity Heuristics   | Equal variances  | 2.711                                   | .101 | .968                         | 298     | .334            | .07197          | .07431                | -.07427                                   | .21821 |
|                         | Unequal Variance |   |      | .989                         | 296.732 | .323            | .07197          | .07276                | -.07123                                   | .21517 |
| Destination Image       | Equal variances  | .086                                    | .769 | .118                         | 298     | .906            | .00825          | .06973                | -.12897                                   | .14548 |
|                         | Unequal Variance |   |      | .119                         | 290.122 | .905            | .00825          | .06908                | -.12771                                   | .14421 |
| User-generated Content  | Equal variances  | 1.391                                   | .239 | .638                         | 298     | .524            | .04261          | .06680                | -.08884                                   | .17406 |
|                         | Unequal Variance |   |      | .650                         | 296.000 | .516            | .04261          | .06553                | -.08636                                   | .17158 |
| Visual-E WOM            | Equal variances  | .390                                    | .533 | 1.059                        | 298     | .290            | .09172          | .08660                | -.07871                                   | .26215 |
|                         | Unequal Variance |   |      | 1.064                        | 286.357 | .288            | .09172          | .08617                | -.07789                                   | .26134 |

|                           |                         |       |      |      |         |      |        |        |         |        |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------|------|------|---------|------|--------|--------|---------|--------|
| <b>Consumer Intention</b> | <b>Equal variances</b>  | 2.529 | .113 | .970 | 298     | .333 | .06128 | .06315 | -.06299 | .18556 |
|                           | <b>Unequal Variance</b> |       |      | .994 | 297.483 | .321 | .06128 | .06167 | -.06007 | .18264 |

### 4.7.2 Whitney U Test

The main Whitney U test is a specified non-parametric test that is used to design the comparison of two independent groups. It is used to determine whether there is a statistical difference between two independent groups, in this study the two generations 'Y' and 'Z'.

The P-value of information quality given in Table 4.45 is .150, indicating no difference between the generation's 'Y' and 'Z' in distribution. The P-value of website quality is .069, indicating no difference between the generations 'Y' and 'Z' in distribution. The P-value of motivation is .103, indicating no difference in distribution between the generation's 'Y' and 'Z'. The P-value of innovativeness is .515, indicating no difference between generations 'Y' and 'Z' in distribution. The P-value of the popularity heuristic is .488, indicating no difference between the generation's 'Y' and 'Z' in distribution. The P-value of the destination image is .944, which indicates no difference between the generation's 'Y' and 'Z' in terms of distribution. The P-value of user-generated content is .721, indicating no difference between the generation's 'Y' and 'Z' in distribution. The P-value of the visual eWOM using Instagram is .273, indicating no difference between the generation's 'Y' and 'Z' in distribution. The P-value of consumer intention is .537, indicating no difference between the generation's 'Y' and 'Z' in distribution.

However, the P-value of information credibility is .015, which indicates a significant difference between the generation's 'Y' and 'Z' in terms of distribution. As well, the P-value of destination fascination is .000, indicating a significant difference in distribution between the two generations 'Y' and 'Z'. In practical terms, the P-value of .015 for information credibility suggests a meaningful distinction in how Generation Y and Generation Z perceive the trustworthiness of information. The P-value of .000 for destination fascination implies a substantial difference in the preferences, tastes, or interests related to travel destinations between the two generations.

Table 4. 45: Whitney U Test to Test Differences in Generation Y and Generation Z

| Sr. Number | Null Hypothesis  | Significance Value | Interpretation             |
|------------|--|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1.         | The distribution of <b>information quality</b> is the same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”.         | 0.150              | Retain the Null Hypothesis |
| 2.         | The distribution of <b>information credibility</b> is the same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”.     | 0.015              | Reject the Null Hypothesis |
| 3.         | The distribution of <b>website quality</b> is the same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”.             | 0.069              | Retain the Null Hypothesis |
| 4.         | The distribution of <b>consumer motivation</b> is the same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”.         | 0.103              | Retain the Null Hypothesis |
| 5.         | The distribution of <b>innovativeness of HORECA</b> is the same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”.    | 0.515              | Retain the Null Hypothesis |
| 6.         | The distribution of <b>destination fascination</b> is the same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”.     | 0.00               | Reject the Null Hypothesis |
| 7.         | The distribution of <b>popularity heuristics</b> is the same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”.       | 0.48               | Retain the Null Hypothesis |
| 8.         | The distribution of <b>destination images</b> is the same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”.          | 0.94               | Retain the Null Hypothesis |
| 9.         | The distribution of <b>user generated content</b> is the same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”.      | 0.721              | Retain the Null Hypothesis |
| 10.        | The distribution of <b>visual eWOM using Instagram</b> is the same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”. | 0.273              | Retain the Null Hypothesis |
| 11.        | The distribution of <b>consumer intention</b> is the same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”.          | 0.537              | Retain the Null Hypothesis |

## 4.8 Hypotheses Testing

Findings of the study show that the null hypothesis for H1 is accepted as findings propose that information quality conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services as information quality reported a moderate linear association with consumer booking intention with the coefficient of  $r=.628$ . Similarly, information quality reported a moderate linear association with visual eWOM using Instagram with the coefficient of  $r=.604$  which suggests a positive relationship between the variables. Model 1 using ordinary least square regression suggests a significant statistical relationship between information quality and visual eWOM using Instagram with a p-value less than 0.05 which is a significant level of interval with a beta value of  $\beta=.720$ . Hayes process Macros has been used to test the mediating role of visual

eWOM between information quality and customer booking intentions which shows that information quality has both direct and indirect effects on customer booking intentions. Findings from the Whitney U test suggest that the distribution of information quality is the same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”, hence there are no significant differences between the two generations when it comes to the perception of information quality.

The findings of the study show that the null hypothesis for H2 is accepted as findings propose that information credibility conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services as information credibility reported a moderate linear association with consumer booking intention with the coefficient of  $r=.628$ . Similarly, the information credibility reported a strong linear association with visual eWOM using Instagram with the coefficient of  $r=.635$  which suggests a positive relationship between the variables. Model 2 using ordinary least square regression suggests a significant statistical relationship between the information credibility and visual eWOM using Instagram with a p-value less than 0.05 which is a significant level of interval with a beta value of  $\beta=.792$ . Hayes process Macros has been used to test the mediating role of visual eWOM between the credibility of information and customer booking intentions which shows that the credibility of information has both direct and indirect effects on customer booking intentions. Findings from the Whitney U test suggest that the distribution of credibility of information is different across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”, hence there are significant differences in terms of Generation Y and Generation Z when it comes to the perception of credibility of information on Instagram with the significance value of 0.015.

The findings of the study show as well that the null hypothesis for H3 is accepted as findings propose that website quality conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services as website quality reported a moderate linear association with consumer booking intention with the coefficient of  $r=.591$ . Similarly, website quality reported a moderate linear association with visual eWOM using Instagram with the coefficient of  $r=.535$  which suggests a positive relationship between variables. Model 3 using ordinary least square regression suggests a significant statistical relationship between website quality and visual eWOM using Instagram with a p-value less than 0.05 which is a significant level of interval with a beta value of  $\beta=.734$ . Hayes process Macros has been used to test the mediating role of visual eWOM between website quality and customer booking intentions which shows that website quality has both direct and indirect effects on customer booking intentions. Findings from

Whitney U test suggest that the distribution of website quality is same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z ”, hence there are no significant differences in terms of Generation Y and Generation Z when it comes to the perception of website quality.

The findings of the study show that the null hypothesis for H4 is accepted as findings propose that motivation conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services as motivation reported a strong linear association with consumer booking intention with the coefficient of  $r=.672$ . Similarly, consumer motivation reported a moderate linear association with visual eWOM using Instagram with the coefficient of  $r=.616$  which suggests a positive relationship between the variables. Model 4 using ordinary least square regression suggests a significant statistical relationship between consumer motivation and visual eWOM using Instagram with a p-value less than 0.05 which is a significant level of interval with a beta value of  $\beta=.795$ . Hayes process Macros has been used to test the mediating role of visual eWOM between consumer motivation and customer booking intentions which shows that motivation has both direct and indirect effects on customer booking intentions. Findings from the Whitney U test suggest that the distribution of consumer motivation is the same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z ”, hence there are no significant differences in terms of Generation Y and Generation Z when it comes to the perception of motivation.

The findings of the study show that the null hypothesis for H5 is accepted as findings propose that innovativeness conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services as innovativeness reported a strong linear association with consumer booking intention with the coefficient of  $r=.676$ . Similarly, innovativeness reported a strong linear association with visual eWOM using Instagram with the coefficient of  $r=.629$  which suggests a positive relationship between the variables. Model 5 using ordinary least square regression suggests a significant statistical relationship between innovativeness and visual eWOM using Instagram with a p-value less than 0.05 which is a significant level of interval with the beta value of  $\beta=.866$ . Hayes process Macros has been used to test the mediating role of visual eWOM between innovativeness and customer booking intentions which shows that innovativeness has both direct and indirect effects on customer booking intentions. Findings from the Whitney U test suggest that the distribution of innovativeness is the same across “Generation Y” and “Generation Z ”, hence there are no significant differences in terms of Generation Y and Generation Z when it comes to the perception of innovativeness.

Findings of the study show that the null hypothesis for H6 is accepted as findings propose that destination fascination conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services as destination fascination reported a strong linear association with consumer booking intention with the coefficient of  $r=.625$ . Similarly, destination fascination reported a moderate linear association with visual eWOM using Instagram with the coefficient of  $r=.559$  which suggests a positive relationship between the variables. Model 6 using ordinary least square regression suggests a significant statistical relationship between destination fascination and visual eWOM using Instagram with a p-value less than 0.05 which is a significant level of interval with a beta value of  $\beta=.796$ . Hayes process Macros has been used to test the mediating role of visual eWOM between destination fascination and customer booking intentions which shows that destination fascination has both direct and indirect effects on customer booking intentions. Findings from the Whitney U test suggest that the distribution of destination fascination is different across "Generation Y" and "Generation Z", hence there is a significant difference in terms of Generation Y and Generation Z when it comes to the perception of destination fascination with the significance value of 0.00.

The findings of the study show that the null hypothesis for H7 is accepted as findings propose that popularity heuristics conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services as popularity heuristics reported a strong linear association with consumer booking intention with the coefficient of  $r=.683$ . Similarly, popularity heuristics reported a strong linear association with visual eWOM using Instagram with the coefficient of  $r=.698$  which suggests a positive relationship between the variables. Model 7 using ordinary least square regression suggests a significant statistical relationship between popularity heuristics and visual eWOM using Instagram with a p-value less than 0.05 which is a significant level of an interval with a beta value of  $\beta=.813$ . Hayes process Macros has been used to test the mediating role of visual eWOM between popularity heuristics and customer booking intentions which shows that popularity heuristics has both direct and indirect effects on customer booking intentions. Findings from the Whitney U test suggest that the distribution of popularity heuristics is the same across "Generation Y" and "Generation Z", hence there are no significant differences in terms of Generation Y and Generation Z when it comes to the perception of popularity heuristics.

The findings of the study show that the null hypothesis for H8 is accepted as findings propose that destination image conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable



influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services as destination image reported a strong linear association with consumer booking intention with the coefficient of  $r=.724$ . Similarly, the destination image reported a strong linear association with visual eWOM using Instagram with the coefficient of  $r=.707$  which suggests a positive relationship between the variables. Model 8 using ordinary least square regression suggests a significant statistical relationship between destination image and visual eWOM using Instagram with a p-value less than 0.05 which is a significant level of an interval with a beta value of  $\beta=.879$ . Hayes process Macros has been used to test the mediating role of visual eWOM between destination image and customer booking intentions which shows that destination image has both direct and indirect effect on customer booking intentions. Findings from the Whitney U test suggest that the distribution of destination image is the same across "Generation Y" and "Generation Z", hence there are no significant differences in terms of Generation Y and Generation Z when it comes to the perception of destination image.

The findings of the study show that the null hypothesis for H9 is accepted as findings propose that user-generated content conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services as user-generated content reported strong linear association with consumer booking intention with the coefficient of  $r=.707$ . Similarly, user-generated content reported a strong linear association with visual eWOM using Instagram with the coefficient of  $r=.688$  which suggests a strong positive relationship between the variables. Model 9 using ordinary least square regression suggests a significant statistical relationship between user-generated content and visual eWOM using Instagram with a p-value less than 0.05 which is a significant level of an interval with a beta value of  $\beta=.890$ . Hayes process Macros has been used to test the mediating role of visual eWOM between user-generated content and customer booking intentions which shows that user-generated content has both direct and indirect effects on customer booking intentions. Findings from the Whitney U test suggest that the distribution of user-generated content is the same across "Generation Y" and "Generation Z", hence there are no significant differences in terms of Generation Y and Generation Z when it comes to perception of user-generated content.

## **Discussion**

Findings from some studies (Jordaan et al., 2022; Groth et al., 201; Pauliene and Sedneva, 2019; Wahyuningsih et al., 2022) rejected the null hypothesis and indicated that information credibility, motivation and purchase intention have differences between different generations. The first study examined the source credibility across media channels in

perception of both Gen-Y and Gen-Z. The findings accept our study's hypothesis and indicate that Gen-X consumers rate more to new media than traditional which clearly shows the differences among generations. Second study investigated the perception of source credibility within virtual communities across generations. The findings indicated that generations differ in their attitudes towards information credibility and purchase intentions. The message attributes including message length, language quality, and congruence with personal interest represent important cues in information credibility evaluation. Third study examined the impact of motivation in social media on purchasing intention of both generations Y and Z. The results reveal that eWOM motivation has significant influence on purchase intentions. On the contrary, managerial applications witnessed differences among generations. Fourth study examined food purchasing behavior with relationship among satisfaction, customer value and eWOM in comparative study of generations X, Y and Z. The results demonstrate that Generations X, Y and Z perceive different values.

On the contrary, findings from other studies (Reisenwitz and Fowler 2019; Kunigonyte and Kolev, 2021; Savanevičienė and Statnickė, 2020; Schischlik, 2021) retain the null hypothesis and indicated that information sources, website quality, innovativeness and destination fascination show the same distribution among generations.

The above literature shows the different behavioral and normative beliefs in Generation Y and Z developed by source credibility, motivation and purchase intention that build the purchase intention towards HORECA. The user and gratification theory implies that both generations Y and Z seek gratification by motivation equally to derive their booking intentions and visit HORECA services.

The first study investigates the Gen-Y and Gen-Z as the information sources in the tourism decision-making process. The findings reject this study's hypothesis and indicate that Gen-Y uses more technology-based information sources or eWOM than Gen-Z in the vocational planning. Second study examines the emotional differences for web aesthetics between generation-X and generation-Y. The latter indicates that there are no significant differences between generations when it comes to the perceived web aesthetics and the reactions to them. Third study examined the relationship between individual innovativeness and its belonging to different generations. The results indicate that there are more innovators among the Generation Y and Generation Z than Generation Y and the baby boomers. The Generation Y and Z innovators try new ideas and are risk-takers by nature. We can conclude that essential differences are indeed among individuals when it comes to innovativeness, rather than among representativeness of different generations. Fourth study examined the

generational differences in using social media for a destination choice. The findings demonstrate the significant differences in using social media, however similarity in the destination fascination preference to make choices.

The above literature shows the similar behavioral and normative beliefs in Generations Y and Z developed by information source, website quality, innovativeness, website quality and destination fascination that build the purchase intention towards HORECA. In respect to the information adoption model, the information sources, website quality and innovativeness provide ease of use and clarity equally to both Generations Y and Z in information adoption which in turn impact booking intentions towards HORECA services. The technology acceptance model also implies the equal acceptance of new technologies and innovations by both Generations Y and Z which influence their purchase intentions.

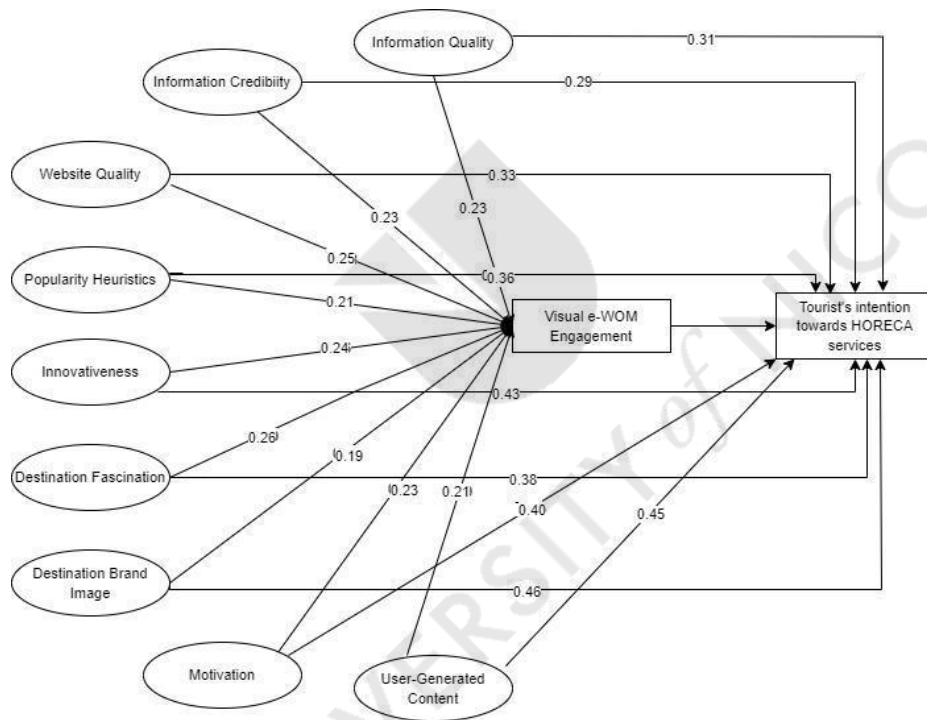


Figure 4. 16: Conceptual framework of direct and indirect relationships

Fig 4.16 above represents the conceptual framework of the direct relationships between eWOM antecedents and consumer purchase towards HORECA services and their indirect relationship through visual eWOM engagement. The information quality directly impacts tourists' intention towards HORECA with a coefficient of 0.31, while indirectly influences with a coefficient of 0.23 through eWOM engagement. The information credibility directly impacts tourists' intention towards HORECA with a coefficient of 0.29, while indirectly influences with a coefficient of 0.23 through eWOM engagement.

