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Online Consumer Reviews Adoption in Tourism
Analysis of review usefulness and consumer susceptibility to influence

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Abstract
Consumers today rely more on online consumer reviews (OCRs) for their purchases than seller provided information. However, neither all the OCRs are equally useful nor all the consumers are equally receptive to these reviews; necessitating the study of factors affecting the adoption of OCRs. This study investigated the impact of message related and the consumer related crucial factors on OCRs adoption in tourism. A survey was conducted to collect data from 630 tourists visiting various tourist destinations in the district Swat of Khyber-pahtunkhwa province in Pakistan. The collected data were analyzed by applying structural equation modeling techniques in the Smart PLS 4 software. Results of the data analysis revealed that Information credibility of the OCRs has direct as well as indirect (Via information usefulness) impact on the consumer information adoption. Information quality impact on the information usefulness found to be insignificant; however its impact on the information adoption was significant. Consumer susceptibility to informational influence moderates the relationship between information credibility and information adoption as well the relationship between the information usefulness and the information adoption. The study has implications for the theory and practice of social media marketing in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Keywords: *Social media marketing, online consumer reviews, Information usefulness Information adoption, Susceptibility to informational influence.*

1. Introduction

Customers today predominantly rely on electronic word of mouth (eWOM) for their purchases due to its perceived usefulness and credibility (Filieri et al., 2023). eWOM is internet-mediated conversation among consumer about products and services. Since eWOM is created and circulated among peers without commercial interests, it has been acknowledged as a more trustworthy source of information compared to the marketer-generated messages (Xiao et al,

2024). Hence, it has greater influence on customer purchase decisions (Brown, Broderick, and Lee 2007), making it indispensible for the marketer to understand its effectiveness (Santateresa-Bernat et al., 2023).

Consequently, firms are switching towards the social media platforms. A recent survey on social media usage revealed that 94% of the marketers use social media. Of the respondents, 87% confirmed an increase their business exposure, 78% confirmed increased customer traffic to their websites (Stelzener (2018). The issue is that the marketing practitioners use social media without adequate theoretical understanding to support their strategies, required for a comprehensive strategic management. Therefore, a more thorough knowledge base is needed for effective social media marketing in a changing media environment (Feng, 2019; Liu, Fraustino & Jin, 2016).

eWOM is defined as *"Any positive or negative statement made by ta potential actual or former customer about a product or company which is made available to the multitude of people and institutes through the internet"* (Henning-Thurau et al. 2004, p39). Tourists frequently rely on eWOM for travel decisions, as tourism is an experiential industry where the experiences of other tourists play a crucial role in decision-making. Online consumer reviews (OCRs), a prominent form of eWOM, allows tourists to express opinions and experiences on various digital platforms like Airbnb, Booking.com and Trip advisor. Travellers today rely heavily on these OCRs because of their credibility as independent source of information and usefulness due to their day to day language (Camilleri & Filier, 2023). Because of their eminence as preferred source of information for the tourists, it is indispensable for the managers in the hospitality and tourism industry to understand how OCRs affect tourist decision making (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Kimmel & Kitchen, 2014; Moorman 2014).

The eWOM literature highlights three prominent research streams: the communicator perspective, which examines the motives behind sharing product reviews; the impact of eWOM on information adoption; and the receiver perspective, which explores the conditions under which eWOM is most effective. The second line of research aims to discuss the impact of eWOM usefulness for information adoption. The third stream takes the receiver perspective and tries to explain their predisposition towards word of mouth. It studies the conditions under which WOM is more effective. Source credibility, information quality and receiver's susceptibility to influence have been found to be the main reason for the success of word of mouth and consequently its adoption (Hlee, Lee & Koo 2018).

This study builds on previous research focusing on message and receiver characteristics to explain eWOM adoption in tourism. Previous research studies have explored various *characteristics of reviews (Quality vs. Credibility)* that affect consumer's perception of usefulness and consequently their adoption. These studies have made substantial contribution towards our understanding of WOM adoption mechanism, but these do not explain what type of information is adopted more by consumers in their decision making (McCabe & Wang, 2018).

For the adoption of online consumer reviews (OCRs), review usefulness is a key determinant. Studies have generally confirmed that consumers adopt information they find helpful for making purchase decisions (Filieri et al., 2023). However, the extent to which review usefulness translates into actionable information adoption varies and is influenced by individual factors, such as *users' susceptibility to informational influence (High vs. Low)*. This factor has

gained attention in eWOM research, especially in the tourism industry, where purchase decisions often rely heavily on online reviews (Li, Wang, & Zhang, 2023). To the best of our knowledge, no study has yet examined the impact of consumer susceptibility to influence on OCR information adoption. Therefore, this research aims to understand the impact of both message-related and receiver-related characteristics on the adoption of OCRs in tourist decision-making. The objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate the impact of communication attributes on word of mouth adoption in online buying.
2. To examine the moderating impact of consumer susceptibility on information adoption.

Theoretically, this study will enhance our understanding of eWOM effectiveness by further developing and validating the Information Adoption Model (IAM). Distinguishing between information usefulness and information adoption as two separate pathways will provide valuable insights into online information usefulness and consumers' willingness to adopt this information in purchase decision-making. Practically, the study will help marketers encourage and highlight online consumer reviews for the appropriate audience, thereby increasing brand awareness and adoption.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Information Adoption

Information adoption refers to how people are influenced by available information Xu et al. (2021). Researchers have tried to explain the mechanism for the effect of information presented online in the form of online consumer reviews (OCRs) using different theories. The noticeable theories of information adoption are Heurastic-systamatic (H&S) model or dual process model of persuasion (Chaiken, 1980) and elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cocciopo, 1986). The H&S model postulates that depending upon the importance of purchase customers either systematically evaluate the given information or use short cut cues to make a purchase decision. While ELM is another psychological theory that explains how customers use central and peripheral cognitive routes to make purchase decisions of important vs. unimportant purchases. Sussman and Siegal (2003) built on the ELM theory and developed Information adoption model (IAM) to explain information adoption on social media.

IAM explains how people adopt and diffuse information based on some characteristics related to the elements of communication (e.g. Message vs. source characteristics) Xu et al. (2021). According to this model critical factors of information adoption are: the credibility, relevance, novelty and quality of information. Many scholars believe that IAM is particularly relevant for online information investigations because it focuses specifically on the impact of information on computer-mediated communication platforms (Cheung, Lee, & Rabjohn 2008; Cheung & Thadani 2012; Shu & Scott 2014). Thus, applying IAM supported by ELM offers a robust framework for explaining eWOM adoption in the context of social media and e-commerce websites.

Therefore, Information adoption model underpinned by ELM provides the theoretical base for the hypotheses development and testing in this study, as it explains why **information quality** (central route) and **information credibility** (peripheral route) are crucial predictors of information usefulness and adoption. More recent research supports this application. For example, Li et al. (2023) confirmed that consumers exposed to high-quality online reviews

engage in deeper elaboration and are more likely to perceive the content as useful, ultimately leading to stronger adoption intentions. Similarly, Xu and Weng (2024) found that both argument strength and source credibility significantly shaped eWOM adoption on social commerce platforms.

2.2 Information Quality

Information quality, defined as the strength and relevance of the content, is pivotal in consumer evaluation and purchase decisions (Yeap et al., 2014). High-quality reviews characterized by relevance, objectivity, and comprehensibility significantly influence purchase intentions (Zhang et al., 2014; Park et al., 2007). It plays significant role in the evaluation stage of consumer purchase journey (Filieri & McLeay 2014) and purchase intentions. Zhang et al. (2014) discovered that one of the main factors influencing consumers' propensity to buy products is the quality of the argument (informative and persuasive contents). Park, Lee, and Han (2007) found that online review quality, characterized by relevance, objectiveness, understandability, and completeness, is a key factor leading to information adoption. According to ELM theory information quality is central to OCR adoption because when these are logically structured and backed by factual information consumers are more likely to process, understand and use them in decision making. Results of recent studies (e.g. Xu et al., 2021) have demonstrated the positive impact of quality information on its adoption.