Additionally, website quality directly impacts tourists' intention towards HORECA with a coefficient of 0.33, while indirectly influences with a coefficient of 0.25 through eWOM

engagement. Popularity heuristics directly impact tourists' intention towards HORECA with a coefficient of 0.36, while indirectly influence with a coefficient of 0.21 through eWOM engagement. Innovativeness directly impacts tourists' intention towards HORECA with a coefficient of 0.43, while indirectly influences with a coefficient of 0.24 through eWOM engagement. Destination fascination directly impacts tourists' intention towards HORECA with a coefficient of 0.38, while indirectly influences with a coefficient of 0.26 through eWOM engagement. Destination brand image directly impacts tourists' intention towards HORECA with a coefficient of 0.46, while indirectly influences with a coefficient of 0.19 through eWOM engagement. Motivation directly impacts tourists' intention towards HORECA with a coefficient of 0.40, while indirectly influences with a coefficient of 0.23 through eWOM engagement. User-generated content directly impacts tourists' intention towards HORECA with a coefficient of 0.45, while indirectly influences with a coefficient of 0.21 through eWOM engagement. Below table 4.46 shows the summary of findings for the hypotheses testing:

Table 4. 46: Summary of Findings

| SUMMARY OF FINDINGS   | R Square | Correlation Coefficient | Beta Coefficient | Direct Effect | Indirect Effect | Interpretations |
|---|----------|-------------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| H1: Information Quality conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.               | 51%      | .628**                  | .32              | .31           | .23             | Accepted        |
| H2: The credibility information conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.       | 50%      | .616**                  | .32              | .29           | .32             | Accepted        |
| H3: Website Quality conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions toward HORECA services                     | 51%      | .591**                  | .35              | .33           | .25             | Accepted        |
| H4: The motivation conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.                    | 54%      | .672**                  | .28              | .40           | .23             | Accepted        |
| H5: Innovativeness conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.                    | 54%      | .676**                  | .28              | .43           | .24             | Accepted        |
| H6: Destination Fascination conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services.           | 53%      | .625**                  | .33              | .38           | .26             | Accepted        |
| H7: The popularity heuristics conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions toward HORECA services           | 53%      | .683**                  | .26              | .36           | .21             | Accepted        |
| H8: Positive destination brand image, conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services. | 56%      | .724**                  | .21              | .46           | .19             | Accepted        |

|  |     |        |     |     |     |          |
|--|-----|--------|-----|-----|-----|----------|
| H9: User-generated content conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services. | 55% | .707** | .24 | .45 | .21 | Accepted |
|--|-----|--------|-----|-----|-----|----------|

## 4.9 Chapter Conclusion

The research findings and discussion chapter present the interpretations of results and analyses made in SPSS. This chapter provides insights into the demographics of respondents presented in the form of pie charts for an easy understanding of researchers on the demographic profile of respondents. Reliability of the instrument used for data gathering presents a summary of results related to the internal consistency in items used for the development of research instruments which shows that all the items exhibit high internal consistency. Frequency distribution has been used to analyze the responses along with the value of mean and standard deviation. Descriptive statistics has been used to analyze the responses and differences in terms of “Generation Y” and “Generation Z”. Bivariate correlation has been used to analyze the linear association between variables which shows that all variables exhibit positive strong to moderate linear association. Ordinary least square regression has been used to analyze the relationship between all the variables and the mediator to further provide the rationale for direct and indirect effects using Hayes process macros. Hayes process Macros has been used to analyze the mediating role of visual eWOM using Instagram which shows that all variables have both direct and indirect effects on consumer purchase intention. In a nutshell, all hypotheses have been accepted as findings suggest that all variables used in the study conveyed through visual eWOM, have a favorable influence on customers' booking intentions towards HORECA services. Lastly, an independent T-test: the Whitney U-Test has been conducted to test the differences in terms of generations. The findings of the study show that there are significant differences between information credibility and destination fascination between Generation Y and Generation Z.

Finally, a final question in the questionnaire was added exclusively as an open-ended one to confirm that humans are conducting the survey online and to know whether people have truly traveled to a HORECA service based on visual eWOM they saw on Instagram. The findings reported that 205 (68.3%) participants indeed traveled to a HORECA service based on visual eWOM, but 95 (31.66%) participants did not.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS**



UNIVERSITY of NICOSIA

## **5.0 Introduction**

The previous chapter explained the findings in detail regarding the variables included in the conceptual framework, in statistics or graphical illustrations, including their association, direct and indirect relationships, and the mediation role of visual eWOM. The current chapter summarizes the results related to the proposed hypotheses and highlights theoretical and practical implications. Finally, limitations of the study, additional avenues for future research, and conclusions have been provided in detail related to the subject matter.

### **5.1 Summary of the Main Findings**

This section summarizes the findings related to the primary data gathered through the survey and analyzed using SPSS. This section provides a summary of the results which provided rationale for the selection of the proposed nine research hypotheses in chapter two.

The first objective of this research is to review and critically analyze the existing literature regarding the impact of visual eWOM on the customer's booking intention towards the HORECA services and the importance of eWOM in the marketing discipline. There is substantial evidence regarding the influence of eWOM on HORECA to monitor their online reputation to remain competitive by influencing customer behavior. The eWOM can positively and negatively affect HORECA through positive or negative reviews on online platforms. Therefore, managing and monitoring eWOM is essential for HORECA's business to remain competitive. Evidence from the narrative literature review suggests that eWOM is crucial for maintaining an online presence by responding to online reviews and feedback and improving the experience and services. Moreover, the visual eWOM significantly influences the consumer's decision-making process, as the consumers can express their feelings, opinions and product reviews through various online platforms. It also has significance in the marketing role where customers can share their experiences and opinions with others regarding various topics such as favorite restaurants, tastes, preferences, etc. The literature highlights nine variables that are significant predictors of visual eWOM which include (a) information quality, (b) information credibility, (c) website quality, (d) motivation, (d) innovativeness, (e) destination fascination, (f) popularity heuristics, (g) destination image and (i) user-generated content.

The second objective was to examine the underpinning theories and evaluate the impact and factor of visual eWOM influencing customers' booking tourist intention towards HORECA services. Five theories have been used to evaluate how antecedents of visual

eWOM convert into consumer booking intentions. Out of these, two main theories played a critical role in developing the study's framework including (a) theory of planned behavior, and (b) technology acceptance model that discuss the ease of use and information usefulness deriving the consumer behavior towards booking intentions. The TPB can help explain how visual eWOM factors influence tourists' intention to visit HORECA destinations. Two main beliefs exist in the theory that discusses behavioral belief and normative belief which have a combined effect to develop the attitude, and hence tourists booking intentions towards HORECA services. Lastly, the study examined the usefulness and ease of use of eWOM information supported by the TAM to determine its impact on online purchase intention. TAM helps to understand how tourists perceive and accept Instagram as a platform for visual eWOM, which influences their purchase intention.

The TPB used in the current study provides a structured framework to understand how perceived behavior control influences individual attitudes and customers' purchase intentions. Hence, TPB is significant in supporting our research objectives to understand how eWOM influences tourists' purchase intentions. The UGT is also relevant to our study in achieving the research objective that acknowledges the potential impact of opinions and experiences shared by tourists on Instagram. While, the IAM used in the study considers innovativeness and motivation. Innovativeness informs the tourists using updated travel-related information sources that motivate and influence the tourists to visit HORECA services. The innovativeness and motivation in the tourists can be brought through usefulness and ease of use of digital platforms which, in turn, influence the tourist purchase intention towards HORECA services. Lastly, the TAM recognized a theoretical framework that includes the construct of perceived ease of use, which aligns with our study's website quality concept. Therefore, the TPB, UGT, IAM, ELM and TAM have all been used in the study, however TPB and TAM were the starting and important base to strongly support the adopted conceptual framework in achieving this research objectives.

The third objective was to develop a preliminary conceptual framework related to the impact of visual eWOM based on the studied literature and constructed hypotheses. The study developed 9 independent variables which included X1: information quality, X2 information credibility, X3 website quality, X4 motivation, X5 innovativeness, X6 destination fascination, X7 popularity heuristics, X8 destination image, and X9 user-generated content. The Y variable used for the study was Y1: consumer booking intention whereas visual eWOM was used as a mediator between X and Y to develop the conceptual framework for the study.



The fourth objective is to collect data from international tourists regarding their Instagram usage and visual eWOM and their impacts on intention towards tourism consumption in HORECA services. The study employs an equal number of tourists using stratified random sampling from seventeen countries from the European region, thirteen countries from the Asian region, one country from each of the Eurasia region, the Oceania region, and South America respectively, two countries from North America and seven countries from the African region (Appendix B). For eligibility criteria, the participants were required to be Instagram users for information search regarding HORECA's services. Primary data in the form of questionnaires were gathered from a sample of n=300 respondents which included Generation Y and Generation Z respondents, 150 respondents each, using the Pollfish.com survey tool which provided analytics on respondent's profiles who filled the survey. The below table 5.1 shows the summary of the social demographic profiles of respondents from Generation Y and Generation Z.

Table 5. 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

| Socio-Demographic Analysis of Respondents |                     |                 |                      |                 |               |                 |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
|   | Generation Y(n=150) |                 | Generation Z (n=150) |                 | TOTAL (n=300) |                 |
|   | n (%)               | M (SD)          | n (%)                | M (SD)          | n (%)         | M (SD)          |
| <b>Age</b>                                |                     | 1988.33 (3.920) |                      | 1999.42 (2.657) |               | 1994.42 (6.407) |
| <b>Gender</b>                             |                     |                 |                      |                 |               |                 |
| Male                                      | 78 (59.1%)          |                 | 90 (53%)             |                 | 168 (56.4%)   |                 |
| Female                                    | 54 (40.9%)          |                 | 78 (46.4%)           |                 | 132 (43.6%)   |                 |
| <b>Marital Status</b>                     |                     |                 |                      |                 |               |                 |
| Single                                    | 38 (28.8%)          |                 | 97 (57.7%)           |                 | 135 (45%)     |                 |
| Divorced                                  | 2 (1.5%)            |                 | 0                    |                 | 2 (0.7%)      |                 |
| Living with Partner                       | 11 (8.3%)           |                 | 26 (15.5%)           |                 | 37(12.3%)     |                 |
| Married                                   | 77 (58.3%)          |                 | 40 (23.8%)           |                 | 117 (39%)     |                 |
| Prefer not to say                         | 1 (0.8%)            |                 | 5 (3%)               |                 | 6 (2%)        |                 |
| Separated                                 | 3(2.3%)             |                 | 0                    |                 | 3 (1%)        |                 |
| <b>Education</b>                          |                     |                 |                      |                 |               |                 |
| Elementary School                         | 1 (0.8%)            |                 | 0                    |                 | 1 (0.3%)      |                 |
| Middle School                             | 0                   |                 | 1 (0.6%)             |                 | 1 (0.3%)      |                 |
| High School                               | 15 (11.4%)          |                 | 26 (15.5%)           |                 | 41 (13.7%)    |                 |

|                            |            |  |             |  |             |  |
|----------------------------|------------|--|-------------|--|-------------|--|
| Vocational Training        | 10 (7.6%)  |  | 14 (8.3%)   |  | 24 (8%)     |  |
| Undergraduate              | 80 (60.6%) |  | 102 (60.7%) |  | 182 (60.7%) |  |
| Postgraduate               | 26 (19.7%) |  | 24 (14.3%)  |  | 50 (16.7%)  |  |
| Others                     | 0          |  | 1 (0.6%)    |  | 1 (0.3%)    |  |
| <b><i>Ethnicity</i></b>    |            |  |             |  |             |  |
| Arab                       | 7 (5.3%)   |  | 10 (6%)     |  | 17 (5.7%)   |  |
| Asian                      | 39 (29.9%) |  | 64 (38.1%)  |  | 103 (34.3%) |  |
| Black                      | 30 (22.7%) |  | 54 (32.1%)  |  | 84 (28%)    |  |
| Hispanic                   | 1 (0.3%)   |  | 1 (0.3%)    |  | 2 (0.7%)    |  |
| Latino                     | 1 (0.3%)   |  | 0           |  | 1 (0.3%)    |  |
| Multi-Racial               | 2 (0.7%)   |  | 3 (1.8%)    |  | 5 (1.7%)    |  |
| White                      | 48 (16%)   |  | 31 (18.5%)  |  | 79 (26.3%)  |  |
| Others                     | 2 (0.7%)   |  | 1 (0.3%)    |  | 3 (1%)      |  |
| Prefer not to Say          | 2 (0.7%)   |  | 4 (2.4%)    |  | 6 (2%)      |  |
| <b><i>Employment</i></b>   |            |  |             |  |             |  |
| Waged Employee             | 89 (67.4%) |  | 88 (52.4%)  |  | 177 (59%)   |  |
| Homemaker                  | 6 (4.5%)   |  | 4 (2.4%)    |  | 10 (3.3%)   |  |
| Military                   | 1 (0.8%)   |  | 0           |  | 1 (0.3%)    |  |
| Self Employed              | 31 (1.5%)  |  | 33 (20.2%)  |  | 65 (21.7%)  |  |
| Unemployed                 | 3 (2.3%)   |  | 10 (6%)     |  | 13 (4.3%)   |  |
| Other                      | 2 (1.5%)   |  | 2 (1.2%)    |  | 4 (1.3%)    |  |
| Student                    | 0          |  | 29 (9.7%)   |  | 29 (9.7%)   |  |
| <b><i>Social Class</i></b> |            |  |             |  |             |  |
| Lower Income Class         | 72 (54%)   |  | 87 (51.8%)  |  | 159 (53%)   |  |
| Middle-Income Class        | 22 (16.7%) |  | 32 (19%)    |  | 54 (18)     |  |
| Higher Income Class        | 35 (26.5%) |  | 45 (26.8%)  |  | 80 (26.7%)  |  |
| Prefer not to say          | 3 (2.3%)   |  | 4 (2.4%)    |  | 7 (2.3%)    |  |

The fifth objective of the study was to test the conceptual framework based on the empirical evidence collected. Primary data collected via questionnaires were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in which various tests were run, the tests included reliability test, bivariate correlation, ordinary least square regression, and Hayes process macros were used to test the hypotheses. The findings suggest that all variables X1:

information quality, X2 information credibility, X3 website quality, X4 motivation, X5 innovativeness, X6 destination fascination, X7 popularity heuristics, X8 destination image and X9 user-generated content conveyed via mediation M1: visual eWOM have a significant impact on Y1: consumer booking intention.

The sixth objective of the study was to investigate the dynamics of visual eWOM using Instagram leading to consumer purchase intention of HORECA services. The findings of the study suggest that the information quality reported P-value  $.00 < 0.05$  in Hayes process macros, which suggests its significant impact on consumer intention with ( $\beta = .313$ ) and indirect effect with ( $\beta = .23$ ) due to non-zero between LLCI and ULCI. Besides, the P-value of information quality  $.00 < .05$  demonstrates the significant association with visual eWOM using Instagram with ( $\beta = .72$ ). The information credibility reported P-value  $.00 < 0.05$  in Hayes process macro suggests its significant impact on consumer intention with ( $\beta = .29$ ) and indirect effect with ( $\beta = .23$ ) due to non-zero between LLCI and ULCI. Besides, the P-value of information credibility  $.00 < .05$  demonstrates the significant association with visual eWOM using Instagram with ( $\beta = .79$ ). Moreover, the website quality reported P-value  $.00 < 0.05$  in Hayes process macro that suggests its significant impact on consumer intention with ( $\beta = .33$ ) and indirect effect with ( $\beta = .25$ ) due to non-zero between LLCI and ULCI. Besides, the P-value of website quality  $.00 < .05$  demonstrates the significant association with visual eWOM using Instagram with ( $\beta = .73$ ). Further, the motivation reported P-value  $.00 < 0.05$  in Hayes process macro that suggests its significant impact on consumer intention with ( $\beta = .40$ ) and indirect effect with ( $\beta = .23$ ) due to non-zero between LLCI and ULCI. Besides, the P-value of motivation  $.00 < .05$  demonstrates the significant association with the visual eWOM using Instagram with ( $\beta = .79$ ). In addition, the innovativeness reported P-value  $.00 < 0.05$  in Hayes process macro that suggests its significant impact on consumer intention with ( $\beta = .43$ ) and indirect effect with ( $\beta = .24$ ) due to non-zero between LLCI and ULCI. Besides, the P-value of innovativeness  $.00 < .05$  demonstrates the significant association with visual eWOM using Instagram with ( $\beta = .86$ ). The destination fascination reported P-value  $.00 < 0.05$  in Hayes process macros that suggests its significant impact on consumer intention with ( $\beta = .38$ ) and indirect effect with ( $\beta = .26$ ) due to non-zero between LLCI and ULCI. Besides, the P-value of destination fascination  $.00 < .05$  demonstrates the significant association with visual eWOM using Instagram with ( $\beta = .79$ ).