Thus, we hypothesize that:

H1: Information Quality has significant/positive impact on information usefulness.

H2: Information Quality has significant/positive impact on information usefulness.

2.3 Information credibility

As the Internet is so widely used, practically anybody may publish eWOM content, making information credibility more important to customers (Reichelt, Sievert & Jacob 2014; Yoo, Kim, & Sanders 2015). Credibility reflects trustworthiness and expertise in eWOM (Wathen & Burkell, 2002). Prior studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between customers' purchase intentions and the reliability of the information (Dou et al. 2012; Park, Lee & Han, 2007; Prendergast, Ko, & Yuen, 2010; Hsu & Tsou, 2011). An information source (the reviewer) who gives precise, factual, and thorough details on the pertinent aspects of a product or service may be seen as more reliable than one who gives a succinct, shallow, and subjective summary. In the age of (Mis) Information and uncertainty of the reviewer's identity and internet it is important to establish the credibility of the reviewer before information adoption, Liu and Park (2023). Therefore, in the context of online purchases, we consider information credibility to be one of the elements influencing the usefulness perception and adoption of information.

H3: Information Credibility significantly and positively impacts the Information usefulness.

H4: Information Credibility significantly and positively impacts the Information Adoption.

2.3 Information Usefulness

Information usefulness is the receiver's perception of the contents being relevant and helpful in the evaluation and usage of the product or service. The usefulness of information in a review is a matter of personal opinion based on the incorporation of fresh concepts and viewpoints that improve the articulation of a product or service (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Sussman & Siegal, 2003) When consumers have access to relevant information, their confidence and likelihood of accepting a product or service increase (Khwaja et al., 2020). Further, in the presence of AI

assisted recommendation systems the usefulness of the information has become more important Chen et al. (2025).

Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H5: Information Usefulness has significant and positive impact on Information Adoption.

As the usefulness of information is the precursor of information adoption (Nadlifatin et al., 2022) which has been found to be informed by the quality as well as credibility of the reviews, we hypothesize that:

H6: Information usefulness mediates the relationship between Information quality and Information adoption.

H7: Information usefulness mediates the relationship between Information credibility and Information adoption.

2.4 Susceptibility to Interpersonal Influence

Consumer susceptibility to influences affects decision-making and conformity (Bearden et al., 1989). The research has distinguished between two types of interpersonal influence: normative and informational impacts (Bearden et al., 1989). According to Burnkrant and Cousineau (1975), normative influences are the propensity to adhere to the standards, norms, and expectations of others. Conversely, informational influence refers to the propensity to follow advice from knowledgeable people and to follow their recommendations when choosing a brand, product, and retailer (Bearden et al. 1989).

As this study chiefly deals with the message factors , so the informational influence is most relevant component that is assumed to have moderating effect among the message characteristics and it adoption in decision making (Lis & Korchmar, 2023). Information influence means taking provided information as reality based on some clues in the information or credibility of the informer. As people differ on susceptibility to information influence, the perception and adoption of the information may also be different Lis and Korchmar (2023) . Studies have demonstrated that people with high susceptibility to influences adopt information even when the argument of information is weak (Li et al.2024).

Therefore we propose the following hypothesis:

H8: There is moderation effect of Susceptibility to Informational Influence on the relationship between Information Credibility and Information Adoption.

H9: There is moderation effect of Susceptibility to Informational Influence on the relationship between Information usefulness and Information Adoption.

H10: There is moderation effect of Susceptibility to Informational Influence on the relationship between Information Quality and Information Adoption.