Further, the popularity heuristics reported P-value  $.00 < 0.05$  in Hayes process macro suggesting its significant impact on consumer intention with ( $\beta = .36$ ) and indirect effect with ( $\beta = .21$ ) due to non-zero between LLCI and ULCI. Besides, the P-value of popularity

heuristics  $.00 < .05$  demonstrates the significant association with visual eWOM using Instagram with ( $\beta = .81$ ). The destination image reported P-value  $.00 < 0.05$  in Hayes process macro that suggests its significant impact on consumer intention with ( $\beta = .46$ ) and indirect effect with ( $\beta = .19$ ) due to non-zero between LLCI and ULCI. Besides, the P-value of destination image  $.00 < .05$  demonstrates the significant association with visual eWOM using Instagram with ( $\beta = .87$ ). Finally, the user-generated content reported P-value  $.00 < 0.05$  in Hayes process macro that suggests its significant impact on consumer intention with ( $\beta = .45$ ) and indirect effect with ( $\beta = .21$ ) due to non-zero between LLCI and ULCI. Besides, the P-value of user-generated content  $.00 < .05$  demonstrates the significant association with the visual eWOM using Instagram ( $\beta = .89$ ).

The last objective of the study is to provide research implications for practice and policy insights to market HORECA and delineate a future research agenda by highlighting the shortcomings in the current literature. This chapter uncovers this objective by analyzing next the practical and theoretical implications of this study.

## **5.2 Theoretical Implications**

### **5.2.1 Implications on the Theory of Planned Behavior**

This research has used several theories that provided a basis to formulate the theoretical framework for achieving the desired objectives. On one hand, the TPB demonstrates that people derive their actions and successful outcomes from the intention to manage obstacles that hinder their behavior. It also explains how visual eWOM factors influence tourists' intentions to visit HORECA destinations (Azhar et al., 2022). The current findings align with the TPB, which states that visual eWOM using Instagram significantly mediates the relationship between information quality and customer intention. Ajina (2019) provides a theoretical framework demonstrating that attitude interactions, behavioral control, and subjective norms determine intention. Visual eWOM using Instagram is the behavioral control that influences individual perceptions of information quality. The mediating role of visual eWOM using Instagram suggests that Instagram is the tool that shapes the attitude and subjective norms that influence their intention to engage.

On the other hand, information quality is critical to shaping attitudes, significantly contributing to customer's intention to purchase goods and services. The findings suggest that the visual eWOM using Instagram significantly mediates between innovativeness and customer booking intention towards HORECA services. Besides, innovativeness also has a significantly direct effect on customer booking intention towards HORECA services. According to the TPB, Instagram drives people's attitudes based on innovativeness, affecting

the customer's intention to visit HORECA. Moreover, innovativeness drives people's attitudes, resulting in positive customer intentions to visit HORECA. According to the TPB, Instagram drives people's attitudes based on motivation, affecting the customer's intention to visit HORECA. As well, motivation drives people's attitudes, so positive customer intention is developed to visit HORECA.

Besides, the destination image also significantly directly affects customer intention. According to the TPB, Instagram drives people's attitudes based on a favorable destination image positively affecting the customer's intention to visit HORECA services.

In addition, the destination image drives people's attitudes, positively affecting customers' intentions to visit HORECA. Furthermore, the findings align with our theoretical framework, representing that visual eWOM using Instagram significantly mediates between popularity heuristics and customer intention. Besides, the popularity of heuristics also significantly directly affects customer intention. According to the TPB, Instagram drives people's attitudes rapidly based on popularity heuristics, which favorably affects the customer's booking intention towards HORECA services. Finally, positive destination fascination on Instagram drives people's attitudes, positively affecting customers' intentions to visit HORECA services as well.

### **5.2.2 Implications on Uses and Gratifications theory (UGT)**

UGT enhanced the gratification and motivation tourists seek through their intention with visual eWOM content. It provides insights into various reasons for tourists to engage with visual eWOM, including social connection, entertainment, seeking information, and validating their choices. UGT provides self-expression, impression management, and travel-related information (Luo, 2002).

The findings align with our theoretical framework and represent that visual eWOM using Instagram significantly mediates between destination fascination and customer intention. Besides, destination fascination also has a significantly direct effect on customer intention. In the context of the UGT, the user's visit to HORECA may share their visual experience on social media that addresses gratification needs and magnifies the destination fascination, further contributing to the customer's intention to visit HORECA.

The tourists may share their visual experience after a HORECA visit, on social media, which addresses gratification needs and magnifies the destination image, further contributing to more UGC and other customers' intention to visit that HORECA service. The findings align with the theoretical framework and represent that the visual eWOM using

Instagram significantly mediates between user-generated content and customer booking intention towards HORECA services. Besides, the user-generated content also significantly directly affects customer intention. Finally, the positive UGC drives people's positive attitudes, positively affecting customers' intentions to visit a HORECA service.

### **5.2.3 Implications on Elaboration Likelihood Model**

According to Filieri and McLeay (2013), a primary principle of the ELM is a continuum of elaboration ranging from low to high elaboration. It distinguished between two routes influencing customers' booking intentions towards HORECA: peripheral and central routes. The people who are motivated and spend more time adopt a central route to access information, while less motivated people adopt a peripheral route and use information shortcuts such as information credibility and information quality to make a decision. ELM is the most frequently used model in eWOM-related research as it argues that travelers adopt information and incorporate the information obtained. Subsequently, they take action based on the recommendations and information received. The findings align with the adopted theory and suggest that information quality and information credibility through visual eWOM favorably impact the customer's booking intention towards HORECA.

Chang, Lu and Lin (2020) demonstrate that information credibility, likeability, and attractiveness can influence the peripheral route of ELM. Information credibility is the most frequently used in the peripheral route of ELM as the post attractiveness and post popularity provide a basis for information credibility. Hence, the current study validates ELM theory's peripheral route and suggests that information credibility significantly affected customer intention towards HORECA services through visual eWOM. Moreover, consumer intention can be influenced by the various social media platforms. After receiving stimuli, customers will give feedback or generate message-related responses on the platforms. It clarifies that eWOM is significantly associated with customer intention. Hence, the current study also validates that eWOM significantly affected the customer booking intention towards HORECA and significantly mediated between nine eWOM antecedents and customer booking intentions.

### **5.2.4 Implications of Information Acceptance Model (IAM)**

The IAM highlights the significance of information credibility, usefulness, quality, and ease of use in determining individual adoption and subsequent behavioral intention. It also provides the framework to analyze the role of these factors on customers' booking intention towards HORECA services. Hussain et al. (2018) proposed a framework regarding

the credibility of eWOM and its antecedent relationship with the customer's intention. According to the IAM, the visual eWOM and its related factors shape customer intention in decision-making. The current study validates the IAM theory and suggests that information credibility and information quality significantly influence customer booking intention towards HORECA through visual eWOM. Hence, the findings implicate that information adoption with positive eWOM positively shapes the customer's intention towards HORECA services.

Furthermore, based on the IAM, the current study has developed a model considering the impact of eWOM antecedents on customers' booking intentions. Notably, we identified the drivers of customers' perception toward visual eWOM and customers' future intention towards eWOM after visiting HORECA. Regarding the antecedents of visual eWOM, our findings support the quality of information perception towards customers' booking intention through visual eWOM. In this context, the reviews of a particular hotel are critical in determining its popularity. The number of subscribers judges the credibility of information, likes and shares constitute the eWOM credibility. Ngarmwongnoi et al. (2020) report that customers perceive eWOM as organic instead of a marketing tactic. It was found that the role of eWOM spreads throughout customers' decisions, and customers may develop different attitudes towards eWOM across different decision stages. The findings also show that eWOM significantly affected customers' booking intention towards HORECA services. This clarifies that positive or negative eWOM shapes the customer's intention accordingly, indicating the significance of the IAM.

The findings show that information quality and information credibility significantly influence consumer purchase intention through the mediating role of eWOM. It supports the IAM that tourists perceive information quality and credibility due to the usefulness and ease of use of digital platforms which enhance the consumer intention towards HORECA services. It also implies that website quality ensures the ease of use which enhances the tourists' adoption of information using Instagram that simultaneously influences their booking intentions. As the motivation significantly influences tourists' booking intention through the mediating role of eWOM; it implies that tourists use a central route to receive information directly related to tourism that motivates them and builds their intention towards HORECA services. Additionally, the user-generated content makes related information for tourists easy to find on Instagram, and hence significantly influences the consumers' purchase intention towards HORECA services. Instagram is one of the most useful platforms that encourages customers to know about the image destinations, and so significantly

mediates between destination brand image and tourists booking intentions. The result has also theoretical implications concerning the ease of use perceived by tourists which indicates the innovativeness in Instagram, and affects the consumer booking intention towards HORECA services.

### **5.2.5 Implications on Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**

The TAM emphasizes the customer's acceptance and adoption of technologies and innovations. TAM helps tourists assess the HORECA information by accepting and adopting visual eWOM as a digital communication tool. The current study reveals that customers' booking intention towards HORECA was influenced by visual eWOM (Castro, 2016). The results contribute to service providers by establishing effective communications with customer service systems and customers in order to solve customer complaints. The theoretical contribution of the current study also enriches the TAM. On top of that, the current study used Instagram for visual eWOM, where customers get information and make decisions about visits to HORECA. The TAM model stresses the significance of eWOM in shaping customers' decisions. Our findings also validate the theory by suggesting the significant impact of visual eWOM through Instagram on customers' intentions toward HORECA services.

The WOM antecedents, such as information quality, destination fascination, information credibility, and destination image, significantly have a favorable influence on customers' booking intention through visual eWOM on Instagram. It validates the TAM model, which gives insight into the significance of technology used as the communication channel by customers to receive information about HORECA.

### **5.3 Practical Implications**

Further to the theoretical implications, this dissertation provides several practical implications. The current study discusses the eWOM antecedents encompassing information quality, information credibility, website quality, motivation, innovativeness, destination fascination, popularity heuristics, destination image, and user-generated content, which have a favorable influence on customer's booking intention towards HORECA services. The findings provide insights for social media marketing or entrepreneurs related to HORECA who govern their social media platforms regarding the significance of SNS.

Wang and Yan (2022) state that information quality must be accessible, and easy to understand, and quality-based visuals could provide clear information to people for visiting



selected destinations. Tourism managers should encourage publishers to share high-quality information encompassing authenticity, eye-catching, completeness, richness, and credibility to obtain a rational and more precise understanding of the destination. The marketing manager should regularly monitor the information quality of visuals that shape the destination and influence the tourists to visit restaurants or particular tourist places. Besides, Edwin, Wibowo, and Shihab (2019) state that information related to a HORECA service should be the latest and actual, in terms of pictures and descriptions, to deliver the mental image of the current experience condition. The information should be complete and precise, elaborating various aspects or attributes, i.e., available accommodation and exciting destination. The information should be presented in such a way as to create interest for tourists by using a variety of formats to portray images and interactive media for a better understanding of the destination. Further, the information should be based on additional benefits with exciting deals and restaurant menus.

Moreover, the findings suggest that information credibility significantly affected consumer booking intention through the mediating role of social media/visual eWOM on Instagram. Besides, information credibility also has a direct impact on consumer intention. Similarly, Martín-Consuegra et al. (2017) revealed that credibility can also be interpreted in the quest for authenticity and truth and that once a certain level of credibility is achieved between the relationship of a particular tourism brand and consumers, it can probably produce positive, long-lasting effects on purchase intention. To achieve HORECA-related restaurant loyalty, credibility may require excellent service quality. Information credibility also has significance, and people verify or authenticate the information provided on social media platforms regarding particular sites or tourism destinations. If the provided information is wrong, it leads to negative experiences for customers, shared negative remarks, or negative eWOM that significantly influences the particular social media page and gives a destination. However, credible information shapes customers' attitudes and creates a positive eWOM that significantly enhances the online platform image and customers' intention to visit HORECA services.

The findings suggest that website quality indirectly affects customer intention through social media and demonstrates its direct impact on customer booking intentions. Hence, businesses should invest in good quality websites to retain existing and encourage potential customers. Nowadays, consumers can acknowledge the significance of a website's quality leading to a positive and significant impact on customer intention. The managers should improve the operating system and make the website easy and quickly accessible. The

high-quality and user-friendly websites need to have accurate tourism/product information, effective processes, and applicable and reliable systems, influencing consumer intention to visit HORECA services. As a result, consumers share their experiences on these platforms with other consumers and on social media.

Hence, marketers need to invest heavily in social listening to understand and monitor these platforms of social groups. In addition, social media officers should focus on delivering consistently reliable and updated information to relevant social media groups. They should enhance their marketing strategies by recognizing the customer's participation in eWOM communication based on HORECA websites and social media (Saleem et al., 2022). HORECA marketing managers should monitor, analyze, and evaluate customer reviews and be involved in online reviews assessments. Accordingly, the service provider can better forecast the consequences of different online reviews on the service evaluation of prospective customers. Therefore, the customer's word-of-mouth is a positive function to evaluate its services and formulate strategies accordingly in the future (Köcher and Köcher, 2021). Furthermore, the marketing managers should leverage the website quality to gain positive feelings. That is, the customer browsing a website with good quality tends to purchase a particular tourism spot (Hsu, Chang and Chen, 2012).

The findings suggest that popularity heuristics have a favorable influence on customers' booking intention while indirectly and significantly being associated with visual eWOM using Instagram. Hence, the consumer utilizes all available information before a restaurant evaluation, including food-related decisions and behavioral intention. Moreover, the findings illustrate that the HORECA sector should ensure timely service delivery to prevent negative reviews posted by customers. The negative reviews can deter potential customers from visiting the HORECA service. There should be a user-friendly return policy to reduce the burden on the consumers. Therefore, social media managers must ensure their presence, track negative comments, and monitor online interactions. Several consumers provide concrete rating indicators where consumers prefer ratings associated with quality.

HORECA establishments can trigger consumer quality heuristics by using star ratings for promotional activities. They can create an Instagram-worthy ambiance and attractive food presentations to encourage customers to share their dining experiences on personal social media accounts (Nazlan, Tanford, and Montgomery, 2018). Moreover, marketers can improve ad quality in persuasiveness and informativeness, optimizing the influence of systematic information. A strong customer response can be attained by inviting influencers to market when the ad is customized with personal traits or particular HORECA-

related services (Tan et al., 2021). These findings are essential for marketing managers to decide how to allocate resources. Finally, in the case of negative WOM, the findings suggest that social media marketing managers need to quickly make decisions based on popularity heuristics to recover by various methods to prevent the losses associated with negative WOM.

Furthermore, findings show that destination fascination also significantly impacts customer intention to visit HORECA through the visual eWOM. The findings suggest that destination fascination significantly has an indirect association with customer booking intention as well as a direct relationship. The destination fascination provides destination management organizations with systematic and complete information about destination fascination. Moreover, destination fascination can be applied to managing tourism experiences. It can be used in destination marketing to attract the public as well. Destination management organizations can strategically market a HORECA destination by focusing on the core dimensions of their destination by matching the fascination dimension with the destination's positioning. The competitors can emphasize family-friendly or program-related policies in marketing to represent another kind of destination fascination (Liu et al., 2017). The employee-customer interaction is the primary catalyst for enhancing destination-tourist interactions to trigger greater delight. The destination should be designed in such a way as to optimize the occurrence of pleasure. The travel experience will be attractive by introducing high-quality venues and unexpected service features, such as nail beauty services when queuing in scenic areas (Zheng et al. 2022). The findings provide insights to social media marketing managers to create captivating visual information on social media platforms to enhance fascination and influence the customer's intention to visit HORECA establishments. They should monitor the destination's reputation to prevent the negative image portrayed to the public, address negative feedback or eWOM, and promote positive aspects to restore and ameliorate the perception of the destination.

Moreover, the destination image also has a favorable influence on customers' booking intention towards HORECA services through the visual eWOM. Therefore, the associated tourism businesses and destination marketing planners should update their tactics. The social media content should reflect the destination reality without personal judgment. The accuracy of tourism information may only be helpful if the destination can digest that information. The diverse needs of tourists demand different kinds of tourism information. Social media marketing can be improved by emotional and cognitive destination images. The subsequent application of these tourism tactics may create a positive destination image

and influence the customer's intention to visit the tourism-related HORECA industry (Baber and Baber, 2022).

Furthermore, the destination managers should enhance tourist opportunities with destination staff, residents, and other tourists. As the experience of tourists appears in the form of interaction with other people in the destination, it opens their minds and hearts (Dai et al. 2023). Wang and Yan (2022) provide implications that HORECA-related businesses should invest their efforts in analyzing their images on social media because it influences purchase intention. It provides insight to social media marketing managers to create captivating visual information on social media platforms to improve the image, influencing the customer's intention to visit HORECA. They should monitor the destination's reputation to prevent the negative image portrayed to the public from addressing negative feedback or eWOM and promote positive aspects to restore and ameliorate the actual perception of the destination image. The destination administration should use the symbolic meaning of the destination to design publicity information to share their personality and different advantages. It will inspire consumers to regard the destination image as the promotion of their self-image so that consumers express their personalities and maintain their image by traveling to the destination.

Motivation also has a favorable influence on customers' booking intention towards HORECA services through visual eWOM information. It provides insights to social media marketing managers to create captivating visual information on social media platforms related to rewards and incentives provided by the restaurant and tourism industry to motivate the customer's intention to visit HORECA. The managers should design the written and visual content and share stories regarding people's experiences and the value of location that motivate people to visit HORECA for a memorable journey. Consumers are motivated not only by reason but also by emotion. The destination image must conduct transparent supervision of unethical incidents efficiently and promptly (Yu, Wenhao, and Jinghong, 2022). Further, HORECA-related businesses should focus on the promotional activities that drive customer motivation, and factors may lie in terms of social interaction, modern atmosphere, adventure, and feeling of togetherness. Besides, the restaurant managers should ensure the food, service, and environmental quality. The tourism associations must ensure that restaurant industry practitioners incorporate policies focusing on customer satisfaction and motivation (Bedua-Taylor, Amissah, and Mensah, 2022). Motivation has a significant effect on social media role and customer intention. Therefore, marketers need to provide consumers with relevant and timely information to gratify customers' information-seeking

motives. Marketers also need to consider the needs of the consumers, as motivation plays a vital role in influencing consumers' attitudes toward social media. This can be done by providing the most appealing pictures of products. High-quality graphics, visual elements, fonts, and background music should be included to make interesting appearance-based features. Moreover, the marketing managers should emphasize their attention on consumers' behavioral targeting, i.e., targeting their tastes and preferences (Irshad and Ahmad, 2019).