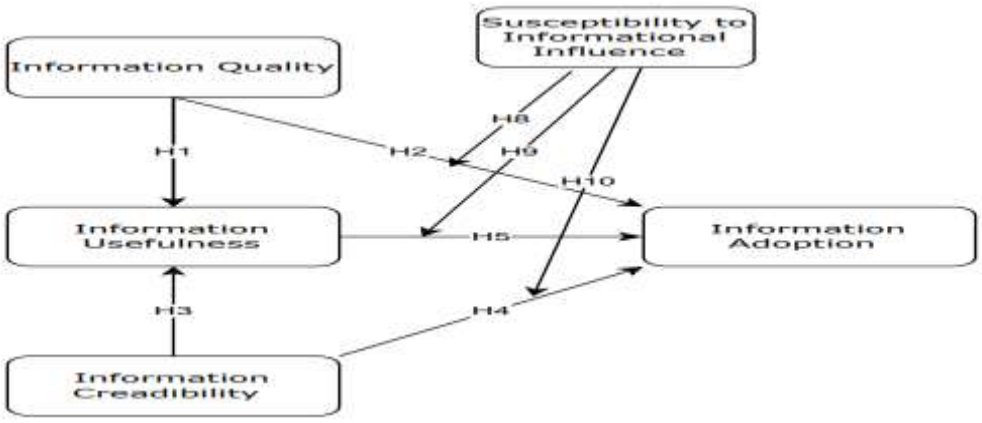

Figure1: The conceptual Framework.

H6: Information Quality → Information Usefulness → Information Adoption

H7: Information Credibility → Information Usefulness → Information Adoption

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Design & Sample

To test the hypotheses, data was collected onsite from the tourists visiting various destinations in district swat. District swat is located in the khyber-pahtunkhwa province of Pakistan. This province is a significant hub for tourism, accounting for one-third of the country's tourism activities. A structured questionnaire was distributed among 630 respondents, selected based on their ability and willingness to participate in the survey. The researchers ensured randomness in the data collection process by targeting a diverse range of tourist destinations, including popular attractions, cafes, and leisure centers in the areas of Kalam, Malam Jaba, and Marghazar.

3.2 Measures

The researchers employed well-established scales from previous studies on consumer information search behavior. To measure information quality, we used items from Park, Lee, and Han (2007) scale while the information credibility scale items were adapted from the Smith and Vogt (1995) and Prendergast, Ko, and Yuen (2010). Information usefulness was measured using scales of (Lee, & Rabjohn, 2008). Susceptibility to informational influence was assessed by the adapting the scale of Bearden *et al*. (1989). The items for information adoption were adapted from Cheung et al. (2009). All variables were assessed with a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

3.2 Data Analysis

The researcher used SPSS 23 version for descriptive data analysis of the sample and the variables of the study. As the study model was complex, the researchers further applied structural equation model (SEM) techniques using smart PLS software version 4 to evaluate the model fit (measurement model) and testing of hypothesis (structural model). SEM can handle complex models with multiple variables simultaneously. It facilitates the analysis of both latent and observable variables, which makes it perfect for studying more complex models (Wetzels et al., 2009). It is preferred over covariance based modeling techniques used in software like AMOS

and Lisral when the theory testing is the main objective of the research and/or prediction of an outcome (Hair et al., 2016).

4. Data Analysis Results

Before performing the data analysis, the data set was screened to check the missing values and outliers. This resulted in removal of 30 questionnaires because of missing data and/or having straight / diagonal response pattern and 600 questionnaires were included in the data analysis

4.1Measurement model results

Table1.depicts the validity and reliability of the study constructs. Cronbach alpha and Composite reliability (CR) scores of all the variables were higher than the thresh hold values (0.7 and 0.6 respectively) confirming the reliability of the constructs. All of the constructs had higher AVE value than the threshold value (>0.5), establishing the inter-item consistency reliability. The square roots of the constructs were all higher than their product with other constructs, shown in bold values in the in the table, confirms the discriminant validity of the constructs.

Table 1. Measurement Model Results

Latent Variables	Alpha	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
(1) Information Quality	0.853	0.932	0.872	**0.836**				
(2) Information Credibility	0.862	0.872	0.865	0.425	**0.837**			
(3) Information Usefulness	0.743	0.907	0.732	0.447	0.610	**0.845**		
(4) Information Adoption	0.794	0.911	0.632	0.476	0.630	0.634	**0.763**	
(5) Susceptibility to Influ.	0.795	0.821	0.791	0.342	0.451	0.593	0.453	**0.753**

Note: Composite reliability (CR); Average variance extracted (AVE). The bold numbers in the table are the square roots of the AVE's, showing discriminant validity of the constructs.

4.2 Results of Hypothesis testing

4.2.1 Direct Relationship results

The study results confirm the positive significant influence of information quality (IQ) on the information adoption (IA), as indicated by the study hypothesis (H1: $\beta = 0.31$, $t = 2.28$, $p < 0.01$), however the relationship between IQ and Information usefulness (IU) could not be established (H2: $\beta = -0.01$, $t = 0.13$, $p < 0.89$). The finding suggests Information credibility strongly predicts information adoption (H3: $\beta = 0.24$, $t = 2.289$, $p < 0.02$). The study results show that the impact of Information credibility on Information usefulness is even stronger (H4: $\beta = 0.73$, $t = 6.74$, $p < 0.01$), indicating the importance of credibility of information in the customer information adoption. The Information usefulness intern significantly impact information adoption (H5: $\beta = 0.59$, $t = 4.17$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting the significance of useful information in tourists decision making.

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information adoption (H3: β = 0.24, t = 2.89, p < 0.02), highlighting the importance of credible information in customer information adoption. The impact of information credibility on information usefulness is even stronger (H4: β = 0.73, t = 6.74, p < 0.01), indicating that credible information is perceived as more useful by tourists. Furthermore, information usefulness significantly impacts information adoption (H5: β = 0.59, t = 4.17, p < 0.01), suggesting that useful information plays a crucial role in tourists' decision-making processes.

Table 2: Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Sample Mean **β**	Std. deviation	T statistics	P value	Decision
H1: IQ→IA	0.31	0.12	2.53	0.01	Supported
H2: IQ→IU	-0.01	0.12	0.13	0.89	Not supported
H3: IC→IA	0.24	0.12	2.89	0.02	supported
H4: IC→IU	0.73	0.10	6.74	0.01	Supported
H5: IU→IA	0.59	0.14	4.17	0.01	Supported
H6: IQ→IU→IA	-0.01	0.07	0.13	0.89	Not Supported
H7: IC→ IU→ IA	0.43	0.12	3.48	0.01	Supported
H8: IQ×SUS→IA	0.38	0.13	1.20	0.65	Not Supported
H9: IC×SUS→IA	0.69	0.11	2.67	0.01	Supported
H10: IU×SUS→IA	0.43	0.14	4.81	0.01	Supported

Note: Information Quality (IQ); Information Credibility (IC); Information usefulness (IU); Information adoption IA

4.2.2 Indirect Relationship Results

Interestingly, information usefulness does not mediate the relationship between information quality and information adoption (H6: β = -0.01, t = 0.13, p < 0.89), indicating that the usefulness of information does not play a role in the adoption of high-quality information. However, information usefulness mediates the relationship between information credibility and information adoption (H7: β = 0.43, t = 3.48, p < 0.01), suggesting that credible information is perceived as useful, which in turn leads to its adoption.