Furthermore, findings show that innovativeness conveyed through visual eWOM information, has a favorable influence on customer's booking intention toward HORECA services. It is recommended to practice practices that enable people to use social media in societies and organizations for an appropriate duration. It is essential to explain to people the significance of social media effectively and its pros and cons. They will be more knowledgeable consumers and moderate towards changes brought by innovation (Balkar and Çildir, 2021). The study provides insights to social media marketing managers to enable innovative content by sharing different sites surrounding the restaurants and introducing their menu, chefs, and related material to influence customer intention to visit HORECA. Influencers who visit the restaurants can provide an opportunity to conduct interviews, and their images and feedback regarding their experiences shared on social media platforms can attract a massive number of customers to visit HORECA. Moreover, user-generated content also significantly impacts customers' intention to visit HORECA through the visual eWOM. It provides insight to social media marketing managers to enable user-generated content by engaging with customers who share their experiences through comments and feedback and sharing photos through stories that build a sense of community and influence customer intention.

## **5.4 Policy Implications**

The policy implications involved recommendations to the relevant authorities based on the findings to achieve better future results. The policy implications of this study include how government authorities can foster the tourism or HORECA-related sectors by incorporating the necessary measures for overall well-being.

Firas (2019) highlighted the most visited cities in the world and characterized Bangkok as having the most international visitors, comprising 22.78 million, and Paris ranked second with 19.10 million visitors. Moreover, London has been ranked third with 19.09 million, Dubai with 15.3 million, and finally, Singapore secured the fifth rank with 14.67 million international visitors. Our study's findings suggest that the authorities use the

most updated features to share high-quality information with attributes encompassing authenticity, eye-catching, and completeness to obtain a rational and more precise understanding of the destination to enhance the information quality, which shapes the tourist's intention to visit the targeted location. Further, authorities should collaborate with social media platforms to bring advanced features that promote fact-checking mechanisms and reliable sources. Moreover, information credibility is also crucial for tourism destinations to maintain credibility among tourists. The authorities should develop information credibility mechanisms by allowing people to verify or authenticate the information provided on social media platforms regarding particular sites or tourism destinations. Simultaneously, the HORECA businesses should be encouraged by authorities to provide transparency and honesty regarding their service destination based on the provided guidelines.

The findings illustrate that popularity heuristics are significantly associated with the customer's booking intention towards HORECA services. Therefore, authority-driven tourist places should provide facilities to tourists to avoid negative experiences. In case of a bad experience, the quick decision-making mechanisms must be embedded based on their guidelines to prevent the customer from providing negative remarks or negative eWOM that negatively affects their intention to revisit that place. By implementing such policies, the tourist destination can maintain international tourist strength and minimize the best substitutes for customers to visit any other location in terms of facilities. Besides, the fascination with the destination can be marketed based on customer experiences. Destination management organizations should strategically market a destination by focusing on significant selling points and critical attractions of the region. The government authorities should train stakeholders and local businesses related to the tourism industry to attract more international visitors. This training should be based on adapting marketing strategies and social media trends so that businesses incorporate the relevant trends in their content. The destination image also has significance for tourists, and they need to devise the best technology management to create the interest and best possible image of the destination through tourism websites and brochures.

Further, the content that inspires the audiences should be incorporated, portraying unique destinations and attributes related to the tourist pace to motivate the tourists, hence increasing the international visitor's strength. Consumers are not only motivated by reason but by emotions as well. Therefore, the destination administration must establish a good image and conduct transparent supervision of harmful incidents effectively and

timely. Moreover, the authorities should share the content by highlighting the outdoor activities and unique experiences to motivate adventure-seeking tourists. Also, the authorities should develop a certification process that allows tourism-related businesses to comply with given standards to enhance the quality of their websites within the tourism industry. Besides, the findings provide guidelines for the tourist industry or related authorities to build strategies for encouraging tourists to post UGC to generate the travel intention of potential customers.

On another hand, the hired workers for marketing can stimulate the intention to visit by inducing a positive attitude towards visiting the destination through UGC. Tourism practitioners should monitor the tourists' opinions to improve the harmful UGC. Tourists should be motivated to share their extraordinary experiences on user-generated platforms that may trigger other travelers' intentions. Tourism destination management should pay attention to incentives and management of tourist-generated content to encourage tourists to create value together.

Finally, the government should subsidize or compensate tourism businesses to incur innovation in social media marketing strategies that may influence tourists' intention to visit a particular place. There should be a collaboration between the authorities and IT experts to bring innovative solutions to social media marketing on social media. The tourism-related authorities should have a social media marketing department to increase advancement and attract the maximum number of international tourists. Besides, the marketing department should be given regulatory support by providing AI and other related technologies to make them well-equipped technologically so that innovativeness could be enhanced to compete with other tourism industries globally in attracting tourists. Moreover, the public-private partnership has a crucial role in tourism to create a supportive ecosystem for innovation in social media strategies. As the destination image also has significance to customer intention in our study's findings, destination management or authorities should focus on the functional information and the symbolic meaning of the destination to design publicity information to shape their personality and advantages differentiation.

## **5.5 Limitations and Future Research**

### **5.5.1 Review Methodology**

The methodology is the most critical component in the research that provides a basis to formulate the research investigations, techniques, and data gathered from these studies. In the research methodology, philosophy is the first component that explores the fundamental issues. The philosophy pertains to the collection of beliefs concerning the nature of reality

under investigation. Selecting a specific research philosophy for a particular study depends on the nature of the knowledge being explored. The interpretivism approach enables researchers to comprehend practices within a specific context. Pragmatism revolves around practical actions and prioritizes effective decision-making, while realism primarily concerns scientific observations. Finally, positivism asserts the exclusive validity of knowledge derived from mathematical and logical reasoning and empirical observations. The current study employs the positivism philosophy as the foundation for quantitative research methodology. Smith (1987) criticizes the positivism philosophy by arguing that research on social work should be rigorously in the scientific method. The positivist approach needs to be revised on epistemological grounds, and its experimental method and procedural attributes are unlikely to prove generally feasible. Social work is typical in its under-use of research findings. The researcher further concludes that future research should be more concerned, open, participative, and pragmatic in style.

Two approaches are usually employed in the research: the inductive and deductive approaches. The inductive approach is utilized to produce the grounded theory, while deductive reasoning is "top-down" logic, logically stemming certain conclusions given premises. Thus, the present study uses a deductive approach to test the hypotheses generated from the earlier studies. It concisely maps few qualitative methodologies and quantitative methods relevant to eWOM. The comparative analysis of the most relevant method is done to understand the limitations. The findings suggest that the quantitative research methodology's limitations incorporate control variables, difficulty replicating the same study's condition, and ethical problems. Quantitative research surveys have limitations, including that the reliability of data depends on the quality of answers and survey structure, the rigidity of the structure, and does not capture behavior, emotions, and respondent's emotional changes. In a correlational study, the quantitative research design implies no direct cause and effect can be inferred, may lack internal/external validity, and does not provide a conclusive reason for the correlation between two variables (Queirós, Faria and Almeida, 2017).

Subsequently, the research method consists of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Qualitative research uses non-numerical data to make a descriptive and exploratory stance. The qualitative methodology uses inductive reasoning and concludes according to the outcomes. On the other hand, quantitative research uses numerical data with a deductive approach and adopts a positivist perspective. The current study employs quantitative research, relying on empirical data and deductive reasoning. According to Xiong (2022), the



quantitative researcher needs to develop a profound interest in explanations and meaning involved in the participants' points of view. The quantitative researchers serve as detached observers and are unlikely to develop intimate relationships with participants engaged in research. Hence, this positivism paradigm underpinning quantitative studies needs to be revised for researchers to examine the complex contexts concerning sites and variations.

### **5.5.2 Research Design**

The research design encompasses various methodologies, such as case study, survey, experimental, and action research. Surveys serve as snapshots, capturing viewpoints or situations and practices at a specific moment. They are conducted through structured interviews and questionnaires, enabling the researcher to make inferences. Quantitative techniques are often employed to analyze survey responses, aiming to identify significant findings. Surveys offer the advantage of exploring a wide range of variables, surpassing the limitations of experimental processes when carefully designed. Hence, the present study employs a survey research design to collect and analyze the data for significant outcomes.

The survey method has limitations, including the expensive, time inefficient, and training to avoid bias. Moreover, it takes time for data compilation and needs a suitable research design to cover all subjects (Jones, Baxter, and Khanduja, 2013). For this study, the data was collected through online surveys, which are growing in popularity because of the ease, affordability, and convenience of collecting the data. It needs two critical imitations that include respondents with biases who may select themselves into the sample, and the population to which they are distributed cannot be described. The research has significance or value when findings from a sample can be generalized to a meaningful population. The findings from the online surveys cannot be generalized. They may become misleading if the population the survey addresses cannot be described and respondents contaminate the sample with biases (Andrade, 2020). Moreover, the limitations related to the survey include its dependency on the chosen sampling frame accuracy. Although, it is not possible to identify the up-to-date or accurate sampling frame. The survey can provide information regarding people's behavior and the number of dissatisfied with their treatment. However, more information should be given through a survey regarding the reason behind the behavior due to asking closed-ended questions. The survey collection may be influenced by the interviewer's biases/errors, who needs the proper training and briefed on each project (Fox, Hunn and Mathers, 2009).

### 5.5.3 Sampling Method

The sample size is the number of individuals and observations employed for a study, which is the subset of the data points selected from the larger population to analyze the data and find outcomes. The sample size is essential in research, as it can affect the generalizability and reliability of the findings. The study employed an equal number of tourists using stratified random sampling from seventeen countries from the European region (Russia, Bulgaria, France, Sweden, Slovakia, Finland, Switzerland, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Serbia, Romania, Spain, Ukraine, Italy, Poland, Great Britain), thirteen countries from the Asian region (Jordan, Kuwait, Occupied Palestine, Thailand, Singapore, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, UAE, Pakistan, Indonesia, Philippines, India), one country from each of the Eurasia region (Turkey), the Oceania region (Australia) and South America (Brazil) respectively, two countries from North America ( USA, Canada) and seven countries from the African region (Senegal, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria) (Appendix B).

The study invited 300 tourists to participate in an online survey through Pollfish.com. The respondents were equally divided between 150 respondents from Gen Y and 150 respondents from Gen Z. To be eligible, participants were required to have used Instagram to search for information about the HORECA services they had visited. There are also some pitfalls associated with the sampling issues, i.e., there may be little known about the people attributes in online communities, apart from some fundamental demographic variables, and even information may be questionable. Further, several web survey services provide access to various populations by offering access to email lists generated from online surveys conducted through the web survey service. However, there is no guarantee that participants from previous surveys provided accurate demographic information regarding self-reported data. Besides, the sampling is restricted to the Instagram users who search for tourism places through eWOM. The data collection is potentially biased by focusing only on Instagram users that limit the insights about the role of eWOM antecedents to derive the purchase intentions on other platforms.

Moreover, some virtual organizations and groups provide membership email lists that can help researchers establish the sampling frame. However, not all virtual organizations allow their email addresses to be listed, and few do not allow administrators to provide their email addresses to researchers. It makes it difficult to size the online population. Further, some studies of online survey methods found that response rates in email surveys are equal to those in traditional mailed surveys. Yet, these findings still need to be improved because

non-response tracking is difficult to determine in online communities. The researchers' most usual practical technique to increase the response rates is offering financial incentives. However, this technique is inappropriate because internet users frequently encounter bogus lotteries, so a compensation-based approach to increase the response rates undermines the survey's credibility. Moreover, the self-selection bias is another kind of online survey research limitation, as some individuals are likely to complete the online survey. There is also the possibility of an access issue where the researcher accesses potential participants by posting information to participate in a survey in discussion groups, chat rooms, and community bulletin boards.

## **5.6 Contribution of the study**

The current study has a valuable contribution to the tourism sector because of the significance of eWOM that shapes the tourist's behavior. Several studies (Ponsignon and Derbaix, 2020; Nyikos, 2023; Barbe and Neuburger, 2021) indicate that eWOM on different social media platforms helps in accessing information and sharing experiences about destinations, that Gen Y and Gen Z are impacted by eWOM on SNS as an information source about their decision to travel, and that businesses can develop effective marketing strategies to improve customer satisfaction. The current study also contributed to policymaking where some studies (Reyes-Menendez et al., 2020; Cheng et al., 2021) highlighted the necessary potential policies to improve marketing strategies, required legislation by authorities, and hospitable landscape to enhance the tourism industry. The current research also contributed to theory where the adopted model provides findings validating the theories, particularly TPB and TAM.

The research findings indicate that the distribution of information quality, motivation, innovativeness, website quality, purchase intention, eWOM, user-generated content, popularity heuristics and destination image are equally distributed between generations 'Y' and 'Z'. On the contrary, results reveal that information credibility and destination fascination distributions were unequal between generations 'Y' and 'Z'. Hence, the current study contributed in providing insights over the generations' differences in different aspects influencing purchase intention. The destination fascination indicates differences in distribution between Generation 'Y' and 'Z', which provide different insights from the existing literature. As the technology acceptance model emphasizes consumer acceptance, adoption of new technologies and innovations. Therefore, the differences in generations 'Y' and 'Z' may occur due to varying consumer acceptance, adoption of new technologies and innovation.

The data also provide insights where independent t-tests indicate that the variances between Generations 'Y' and 'Z' are equal in respect to all factors chosen in the current study. On the other hand, the mean indicates varying results between Generations 'Y' and 'Z'. The independent t-test indicates that the mean is equal for factors including information quality, innovativeness, popularity heuristics, destination image, user-generated content, eWOM and consumer intention between Generations 'Y' and 'Z'. On the contrary, the mean is unequal for variables including destination fascination, motivation and information credibility between Generations 'Y' and 'Z'.

The data also provide insights that more than 48% of people agreed that reviews and recommendations, the information provided by visuals on Instagram, visual eWOM in reels or posters, and timeliness of information in visual eWOM regarding HORECA tourism are trustworthy, accurate, comprehensive, and shared at the right time, respectively. More than 50% of respondents agreed that information credibility shared through visual eWOM in reels and posters regarding HORECA tourism services is reliable, favorable, and develops trust and confidence in customers. More than 40% of respondents agreed that websites for HORECA tourism services are user-friendly and easy to navigate, visually attractive, provide relevant and up-to-date information, and an easy-to-book process. More than 45% of respondents agreed that positive feedback, captivating visuals, written stories, excitement and enthusiasm shared by people through visual eWOM motivate, increase desire, motivate to explore, and inspire to visit HORECA services, respectively. More than 41% of respondents agreed that innovative features, unique experiences, novel and innovative concepts, and distinctive concepts shared through visual eWOM enhance customer interest and appeal to visit HORECA services. More than 43% of respondents strongly agreed that unique and captivating attractions, historical significance and landmarks, natural beauty and scenic landscapes, and overall charm and allure shared through eWOM visuals increase fascination, interest, and desire to visit HORECA services.

### **5.6.1 Contribution to Practice**

In recent years, the tourism industry has been experiencing an essential alteration because of the wide range of digital technologies used (Ponsignon and Derbaix, 2020). Social media such as TripAdvisor, Yelp, and Instagram have made it easy for tourists to access information and share experiences about desired destinations. eWOM has become an essential factor in impacting tourists' behavior among these digital technologies. Therefore, it is essential to understand how eWOM affects tourist information searches toward the HORECA industry, specifically among Gen Y and Gen Z, known for their influence and

strong digital presence (Nyikos, 2023). The findings also suggest that eWOM significantly influences the consumers' purchase intentions of various destinations and services. The industry of HORECA is one of the most significant sectors in the tourism industry, accounting for a significant share of the industry revenues. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of eWOM's impact on information search tourist behavior toward HORECA is essential for the industry's success. Accordingly, live posting of visual eWOM to reflect the ambiance in the premises fosters booking intentions among social browsers. As well, motivating visitors who experienced the HORECA service to share a visual eWOM on Instagram themselves would lead to a better targeting of similar age groups. This motivational request could be backed up by incentives whether financial or experiential.

Additionally, the rise of Gen Y and Gen Z as the most digitally practical and influential generations has increased the importance of the impact of eWOM on their behavior. The Gen Y and Gen Z generations are known for their strong presence on social media platforms, which led to an expansion of eWOM as an information source about their decision to travel. They often depend on recommendations from other users, specifically from their peers, when they plan to travel (Barbe and Neuburger, 2021). The distribution of eWOM, information quality, website quality, user-generated content, motivation, innovativeness, destination brand image and popularity heuristics is the same between the Generations 'Y' and 'Z'. On the contrary, information credibility and destination fascination have the same distribution between Generations 'Y' and 'Z' tourists in many countries. These results enlighten stakeholders to deal with tourists differently based on their generation whether 'Y' or 'Z' in terms of communication voice, solutions and offerings and channels used. As each generation has different preferences i.e destination fascination, HORECA establishments would need to showcase different setups, food presentations and atmospheres on SNS to appeal to GEN Y and GEN Z separately. Therefore, understanding the determinants that impact their intention and perception towards the HORECA experience is essential for the industry. The more GEN Y and Z are delighted and they are offered a "wow" effect or an "instagrammable" experience the more likely they will share it on their Instagram accounts thus impacting their communities' visit intention and increasing the brand awareness of the HORECA service. As well, the literature showed that 84% of GEN Z are influenced by social media for travel decisions; particularly when it comes to promotions, deals, and recommendations and for them visual content plays a significant role (Williams, 2018). Thus HORECA establishments are encouraged to share more offers in a visual format to appeal to the GEN Z in particular and to share dining and accommodations

ideas since 54% of Millennials and 57 % of Gen Z use social media platforms to plan their trips and depend on eWOM when making travel and tourism decisions (Meyers, 2021).

Furthermore, the tourism industry after the COVID-19 context is growing gradually, participating significantly in countries' economies again. The industry is likely to grow even further in the coming years, making it essential to understand the impact of eWOM on tourists' behavior towards the HORECA industry. Furthermore, with the deep impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry, it is essential to understand how visual eWOM affects or if it affects tourist information search behaviors and their intention toward the HORECA experience, particularly among younger generations. Therefore, the research on the effect of eWOM on tourist information searches toward the HORECA experience is helping the industry better understand their preferences and needs. Additionally, the study has contributed towards the recognition of weaknesses and strengths of their digital marketing policies and enhancing their online presence. Lastly, the study has contributed to academic studies on eWOM's impact on the behavior of tourists and provides the foundation for the upcoming research areas. In general, eWOM has become an essential factor in impacting the behavior of tourists, specifically among the younger generation. Thus, eWOM's impact on tourist information searches towards the HORECA industry among Gen 'Y' and Gen 'Z' is significant.

The study's findings also suggest that information quality and credibility, motivation, innovativeness, popularity heuristics, destination image, destination fascination and user-generated content has a favorable influence on tourists' purchase intentions in many countries directly and indirectly with the mediating impact of eWOM. The study findings have been advantageous to the HORECA industry but also contribute to the academic literature on the impact of eWOM on tourist behavior. By understanding the factors that impact the decision-making process in the latter industry, businesses can develop effective marketing policies that improve customer loyalty and satisfaction. The study has also contributed to the existing literature on eWOM by examining its impact. Despite its significance, there still needs to be more understanding of how service quality influences the activities of eWOM in the hospitality industry. By offering guests unique services and ensuring they have a memorable experience, the HORECA sector can increase the chances of attracting new guests and receiving positive reviews. The study participates in understanding eWOM factors in the HORECA sector by mentioning the significant influence of perceived quality and objective. The factors of eWOM in the hospitality industry are complex for a range of hotels and customers.

## 5.6.2 Contribution to Policy

The study's rationale includes the importance of the tourism industry, which is a significant contributor to the economy of any country, making billions of dollars in yearly revenue. The HORECA sector is essential in providing travelers with an exciting and joyous experience. Understanding the factors affecting tourist decision-making and their behavior in the industry is significant for the success of the industry and its economic growth (Reyes-Menendez et al., 2020). In addition, knowing the factors affecting the behavior and perceptions of tourists in selecting the services in the HORECA industry is essential for expanding tourism and hospitality services. Understanding the eWOM dynamics in the tourism industry is vital for businesses to succeed in a competitive market. By connecting the eWOM power and actively managing their online reputation, businesses can considerably influence consumers' decision-making processes and drive positive outcomes. Additional examination of this topic has undoubtedly contributed towards a comprehensive understanding of the details of eWOM and its insinuations for the tourism industry.

Furthermore, there is a growing impact of eWOM on SNS, and the internet has become a dominant factor in changing customers' behavior in information searches. Travelers can now access more information about the HORECA services and establishments via online channels like recommendations, reviews, UGC, or visual content. However, the credibility and reliability of this information may be uncertain, which may lead to challenges for tourists in making informed decisions. Visual content on social media platforms like Instagram has an influential impact on patrons. Stories, photos, and videos provide a deeper insight into HORECA services, permitting tourists to make more up-to-date decisions about their travel plans. Exploring visual eWOM's impact on tourist intentions can help industries attract more tourists, enhance brands' online reputation, and improve the overall HORECA experience. Destination fascination, destination brand image and user-generated content play a significant role to attract more tourists in many countries to expand the business activity in tourism sectors. The marketing managers in restaurants and hotels along with tourism national parties i.e municipalities and ministries should emphasize on these aspects to expand the tourism sector locally. An example to reflect on the latter, several municipalities build giant hashtagged letters in a touristic place i.e #ILOVENY, exciting visitors to take a picture and share it on their social media accounts. Furthermore, it is crucial to follow the trendy influencers on social and collaborate with them for tourism campaigns to boost a country's awareness (i.e KSA hosting the legendary football player Messi as the campaign ambassador in 2024) and to grow a country's economy (i.e Prime minister Lee Hsien Loong

confirmed an 'arrangement' for Singapore to be the only stop on Taylor Swift's south-east Asia Eras tour in 2024). By understanding these factors, Cheng et al. (2021) revealed insights into future strategies that marketers can develop more effective visual eWOM strategies and leverage the power of visual content to drive consumer behavior and purchase decisions i.e showing outdoor adventures using a recent marketing trend of computer-generated images (CGI).

Next, Gen Y and Z are known for their presence on digital and social media platforms. These younger generations have a significant role in determining tourism behaviors and trends. Understanding how eWOM, particularly visual eWOM, influences their information decision-making and search processes regarding HORECA destinations is vital for the industry to adapt its marketing strategies successfully.

Apart from this, the findings of this research have provided valuable insights for the HORECA industry to develop effective marketing policies. By understanding the determinants and impacts of eWOM on tourist behavior, businesses can leverage positive reviews, respond to and address negative feedback, and enhance their services based on customer insights. The outcomes of the study stressed the importance of the overall tourist experience leading to economic growth in the industry. Moreover, this study has contributed to the academic literature on eWOM's impact on tourist behavior, specifically in the context of the HORECA industry. By addressing the research gap and providing empirical evidence, the study has served as a foundation for future research and further exploration of eWOM's influence on tourist information searches and decision-making processes. The study outcomes have helped the HORECA sector to form effective marketing strategies and policies to enhance the image of HORECA institutions, leading to economic growth and improved tourist experiences in the industry.

### **5.6.3 Contribution to Theory**

The current study uses the theory of planned behavior (TPB) which helps to include the variables in a flexible model that can enhance the predictive capacity. According to TPB, an individual's behavior is influenced by their attitude towards a behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. The current study's findings support the TPB by stating that eWOM antecedents have a favorable influence on tourists' customer intention through social media. It clarifies that people's attitude norms and perceived behavioral control influence the individual intention to make a purchase intention. Information quality, information credibility and website quality affect the behavioral belief of tourists that



developed their attitude and intention towards HORECA services. On the other hand, a normative belief developed by the society's perception about particular aspects that become a social norm and develop the attitude in individuals, which in turn, affect the consumer's intentions. Hence the findings imply that destination fascination, destination brand image and motivation target the tourist's normative belief which develops their attitude that derives the intention towards HORECA services.

The UGT's primary purpose is to explain individuals' psychological and social bases, motivations for using different media. The study's findings also support the theoretical perspective by suggesting that motivation significantly influences eWOM and indirectly affects purchase intention through visual eWOM using Instagram. Moreover, the ELM explains how tourists may evaluate visual eWOM messages related to HORECA services. The findings also support the ELM by demonstrating that eWOM antecedents as destination brand image and destination fascination significantly influence tourists' purchase intention directly and indirectly through visual eWOM using Instagram. Website quality and popularity heuristics also demonstrate the significant impact directly and indirectly on customer intention through visual eWOM that validates the TAM. The IAM highlights the importance of information quality, credibility, usefulness, and ease of use in determining individuals' adoption and subsequent behavioral intentions. The information quality and information credibility significantly influence directly and indirectly the customer's purchase intention through visual eWOM using Instagram which validates the adopted theory IAM. IAM emphasizes on the usefulness and the ease of use that derive individuals to the adoption of information. The findings imply that usefulness enhances the information credibility of Instagram that developed trust in tourists for information adoption. On the other hand, information quality, website quality, and innovativeness create the possibility of ease of use in Instagram for tourists, which in turn, influence the tourists booking intention towards HORECA services.

Lastly, the TAM recognized a theoretical framework that includes the construct of perceived ease of use, which aligns with this study's website quality concept. TAM also includes the factors of innovativeness and motivation that reflect the individual willingness to adopt new technologies and motivate tourists to engage with Instagram and other innovative platforms for travel-related decisions. Additionally, the study's results contribute to theory by validating existing and separate evidence and offering new perspectives by linking major eWOM antecedents together. Thus, this study introduced a comprehensive framework to study visual eWOM antecedents and their impact on tourists booking

intentions in the HORECA industry. The framework included a set of factors that have never been tested together so as to bridge the gap between visual eWOM on Instagram in the Horeca Industry and consumer digital behavior.

## **5.7 Additional Avenue of Future Research**

Despite the implications above, this study is not free of limitations, which might be seen as potential for future research. Given the outcome of this study, there are many potential gaps to extend the scope of scholarly literature to provide more robust insights and recommendations for research and practices. Hence, this section elaborates upon additional potential avenues for research.

First, the conceptual framework provides the antecedents of eWOM that influence itself and the ultimate impact on customers' intention to visit HORECA. Future researchers can enhance the existing framework by adding more independent variables used in the previous study (Sardar et al., 2021) and incorporating the usefulness and adoption of information. Moreover, the existing research is limited to the visual eWOM using Instagram as the mediating variable, which can be better in the future by adding more possible social network sites, i.e. X, Tiktok thus UGC videos, Notes (the new photo app by Tiktok), Facebook, and other related platforms that can contribute to tourism to shape the consumer intention to visit a destination or a HORECA service. Further, the research is limited by investing in the impact of eWOM antecedents on the visual eWOM using Instagram, which influences customer intention. However, social media networking sites play a critical role in which these eWOMs are reflected to influence customer intention.

Therefore, future research should incorporate social media as the moderating variable to determine whether social media reflects the significant contribution of travelers to determining customer intentions. Besides, the future researcher can utilize the existing framework by adding two independent variables, perceived quality and positive emotional experience, and one dependent variable related to the intention to revisit used in the study (Salah et al. 2023). In this way, future researchers will be able to know the potential customer intention and intention to revisit HORECA based on experience.

Further, the study participants were limited to a total of 42 countries: seventeen countries from the European region (Russia, Bulgaria, France, Sweden, Slovakia, Finland, Switzerland, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Serbia, Romania, Spain, Ukraine, Italy, Poland, Great Britain), thirteen countries from the Asian region (Jordan, Kuwait, Occupied Palestine, Thailand, Singapore, China, Vietnam, Malaysia, UAE, Pakistan, Indonesia, Philippines,

India), one country from each of the Eurasia region (Turkey), the Oceania region (Australia) and South America (Brazil) respectively, two countries from North America ( USA, Canada) and seven countries from the African region (Senegal, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria) (Appendix B). However, it is proposed that future research be conducted with the extension of locations and a comparative analysis of different regions since the findings of this study showed similar results among the respondents from the diverse 42 countries. It is therefore suggested to explore additional countries (Chatterjee et al., 2021) and to conduct comparative analyses across a broader range of regions to capture cultural and geographical differences in consumer behavior and eWOM influence.

Other variables could be explored relating to social media use, the mediating factors, and purchase intention. The current study with an extended framework can also be used in other businesses by adding more relevant factors to determine the potential customer intention. This study is limited to HORECA; hence, more study from different industry perspectives is needed to attain more general findings i.e medical tourism, sustainable tourism, and smart tourism.

Several studies (Al-Dmour et al. 2021; Ong and Ito 2019; Skinner 2021; Huang and Liu, 2018) studied the destination brand image as a factor to examine its impact on customer purchase intention through visual eWOM. In future research, destination brand videos can also be used to reflect the tourists' purchase intention through eWOM. Besides, in the current study, the survey has been constructed using mostly images of the various items of different variables. However, video is an impactful indicator compared to image that highlights destination points more clearly and reflects the true face of the HORECA service. Hence, the future researcher could incorporate the video as the measure of instruments and as a variable to examine its influence on tourist purchase intention through visual eWOM.

Future research can use the existing study model with the extension or reshuffling of variables with the fashion involvement and information influence to forecast the customer intention to purchase online products related to the fashion industry. Moreover, the current study has used the antecedents of eWOM in determining their impact on customer intention through social media. These antecedents can be used in future research by underpinning the eWOM adoption to examine their impacts on customers' intention to visit HORECA.

## **5.8 Chapter Conclusion**

The widespread online communication platforms with the changing technological landscape have shifted businesses and marketing practices from traditional WOM to

eWOM. eWOM-related research has recently been rising in the tourism industry because of its use to gain customer information. The current research is investigating the impact of eWOM on tourists' booking intention; the study aim is: "the impact of eWOM antecedents on customer booking intentions towards tourism consumption in the HORECA industry through the mediating role of social media (Instagram).

The proposal has been investigated to determine the impact of eWOM antecedents on the customer's intention to visit HORECA through social media. The data has been collected from the primary sources based on seventeen countries from the European region, thirteen countries from the Asian region, one country from each of the Eurasia region, the Oceania region, and South America respectively, two countries from North America and seven countries from the African region (Appendix B). The data collected was coded into SPSS to test the proposed hypotheses in achieving the study's objectives. Descriptive statistics have been used to examine the general information of variables and whether data is distributed normally. Moreover, the Pearson correlation has been used to test the strength of the association between the variables. Finally, the current use of linear regression analysis to analyze the significance level for the predictor was explained in the dependent variable, and the model's overall goodness was found. Finally, Hayes process macro has been used to test the direct impact of eWOM antecedents and the indirect impact on customers' intention to visit HORECA through the mediating role of social media.

In the linear regression analysis, the information quality was significantly associated with the customer intention to visit HORECA with ( $\beta=.720$ ). Moreover, the information credibility was significantly associated with the customer's intention to visit HORECA with ( $\beta=.792$ ). The website quality was significantly associated with the customer intention to visit HORECA with ( $\beta=.734$ ). Furthermore, the motivation was significantly associated with the customer's intention to visit HORECA with ( $\beta=.795$ ). In addition, innovativeness was significantly associated with the customer's intention to visit HORECA with ( $\beta=.866$ ). The destination fascination was significantly associated with the customer's intention to visit HORECA with ( $\beta=.796$ ). Besides, the popularity heuristics were significantly associated with the customer intention to visit HORECA with ( $\beta=.813$ ). The destination image was significantly associated with the customer's intention to visit HORECA with ( $\beta=.879$ ). Finally, the user-generated content was significantly associated with the customer intention to visit HORECA with ( $\beta=.893$ ).

The correlation coefficient between the independent variables, including information quality, information credibility, website quality, and destination fascination and the

dependent variable, including customer intention, accounted for ( $r=.628$ ), ( $r=.616$ ), ( $r=.591$ ) and ( $r=.625$ ), respectively. These indicate a moderate association among themselves due to their p-value closer to .5. On the other hand, the correlation coefficient between the independent variables, including motivation, innovativeness, popularity heuristics, UGC and destination image and the dependent variable, customer intention, accounted for ( $r=.672$ ), ( $r=.676$ ), ( $r=.683$ ), ( $r=.707$ ) and ( $r=.724$ ) respectively. These indicate their strong association due to their p-value closer to 1.

Hayes process macro has also examined social media's mediating role between eWOM antecedents and customer intention to visit HORECA services. The P-value of each antecedent is  $.00 < .005$ , which is less than the standard significance level, indicating the significant direct effect on customer intention to visit HORECA. Similarly, the difference between LLCI and ULCI of each eWOM antecedent is non-zero, which indicates their significant indirect impact on customer intention through the mediating role of social media.

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# Appendix I: Survey Questionnaire

## Online Survey Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study on **“The impact of visual electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) and social media usage (Instagram) on the tourists' booking intentions towards tourism consumption in the HORECA Industry”**.

This study is conducted by **Ms. Jessy Kfoury, Phd Candidate at the University of Nicosia, Cyprus**.

The sample of respondents for this study will include a large number of **tourists who access social media regularly**.

This study will take approximately **10** minutes of your time and the questions will be covering :

- eWOM information (e.g., whether you check them and on which platforms, trust level, eWOM visual vs. textual vs. rating impact on travel bookings' intentions)
- Instagram information (frequency of using it -daily or otherwise-, how you browse the platform, hashtags you follow if any, etc.)
- Behavioral Intention (booking intention) whether it is translated into a behavioral action (actual booking)
- Psychographic information (e.g., travel hobbies, activities and frequency, internet usage, etc.)
- Demographic information (e.g. age, income, marital status, occupation, educational level, etc.)

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. If you do not wish to complete this survey, just close your browser.

Your participation in this research will be kept confidential, and data will be averaged and reported in aggregate. Your responses will be anonymous and IP addresses will not be collected to guarantee complete anonymity.

Although your participation in this research may not benefit you personally, but it will help us understand the following:

1. Do tourists consider eWOM on SNS while planning a trip?
2. How does visual eWOM influence the way consumers process a message?
3. What is the profile of the tourists who check eWOM on SNS?
4. How has Instagram changed the way tourists search for info?

5. What is the impact of visual eWOM (Instagram) on the tourists' booking intentions?

There are no risks to individuals participating in this survey beyond those that exist in daily life.

If you have questions about this project, you may contact Ms. Jessy Kfoury by: [jessykfoury@hotmail.com](mailto:jessykfoury@hotmail.com) or 009613482905.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Nicosia, Cyprus.

Please print a copy of this consent form for your records, if you so desire.

|   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| I have read and understood the above consent form. I certify that I am 18 years old or older and, by clicking the next button to enter the survey, I indicate my willingness to voluntarily take part in the study. | (route to survey page) |
| I do not wish to participate in this study.   | (route to Home page)   |

### Phd Questionnaire

**Filtering Q1 Would you travel to a HORECA (hotel, restaurant, cafe) leisure experience in the future? (non-business) (SingleSelection) (Screening question)**

- - Yes
- - No
- - Maybe

**If yes or maybe > proceed**

**Filtering Q2 Do you browse social media such as Instagram or online review platforms such tripadvisor.com, to seek information, recommendations, or reviews related to a HORECA (hotel, restaurant, cafes) experience? (SingleSelection) (Screening question)**

- - Yes
- - No

**If yes > proceed to survey**

### Q3 Section: Information Quality

Information quality refers to the characteristics and attributes of the data shared on social media platforms. It encompasses the reliability, accuracy, relevance, and credibility of the information presented.

The reviews and recommendations about HORECA tourism services that people share through pictures and videos are **TRUSTWORTHY**. (Slider)

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

Q4 Information provided by visual on Instagram in the form of stories, reels and posters regarding HORECA tourism services is **ACCURATE**. (Slider)

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

Q5 Visual eWOM in the form of stories, reels and posters offers a **COMPREHENSIVE** view of HORECA tourism services. (Slider)

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

Q6 I agree with the timeliness of information in visual eWOM in the form of stories, reels and posters about HORECA tourism services (shared at the **RIGHT TIME**.) (Slider)

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

### Section: Credibility

Q7 Credibility refers to the extent to which the information shared through visual eWOM about HORECA tourism services can be **RELIED UPON** and considered **TRUSTWORTHY**. The information credibility shared by people in the form of stories, reels and posters regarding visual eWOM for HORECA tourism services is **RELIABLE**. (Slider)

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

Q8 The information in the form of stories, reels and posters regarding visual eWOM about HORECA tourism services can be relied upon to make tourism decisions **MORE FAVORABLE**. (Slider)

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

Q9 I have **CONFIDENCE** in the credibility of information shared in the form of stories, reels and posters regarding HORECA tourism services. (Slider)

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q10 I TRUST the visual eWOM of HORECA tourism services. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Section: Website Quality**

**Q11 Website quality refers to the overall standard and effectiveness of a brand’s website in meeting its intended goals and user expectations.**

**The websites for HORECA tourism services are USER-FRIENDLY and EASY TO NAVIGATE. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q12 The websites for HORECA tourism services are VISUALLY ATTRACTIVE. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q13 The websites for HORECA tourism services provide RELEVANT and UP-TO-DATE INFO on promotions and travel deals. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q14 The websites for HORECA tourism services provide an EASY BOOKING PROCESS. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Section: Motivation**

**Q15 Motivation refers to the underlying reasons and factors that drive people to travel and engage in tourism-related activities.**

**The positive feedback shared by people through visual eWOM MOTIVATES ME to visit HORECA services. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q16 Seeing captivating visuals and photographs of HORECA services shared through visual eWOM increases my desire to visit them. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q17 The written stories and narratives shared by people through visual eWOM about HORECA services motivate me to explore them myself. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q18 The excitement and enthusiasm expressed by others through visual eWOM regarding HORECA services inspire me to plan a visit. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Section: Innovation**

**Innovation encompasses the creative and novel features, experiences, and technology-driven concepts introduced within HORECA services and highlighted in visual eWOM content. It pertains to the incorporation of new and exciting ideas, advanced technology, unique concepts, and innovative marketing strategies that serve to captivate and engage potential tourists. Example: Airbnb introducing lately the Barbie mansion house**

**Q19 The innovative features and offerings shared through visual eWOM enhance my interest in visiting HORECA services. Example below: (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q20 I am more interested in HORECA services for my travel plans when I see creative and unique experiences shared through visual eWOM. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q21 Experiencing novel and imaginative concepts like a treehouse setting dining or underwater dining (check picture below) shared through visual eWOM enhances my interest in exploring HORECA services. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q22 Distinctive concepts in visual online recommendations related to HORECA services are APPEALING (ATTRACTIVE). (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Section: Destination Fascination**

**Fascination refers to the deep and compelling attraction or interest aroused in individuals by the unique, captivating, and culturally rich aspects of HORECA services, including attractions, historical significance, natural beauty, charm, and cultural richness, as depicted in visual electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) content.**



**Q23 The UNIQUE and CAPTIVATING ATTRACTIONS shared through visual eWOM make me fascinated/interested in HORECA services. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q24 The HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE and LANDMARKS shared through visual eWOM make me fascinated/interested by HORECA services. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q25 The NATURAL BEAUTY and SCENIC LANDSCAPES shared through visual eWOM make me fascinated/interested by HORECA services. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q26 The OVERALL CHARM and ALLURE shared through visual eWOM of HORECA services increase my fascination/interest and desire to visit them. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Section: Popularity Heuristic**

The popularity heuristic is a cognitive bias or mental shortcut that people often use when making decisions or judgments. It involves assuming that the more popular or widely accepted something is, the better or more valid it must be.

**Q27 The HIGH NUMBER OF LIKES, SHARES and ENGAGEMENT on visual eWOM of HORECA services makes me perceive them as popular among tourists. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q28 The WIDESPREAD PRESENCE of visual eWOM about HORECA services ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS makes me perceive them as popular among tourists. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q29 The perception that HORECA services are popular choices among other tourists through visual eWOM influences my intention to visit them. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q30 The positive reviews and recommendations from other tourists through visual eWOM influence my perception of HORECA services as popular choices. (Slider)**

(video url: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/pf.survey.image.production/61bcb037-37fc-4845-b111-cd4690930961.png>)

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Section: Destination Image**

**Destination image refers to the overall perception and impression that travelers have of a particular place, such as a city, region, or tourist destination.**

**Q31 The UNIQUE and DISTINCTIVE identity associated with the brand image of HORECA services captured in visual eWOM makes me more interested in visiting them. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q32 The strong and positive brand image portrayed through visual eWOM enhances my perception of HORECA services as desirable places to visit. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q33 The consistent and positive messaging shared through visual eWOM about the brand image of HORECA services contributes to my positive perception of their quality and value. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q34 The brand image presented through visual eWOM creates a sense of trust and confidence in the overall experience and offerings of HORECA services. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Section: User Generated Content**

**User-generated content (UGC) refers to any content, such as photos, videos, captions, and comments, that is created and shared by regular users of the platform rather than by businesses or brands.**

**Q35 The reviews, ratings, and recommendations provided by people through visual eWOM influence my perception of HORECA services and their offerings. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q36 The user-generated content related to HORECA services shared through visual eWOM helps me gather authentic and reliable info. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q37 The user-generated content shared through visual eWOM creates a sense of community and engagement, making me feel connected and inspired to explore HORECA services. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q38 The user-generated visual content, such as photos and videos, provides me with a realistic portrayal of the atmosphere and experiences in HORECA services (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q39 Section: Role of Instagram**

**The user-generated content and feedback shared by other Instagram users significantly impact my perception of HORECA services and their offerings. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q40 The insights and recommendations shared by influencers and popular Instagram accounts significantly influence my perception of HORECA services and their offerings. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q41 The user-generated content related to HORECA services shared on Instagram helps me gather authentic and reliable info. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q42 Hashtags used by users and Pin location of content shared on Instagram provide a reliable reflection when discovering new HORECA services and experiences. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

### **Section : Consumer Intention**

**Customer intention refers to the likelihood of people making a purchase related to travel and tourism. It represents the decision-making process that potential tourists go through before they commit to booking a trip, hotel stay, tour, or any other travel-related product or service.**

**Q43 The visual eWOM content reflecting enjoyable activities and attractions in HORECA services motivates me to plan a trip to experience them myself. (Slider)**

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q44 The recommendations and endorsements from other tourists through visual eWOM impact my intention to choose HORECA services for my travel plans. (Slider)**

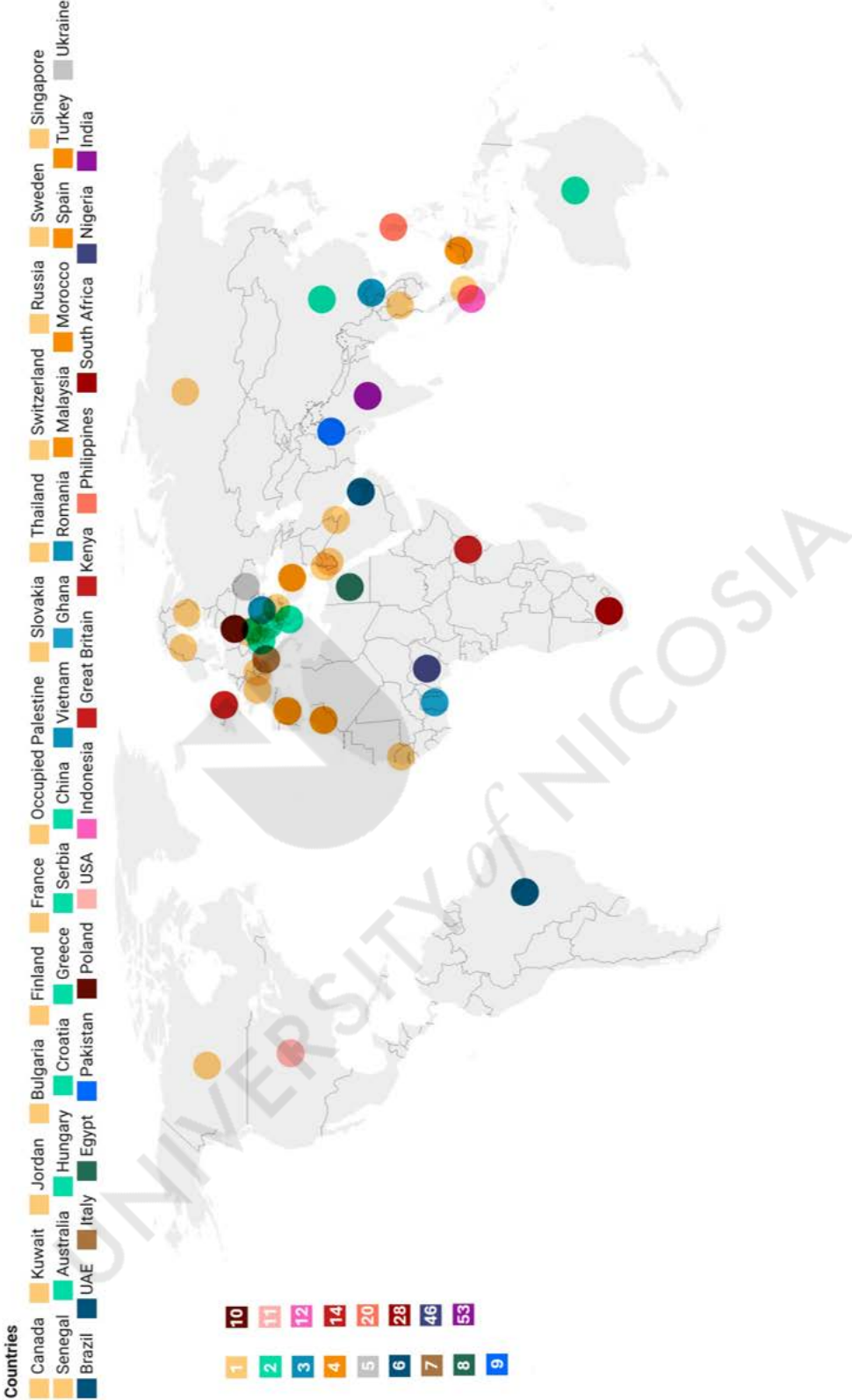
|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

**Q45 Have you ever traveled to a hotel or restaurant in another country after seeing its picture on Instagram? Any additional feedback?**

.....



# Appendix II: Respondents' Countries Distribution

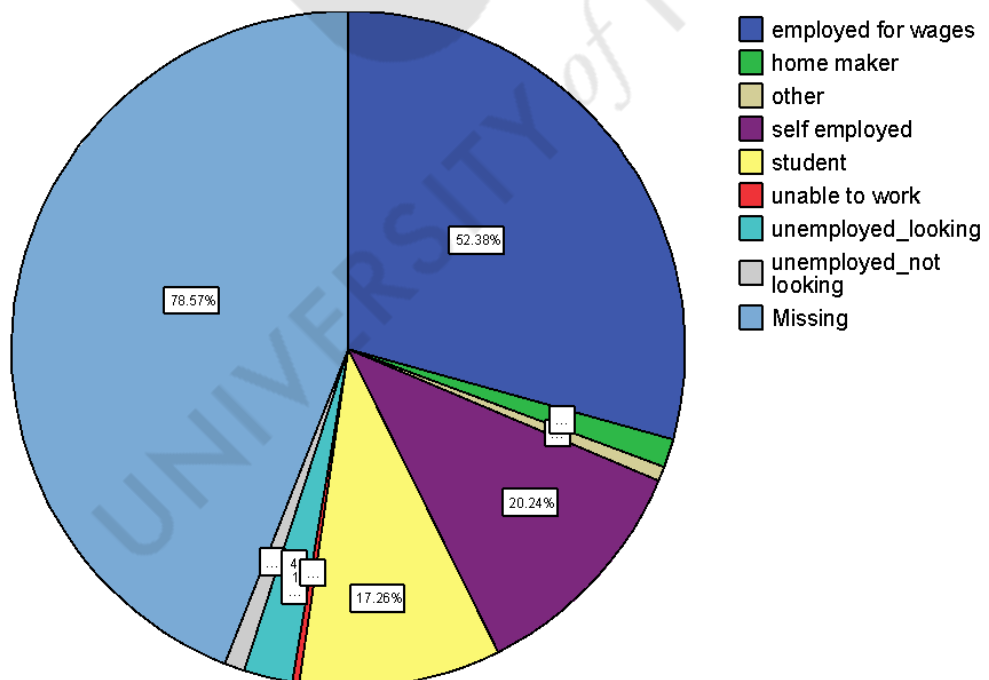


## Appendix III: SPSS Output

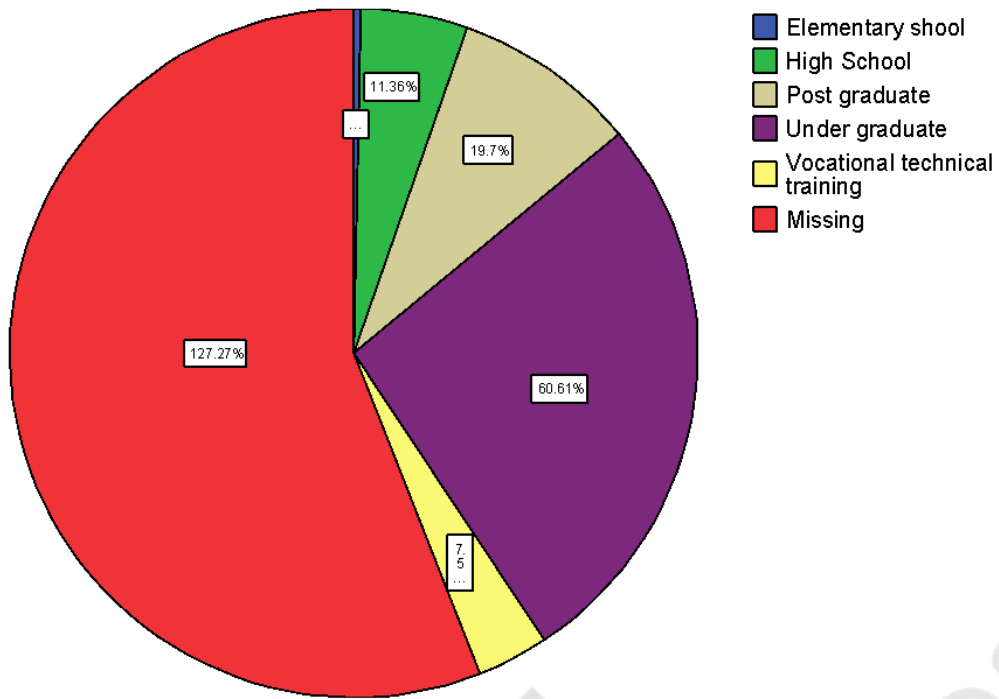
Employment\_Y



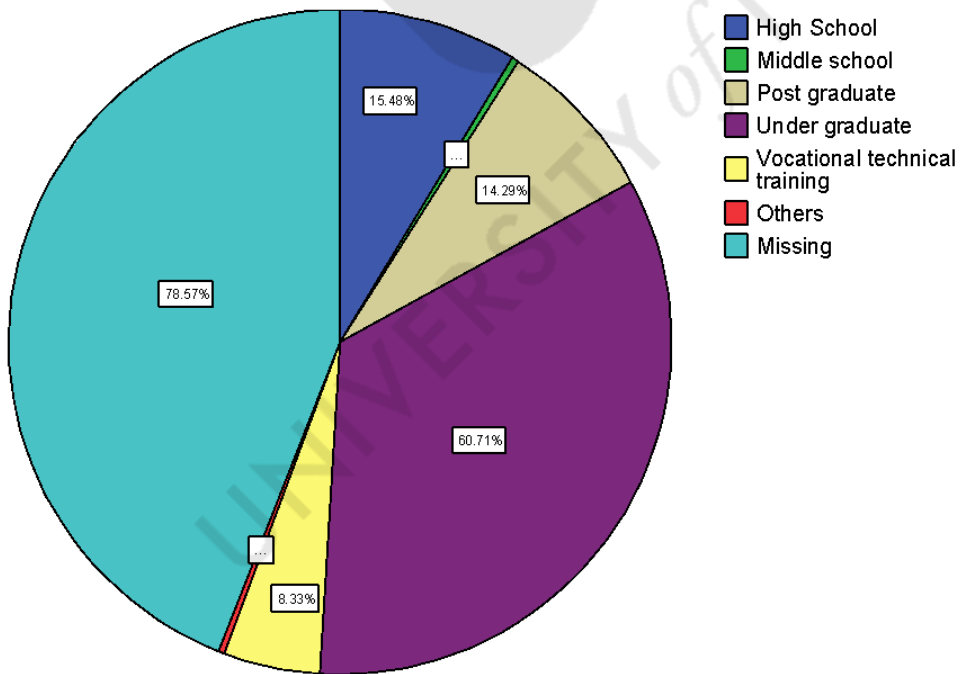
Employment\_Z



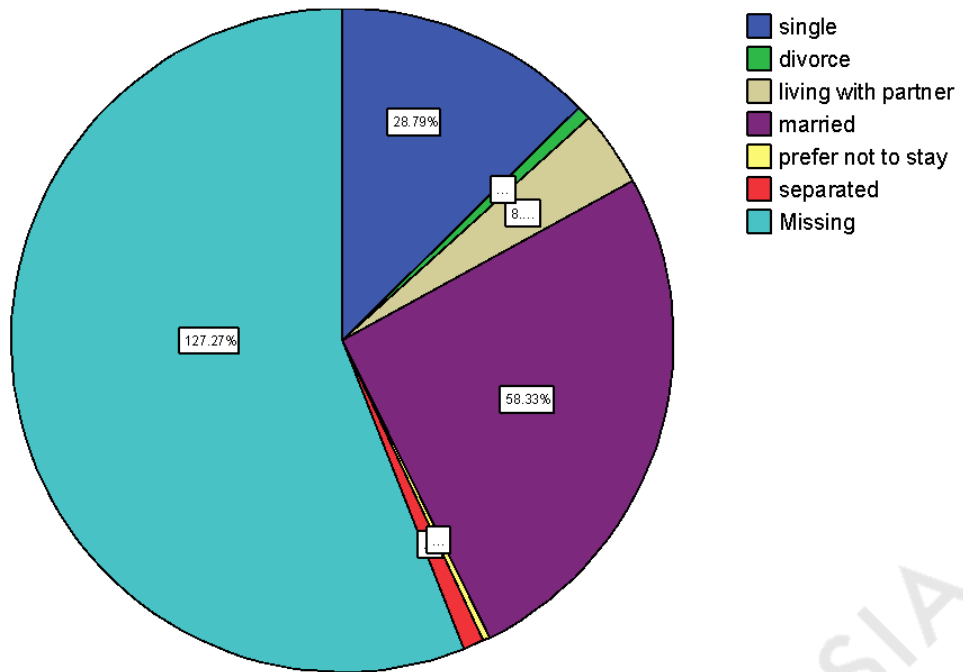
Education\_Y



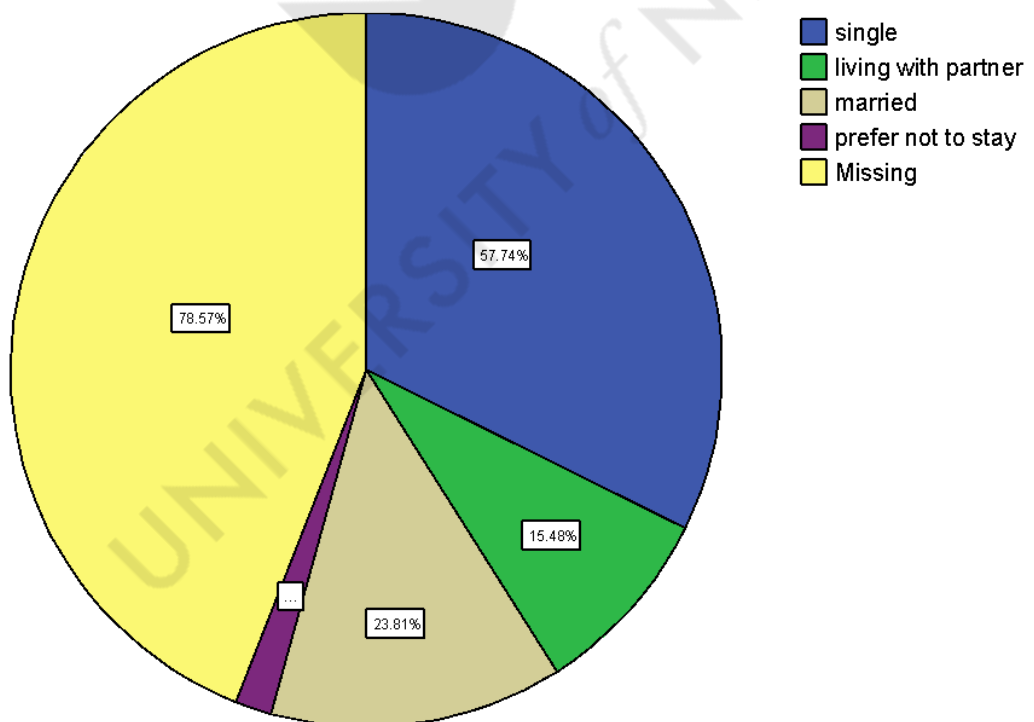
Education\_Z



Marital\_Y

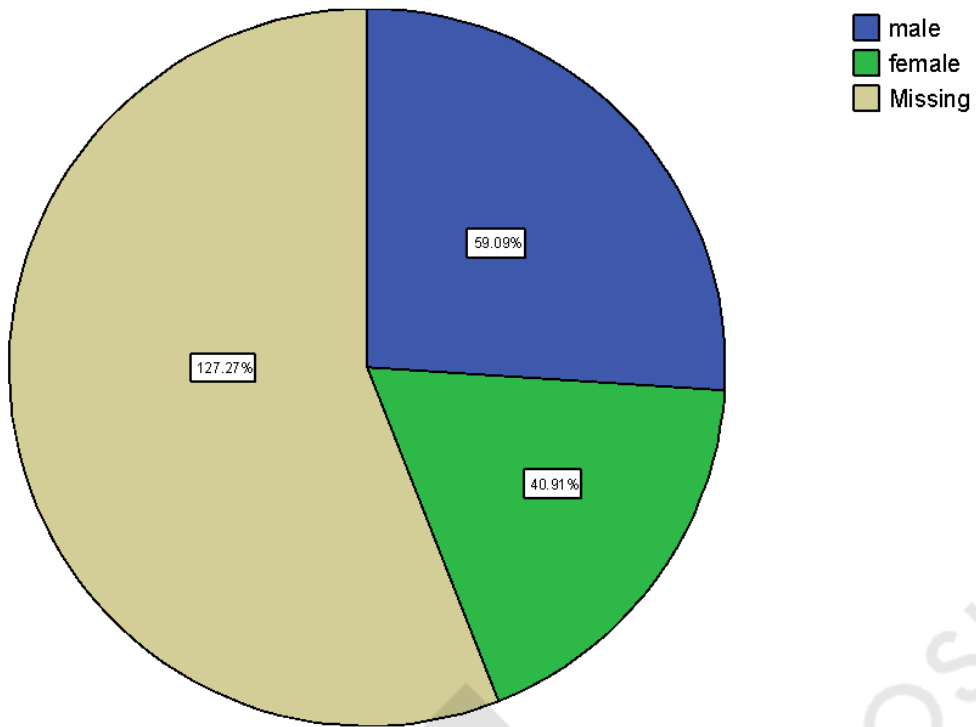


Marital\_Z

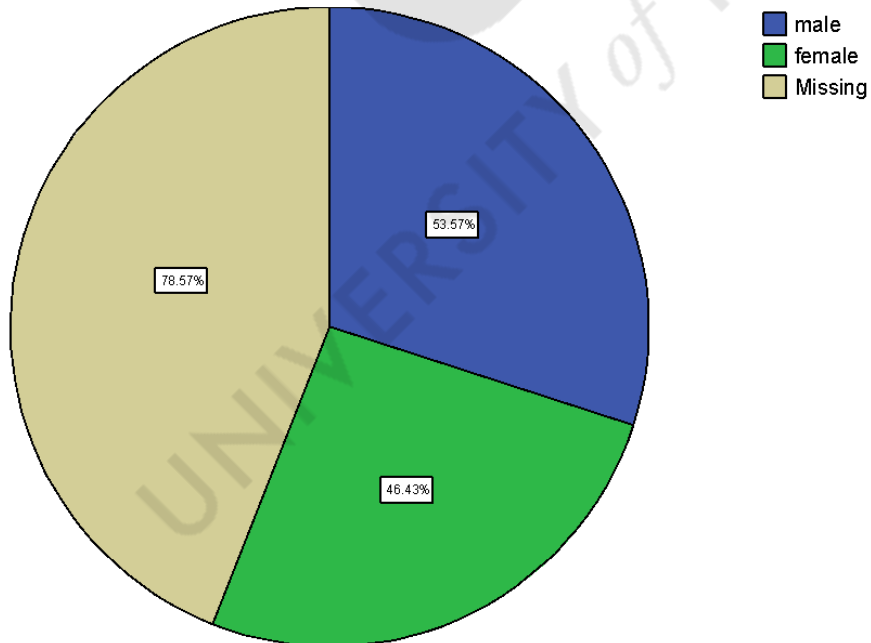




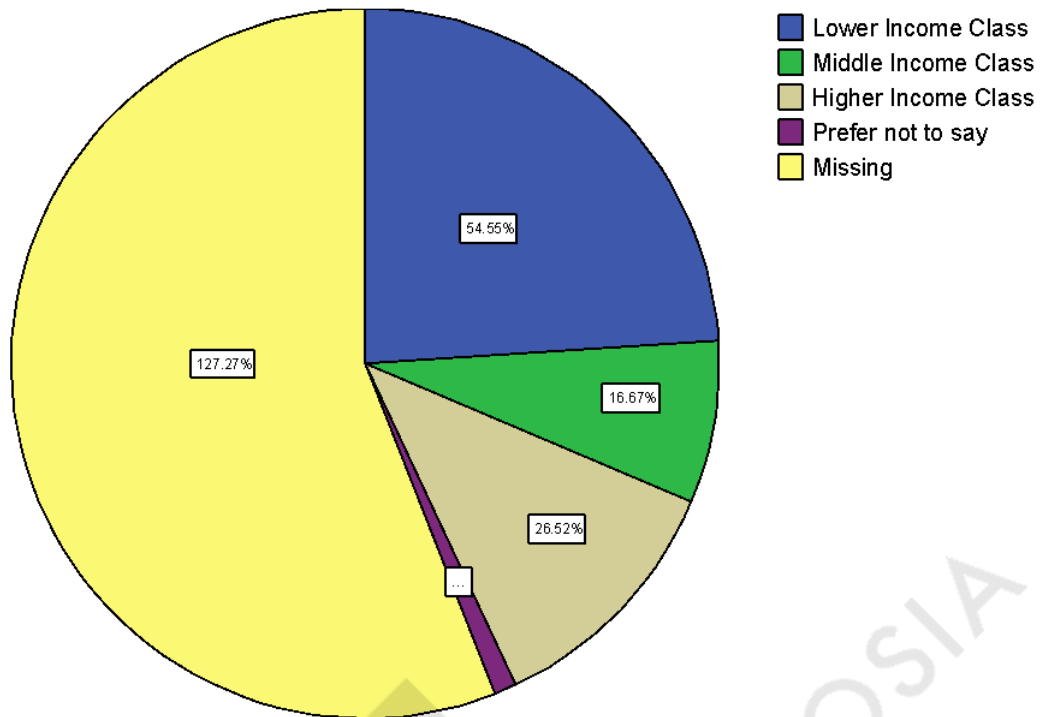
Gender\_Y



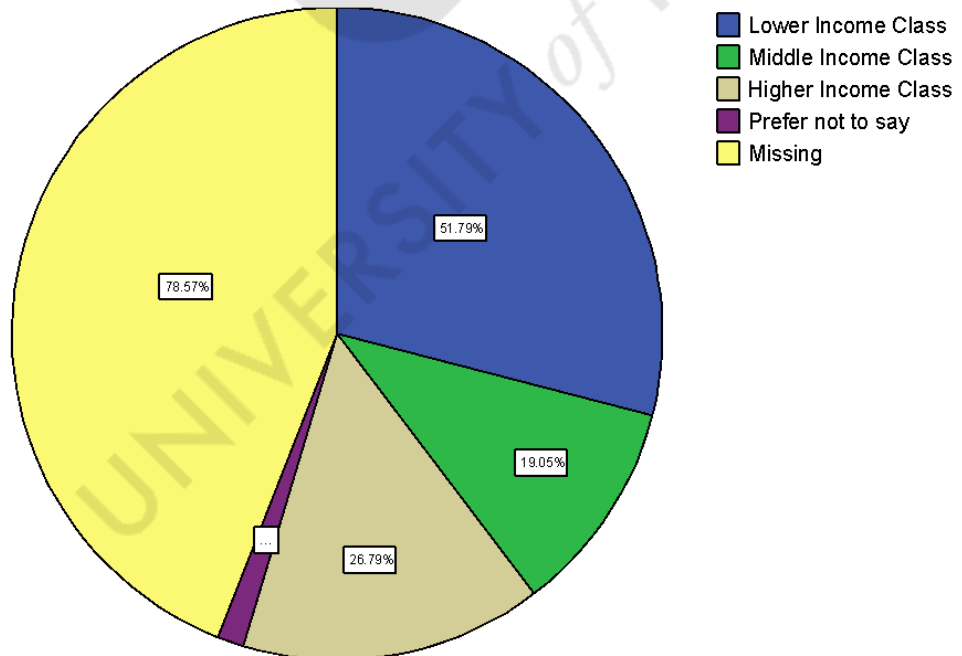
Gender\_Z



Social\_Class\_Y



Social\_Class\_Z



Descriptive Statistics

|                        | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean   | Std. Deviation |
|------------------------|-----|---------|---------|--------|----------------|
| Information_Quality    | 300 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 4.0017 | .62454         |
| Credibility            | 300 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 4.0742 | .59692         |
| Website_Quality        | 300 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 4.2575 | .54226         |
| Motivation             | 300 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 4.2842 | .57640         |
| Innovativeness         | 300 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 4.3317 | .54096         |
| Destination_Facination | 300 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 4.3508 | .52333         |
| Popularity_hueristics  | 300 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 4.1358 | .63884         |
| Destination_Image      | 300 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 4.2283 | .59852         |
| Usergenerated_content  | 300 | .75     | 5.00    | 4.2167 | .57372         |
| EWOM                   | 300 | .50     | 5.00    | 3.9392 | .74472         |
| Consumer_Intention     | 300 | 1.00    | 5.00    | 4.2517 | .54289         |
| Valid N (listwise)     | 300 |         |         |        |                |

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .604 <sup>a</sup> | .365     | .362              | .59464                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), IQ

| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> |            |                |     |             |         |                   |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Model              |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
| 1                  | Regression | 60.456         | 1   | 60.456      | 170.975 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|                    | Residual   | 105.371        | 298 | .354        |         |                   |
|                    | Total      | 165.827        | 299 |             |         |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: E\_WOM

b. Predictors: (Constant), IQ

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |
|---------------------------|
|---------------------------|

| Model |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. |
|-------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
|       |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| 1     | (Constant) | 1.058                       | .223       |                           | 4.744  | .000 |
|       | IQ         | .720                        | .055       | .604                      | 13.076 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: E\_WOM

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .635 <sup>a</sup> | .403     | .401              | .57620                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), CR

| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> |            |                |     |             |         |                   |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Model              |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
| 1                  | Regression | 66.888         | 1   | 66.888      | 201.463 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|                    | Residual   | 98.939         | 298 | .332        |         |                   |
|                    | Total      | 165.827        | 299 |             |         |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: :E\_WOM

b. Predictors: (Constant), CR

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |            |                             |            |                           |        |      |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| Model                     |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. |
|                           |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| 1                         | (Constant) | .711                        | .230       |                           | 3.093  | .002 |
|                           | CR         | .792                        | .056       | .635                      | 14.194 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: :E\_WOM

| Model Summary |
|---------------|
|---------------|

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | .535 <sup>a</sup> | .286     | .284              | .63033                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), WQ

| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> |            |                |     |             |         |                   |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Model              |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
| 1                  | Regression | 47.427         | 1   | 47.427      | 119.370 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|                    | Residual   | 118.400        | 298 | .397        |         |                   |
|                    | Total      | 165.827        | 299 |             |         |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: :E\_WOM

b. Predictors: (Constant), WQ

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |            |                             |            |                           |        |      |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| Model                     |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. |
|                           |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| 1                         | (Constant) | .812                        | .289       |                           | 2.815  | .005 |
|                           | WQ         | .734                        | .067       | .535                      | 10.926 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: :E\_WOM

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .616 <sup>a</sup> | .379     | .377              | .58792                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), MOT

| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> |            |                |     |             |         |                   |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Model              |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
| 1                  | Regression | 62.824         | 1   | 62.824      | 181.757 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|                    | Residual   | 103.003        | 298 | .346        |         |                   |

|  |       |         |     |  |  |  |
|--|-------|---------|-----|--|--|--|
|  | Total | 165.827 | 299 |  |  |  |
|--|-------|---------|-----|--|--|--|

a. Dependent Variable: E\_WOM

b. Predictors: (Constant), MOT

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |            |                             |            |                           |        |      |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| Model                     |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. |
|                           |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| 1                         | (Constant) | .532                        | .255       |                           | 2.087  | .038 |
|                           | MOT        | .795                        | .059       | .616                      | 13.482 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: E\_WOM

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .629 <sup>a</sup> | .396     | .394              | .57974                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), INN

| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> |            |                |     |             |         |                   |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Model              |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
| 1                  | Regression | 65.670         | 1   | 65.670      | 195.390 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|                    | Residual   | 100.157        | 298 | .336        |         |                   |
|                    | Total      | 165.827        | 299 |             |         |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: E\_WOM

b. Predictors: (Constant), INN

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |  |                             |            |                           |   |      |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|---|------|
| Model                     |  | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|                           |  | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |   |      |

|   |            |      |      |      |        |      |
|---|------------|------|------|------|--------|------|
| 1 | (Constant) | .187 | .271 |      | .689   | .491 |
|   | INN        | .866 | .062 | .629 | 13.978 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: E\_WOM

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .559 <sup>a</sup> | .313     | .310              | .61848                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), DF

| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> |            |                |     |             |         |                   |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Model              |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
| 1                  | Regression | 51.838         | 1   | 51.838      | 135.519 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|                    | Residual   | 113.989        | 298 | .383        |         |                   |
|                    | Total      | 165.827        | 299 |             |         |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: E\_WOM

b. Predictors: (Constant), DF

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |            |                             |            |                           |        |      |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| Model                     |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. |
|                           |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| 1                         | (Constant) | .477                        | .300       |                           | 1.594  | .112 |
|                           | DF         | .796                        | .068       | .559                      | 11.641 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: E\_WOM

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .559 <sup>a</sup> | .313     | .310              | .61848                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), DF

| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> |            |                |     |             |         |                   |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Model              |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
| 1                  | Regression | 51.838         | 1   | 51.838      | 135.519 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|                    | Residual   | 113.989        | 298 | .383        |         |                   |
|                    | Total      | 165.827        | 299 |             |         |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: E\_WOM

b. Predictors: (Constant), DF

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |            |                             |            |                           |        |      |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| Model                     |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. |
|                           |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| 1                         | (Constant) | .477                        | .300       |                           | 1.594  | .112 |
|                           | DF         | .796                        | .068       | .559                      | 11.641 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: E\_WOM

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .707 <sup>a</sup> | .499     | .498              | .52788                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), DI

| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> |            |                |     |             |         |                   |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Model              |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
| 1                  | Regression | 82.789         | 1   | 82.789      | 297.104 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|                    | Residual   | 83.038         | 298 | .279        |         |                   |
|                    | Total      | 165.827        | 299 |             |         |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: E\_WOM



b. Predictors: (Constant), DI

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |            |                             |            |                           |        |      |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| Model                     |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. |
|                           |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| 1                         | (Constant) | .222                        | .218       |                           | 1.018  | .309 |
|                           | DI         | .879                        | .051       | .707                      | 17.237 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: E\_WOM

| Model Summary |                   |          |                   |                            |
|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Model         | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
| 1             | .688 <sup>a</sup> | .473     | .472              | .54136                     |

a. Predictors: (Constant), UGC

| ANOVA <sup>a</sup> |            |                |     |             |         |                   |
|--------------------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Model              |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F       | Sig.              |
| 1                  | Regression | 78.492         | 1   | 78.492      | 267.827 | .000 <sup>b</sup> |
|                    | Residual   | 87.335         | 298 | .293        |         |                   |
|                    | Total      | 165.827        | 299 |             |         |                   |

a. Dependent Variable: E\_WOM

b. Predictors: (Constant), UGC

| Coefficients <sup>a</sup> |            |                             |            |                           |        |      |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| Model                     |            | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. |
|                           |            | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |      |
| 1                         | (Constant) | .173                        | .232       |                           | .747   | .456 |
|                           | UGC        | .893                        | .055       | .688                      | 16.365 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable: E\_WOM

Run MATRIX procedure:

\*\*\*\*\* PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 \*\*\*\*\*<sup>1</sup>

Model : 4

Y : CI

X : IQ

M : ROI

Sample Size: 300

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: ROI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .6038 | .3646 | .3536 | 170.9746 | 1.0000 | 298.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff  | se    | t       | p     | LLCI  | ULCI   |
|----------|--------|-------|---------|-------|-------|--------|
| constant | 1.0580 | .2230 | 4.7444  | .0000 | .6192 | 1.4969 |
| IQ       | .7200  | .0551 | 13.0757 | .0000 | .6116 | .8283  |

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: CI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .7205 | .5191 | .1427 | 160.2733 | 2.0000 | 297.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff  | se    | t       | p     | LLCI   | ULCI   |
|----------|--------|-------|---------|-------|--------|--------|
| constant | 1.7251 | .1469 | 11.7420 | .0000 | 1.4360 | 2.0143 |
| IQ       | .3138  | .0439 | 7.1519  | .0000 | .2275  | .4002  |
| ROI      | .3226  | .0368 | 8.7653  | .0000 | .2501  | .3950  |

<sup>1</sup> Andrew F. Hayes, Ph.D. [www.afhayes.com](http://www.afhayes.com) Documentation available in Hayes (2022). [www.guilford.com/p/hayes3](http://www.guilford.com/p/hayes3)

\*\*\*\*\* DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y \*\*\*\*\*

Direct effect of X on Y

| Effect | se    | t      | p     | LLCI  | ULCI  |
|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| .3138  | .0439 | 7.1519 | .0000 | .2275 | .4002 |

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

| Effect | BootSE | BootLLCI | BootULCI |
|--------|--------|----------|----------|
| ROI    | .2322  | .1502    | .3212    |

\*\*\*\*\* ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS \*\*\*\*\*

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals: 5000

----- END MATRIX -----

\* Encoding: UTF-8.

preserve.

set printback=off.

Run MATRIX procedure:

\*\*\*\*\* PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 \*\*\*\*\*

Model : 4

Y : CI

X : CR

M : ROI

Sample Size: 300

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

ROI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .6351 | .4034 | .3320 | 201.4633 | 1.0000 | 298.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff | se    | t       | p     | LLCI  | ULCI   |
|----------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|--------|
| constant | .7110 | .2299 | 3.0930  | .0022 | .2586 | 1.1633 |
| CR       | .7924 | .0558 | 14.1938 | .0000 | .6825 | .9022  |

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

CI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .7076 | .5007 | .1481 | 148.9285 | 2.0000 | 297.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff  | se    | t       | p     | LLCI   | ULCI   |
|----------|--------|-------|---------|-------|--------|--------|
| constant | 1.7364 | .1560 | 11.1319 | .0000 | 1.4295 | 2.0434 |
| CR       | .2990  | .0483 | 6.1935  | .0000 | .2040  | .3940  |
| ROI      | .3293  | .0387 | 8.5095  | .0000 | .2531  | .4054  |

\*\*\*\*\* DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y \*\*\*\*\*

Direct effect of X on Y

| Effect | se    | t      | p     | LLCI  | ULCI  |
|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| .2990  | .0483 | 6.1935 | .0000 | .2040 | .3940 |

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

| Effect | BootSE | BootLLCI | BootULCI    |
|--------|--------|----------|-------------|
| ROI    | .2609  | .0461    | .1741 .3560 |

\*\*\*\*\* ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS \*\*\*\*\*

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals: 5000

----- END MATRIX -----

\* Encoding: UTF-8.

preserve.

set printback=off.

Run MATRIX procedure:

\*\*\*\*\* PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 \*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

Model : 4

Y : CI  
 X : WQ  
 M : ROI

Sample Size: 300

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

ROI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .5348 | .2860 | .3973 | 119.3699 | 1.0000 | 298.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff | se    | t       | p     | LLCI  | ULCI   |
|----------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|--------|
| constant | .8122 | .2885 | 2.8151  | .0052 | .2444 | 1.3800 |
| WQ       | .7345 | .0672 | 10.9257 | .0000 | .6022 | .8668  |

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: CI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .7178 | .5152 | .1438 | 157.8331 | 2.0000 | 297.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff  | se    | t       | p     | LLCI   | ULCI   |
|----------|--------|-------|---------|-------|--------|--------|
| constant | 1.4480 | .1759 | 8.2330  | .0000 | 1.1019 | 1.7942 |
| WQ       | .3330  | .0479 | 6.9569  | .0000 | .2388  | .4272  |
| ROI      | .3518  | .0349 | 10.0935 | .0000 | .2832  | .4204  |

\*\*\*\*\* DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y \*\*\*\*\*

Direct effect of X on Y

| Effect | se    | t      | p     | LLCI  | ULCI  |
|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| .3330  | .0479 | 6.9569 | .0000 | .2388 | .4272 |

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

| Effect | BootSE | BootLLCI | BootULCI    |
|--------|--------|----------|-------------|
| ROI    | .2584  | .0439    | .1774 .3479 |

\*\*\*\*\* ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS \*\*\*\*\*

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals: 5000

----- END MATRIX -----

\* Encoding: UTF-8.

preserve.

set printback=off.

Run MATRIX procedure:

\*\*\*\*\* PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 \*\*\*\*\*

Model : 4

Y : CI

X : MOT

M : ROI

Sample Size: 300

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

ROI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .6155 | .3789 | .3456 | 181.7570 | 1.0000 | 298.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff | se    | t       | p     | LLCI  | ULCI   |
|----------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|--------|
| constant | .5322 | .2550 | 2.0870  | .0377 | .0304 | 1.0340 |
| MOT      | .7953 | .0590 | 13.4817 | .0000 | .6792 | .9113  |

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

CI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .7413 | .5495 | .1337 | 181.1649 | 2.0000 | 297.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff  | se    | t      | p     | LLCI   | ULCI   |
|----------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| constant | 1.3865 | .1597 | 8.6813 | .0000 | 1.0722 | 1.7008 |
| MOT      | .4023  | .0465 | 8.6433 | .0000 | .3107  | .4939  |
| ROI      | .2898  | .0360 | 8.0462 | .0000 | .2190  | .3607  |

\*\*\*\*\* DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y \*\*\*\*\*

Direct effect of X on Y

| Effect | se    | t      | p     | LLCI  | ULCI  |
|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| .4023  | .0465 | 8.6433 | .0000 | .3107 | .4939 |

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

| Effect | BootSE | BootLLCI | BootULCI |       |
|--------|--------|----------|----------|-------|
| ROI    | .2305  | .0415    | .1539    | .3138 |

\*\*\*\*\* ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS \*\*\*\*\*

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals: 5000

----- END MATRIX -----

\* Encoding: UTF-8.

preserve.

set printback=off.

Run MATRIX procedure:

\*\*\*\*\* PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 \*\*\*\*\*

Model : 4

Y : CI

X : INN

M : ROI

Sample Size: 300

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

ROI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .6293 | .3960 | .3361 | 195.3899 | 1.0000 | 298.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff | se    | t       | p     | LLCI   | ULCI  |
|----------|-------|-------|---------|-------|--------|-------|
| constant | .1865 | .2705 | .6895   | .4911 | -.3459 | .7189 |
| INN      | .8663 | .0620 | 13.9782 | .0000 | .7444  | .9883 |

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: CI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .7408 | .5488 | .1339 | 180.6423 | 2.0000 | 297.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff  | se    | t      | p     | LLCI  | ULCI   |
|----------|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| constant | 1.2584 | .1709 | 7.3640 | .0000 | .9221 | 1.5946 |
| INN      | .4333  | .0503 | 8.6091 | .0000 | .3342 | .5323  |
| ROI      | .2834  | .0366 | 7.7521 | .0000 | .2115 | .3554  |

\*\*\*\*\* DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y \*\*\*\*\*

Direct effect of X on Y

| Effect | se    | t      | p     | LLCI  | ULCI  |
|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| .4333  | .0503 | 8.6091 | .0000 | .3342 | .5323 |



Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

| Effect | BootSE | BootLLCI | BootULCI    |
|--------|--------|----------|-------------|
| ROI    | .2455  | .0440    | .1642 .3379 |

\*\*\*\*\* ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS \*\*\*\*\*

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals: 5000

----- END MATRIX -----

\* Encoding: UTF-8.

preserve.

set printback=off.

Run MATRIX procedure:

\*\*\*\*\* PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 \*\*\*\*\*

Model : 4

Y : CI

X : DF

M : ROI

Sample Size: 300

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

ROI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .5591 | .3126 | .3825 | 135.5192 | 1.0000 | 298.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff | se    | t      | p     | LLCI   | ULCI   |
|----------|-------|-------|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| constant | .4775 | .2995 | 1.5942 | .1119 | -.1119 | 1.0669 |

DF .7956 .0683 11.6413 .0000 .6611 .9301

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: CI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .7288 | .5312 | .1391 | 168.2707 | 2.0000 | 297.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff  | se    | t      | p     | LLCI  | ULCI   |
|----------|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| constant | 1.2741 | .1814 | 7.0250 | .0000 | .9172 | 1.6311 |
| DF       | .3856  | .0497 | 7.7568 | .0000 | .2878 | .4834  |
| ROI      | .3300  | .0349 | 9.4464 | .0000 | .2612 | .3987  |

\*\*\*\*\* DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y \*\*\*\*\*

Direct effect of X on Y

| Effect | se    | t      | p     | LLCI  | ULCI  |
|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| .3856  | .0497 | 7.7568 | .0000 | .2878 | .4834 |

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

| Effect | BootSE | BootLLCI | BootULCI    |
|--------|--------|----------|-------------|
| ROI    | .2625  | .0442    | .1815 .3540 |

\*\*\*\*\* ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS \*\*\*\*\*

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals: 5000

----- END MATRIX -----

\* Encoding: UTF-8.

preserve.

set printback=off.

Run MATRIX procedure:

\*\*\*\*\* PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 \*\*\*\*\*

Model : 4

Y : CI

X : PH

M : ROI

Sample Size: 300

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: ROI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .6976 | .4866 | .2857 | 282.4337 | 1.0000 | 298.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff | se    | t       | p     | LLCI  | ULCI  |
|----------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| constant | .5760 | .2025 | 2.8448  | .0048 | .1776 | .9745 |
| PH       | .8132 | .0484 | 16.8058 | .0000 | .7179 | .9084 |

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: CI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .7299 | .5328 | .1386 | 169.3685 | 2.0000 | 297.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff  | se    | t       | p     | LLCI   | ULCI   |
|----------|--------|-------|---------|-------|--------|--------|
| constant | 1.6994 | .1429 | 11.8887 | .0000 | 1.4181 | 1.9807 |
| PH       | .3686  | .0470 | 7.8362  | .0000 | .2760  | .4612  |
| ROI      | .2609  | .0404 | 6.4663  | .0000 | .1815  | .3403  |

\*\*\*\*\* DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y \*\*\*\*\*

Direct effect of X on Y

| Effect | se    | t      | p     | LLCI  | ULCI  |
|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| .3686  | .0470 | 7.8362 | .0000 | .2760 | .4612 |

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

| Effect | BootSE | BootLLCI | BootULCI    |
|--------|--------|----------|-------------|
| ROI    | .2122  | .0468    | .1276 .3111 |

\*\*\*\*\* ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS \*\*\*\*\*

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals: 5000

----- END MATRIX -----

\* Encoding: UTF-8.

preserve.

set printback=off.

Run MATRIX procedure:

\*\*\*\*\* PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 \*\*\*\*\*

Model : 4

Y : CI

X : DI

M : ROI

Sample Size: 300

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: ROI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .7066 | .4992 | .2787 | 297.1039 | 1.0000 | 298.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff | se    | t       | p     | LLCI   | ULCI  |
|----------|-------|-------|---------|-------|--------|-------|
| constant | .2217 | .2178 | 1.0181  | .3095 | -.2069 | .6504 |
| DI       | .8792 | .0510 | 17.2367 | .0000 | .7788  | .9795 |

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: CI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .7539 | .5683 | .1281 | 195.4839 | 2.0000 | 297.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff  | se    | t      | p     | LLCI   | ULCI   |
|----------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| constant | 1.4274 | .1479 | 9.6490 | .0000 | 1.1363 | 1.7185 |
| DI       | .4658  | .0489 | 9.5316 | .0000 | .3696  | .5620  |
| ROI      | .2170  | .0393 | 5.5243 | .0000 | .1397  | .2943  |

\*\*\*\*\* DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y \*\*\*\*\*

Direct effect of X on Y

| Effect | se    | t      | p     | LLCI  | ULCI  |
|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| .4658  | .0489 | 9.5316 | .0000 | .3696 | .5620 |

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

| Effect | BootSE | BootLLCI | BootULCI    |
|--------|--------|----------|-------------|
| ROI    | .1908  | .0446    | .1077 .2838 |

\*\*\*\*\* ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS \*\*\*\*\*

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals: 5000

----- END MATRIX -----

\* Encoding: UTF-8.

preserve.

set printback=off.

Run MATRIX procedure:

\*\*\*\*\* PROCESS Procedure for SPSS Version 4.2 \*\*\*\*\*

Model : 4

Y : CI

X : UGC

M : ROI

Sample Size: 300

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: ROI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .6880 | .4733 | .2931 | 267.8271 | 1.0000 | 298.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff | se    | t       | p     | LLCI   | ULCI   |
|----------|-------|-------|---------|-------|--------|--------|
| constant | .1734 | .2322 | .7469   | .4557 | -.2835 | .6304  |
| UGC      | .8931 | .0546 | 16.3654 | .0000 | .7857  | 1.0004 |

\*\*\*\*\*

OUTCOME VARIABLE: CI

Model Summary

| R     | R-sq  | MSE   | F        | df1    | df2      | p     |
|-------|-------|-------|----------|--------|----------|-------|
| .7465 | .5573 | .1314 | 186.9052 | 2.0000 | 297.0000 | .0000 |

Model

|          | coeff  | se    | t      | p     | LLCI   | ULCI   |
|----------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| constant | 1.3894 | .1556 | 8.9283 | .0000 | 1.0831 | 1.6957 |
| UGC      | .4536  | .0503 | 9.0099 | .0000 | .3545  | .5527  |
| ROI      | .2411  | .0388 | 6.2157 | .0000 | .1647  | .3174  |

\*\*\*\*\* DIRECT AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y \*\*\*\*\*

Direct effect of X on Y

| Effect | se    | t      | p     | LLCI  | ULCI  |
|--------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| .4536  | .0503 | 9.0099 | .0000 | .3545 | .5527 |

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

| Effect | BootSE | BootLLCI | BootULCI    |
|--------|--------|----------|-------------|
| ROI    | .2153  | .0429    | .1357 .3049 |

\*\*\*\*\* ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS \*\*\*\*\*

Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output: 95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals: 5000

----- END MATRIX -----