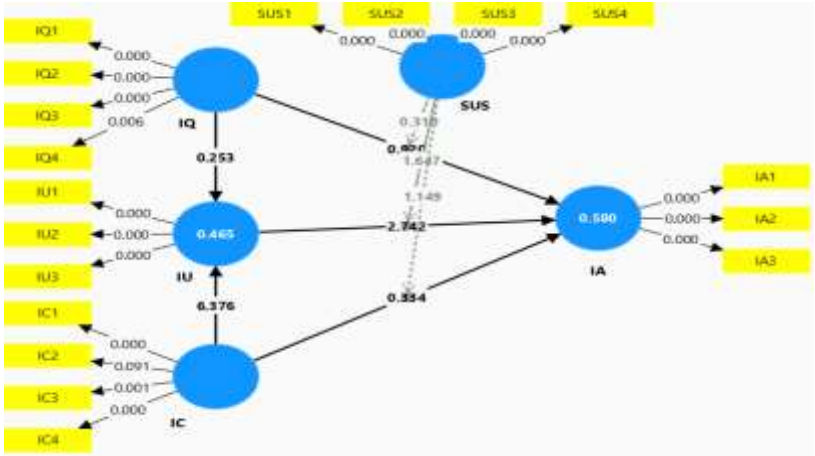

Figure 2: The Smart PLS Bootstrapping results with 5000 iteration

4.2.3 Moderation Effect Results

Susceptibility to informational influence (SUS) does not moderate the relationship between information quality and information adoption (H8: $\beta = 0.38$, $t = 1.20$, $p < 0.65$), but it does moderate the relationship between information credibility and information adoption (H9: $\beta = 0.69$, $t = 2.67$, $p < 0.01$), as well as the relationship between information usefulness and information adoption (H10: $\beta = 0.43$, $t = 4.81$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that the influence of credible and useful information on adoption is stronger for tourists who are more susceptible to informational influence.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight several critical factors that influence the adoption of online consumer reviews (OCRs) in the tourism sector. Information credibility emerges as the most significant factor, both directly and indirectly, affecting information adoption and usefulness. This underscores the importance of ensuring that information is perceived as credible by tourists. Interestingly, information quality does not significantly impact information usefulness, suggesting that tourists may prioritize the credibility and relevance of information over its quality. This finding is further supported by the lack of mediation effect of information usefulness between information quality and adoption.

The study also reveals that susceptibility to informational influence plays a crucial role in moderating the effects of information credibility and usefulness on adoption. This implies that personalizing content based on tourists' susceptibility to influence could enhance engagement and trust.

Overall, the study provides valuable insights for both theory and practice in digital marketing communication, particularly in the tourism and hospitality sectors. It emphasizes the need for credible and useful information to drive the adoption of OCRs by tourists

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The findings suggest that while information quality (IQ) positively impacts information adoption (H1, supported), it does not significantly affect information usefulness (H2, not supported). Our finding in about the impact of IQ is in partial agreement with previous research (Erkan & Evans, 2016; Sirithanaphonchai, 2017). This indicates that tourists may value high-quality information in their decision-making, but the perceived usefulness of such information depends largely on other factors, such as its relevance or credibility of the information. The lack of support for mediation effect of usefulness between quality and adoption (H6, not supported), backs this limited influence of IQ on IU. This implies that the platforms disseminating user-generated content about tourism products, services and experiences must ensure that reviews are designed and presented according to the audience interest and ability.

Information credibility (IC) demonstrates a significant direct effect on both information usefulness (IU), (H5, supported) and information adoption (IA), (H4, supported). Moreover, support for the mediated effect of information usefulness (H7, supported) confirms that credible information not only directly persuades users to adopt it, but also enhances its perceived usefulness that intern leads to the information adoption. These findings are in agreement with the previous research (Silaban et al., 2022; Filieri et al., 2018). Additionally, previous studies results also demonstrated the positive impact OCRs when travellers believed the reviewers to be honest and experts (Ismagilova et al., 2020).

A varied moderating effect of susceptibility to influence on the elements of communication is evident in the results. While it amplifies the effects of information credibility (H9, supported) and information usefulness (H10, supported) on adoption, it does not enhance the influence of information quality (H8, not supported). This underscores the varying levels of susceptibility among users, who may value credibility and actionable insights over general quality in their adoption behavior. This implies that personalizing content for users based on their susceptibility to external influence could be an effective strategy to increase engagement and trust. Overall the study deepens our understanding of online information adoption by disentangling the roles of quality, credibility, and usefulness, and exploring the moderating effects of information susceptibility to influence. It contributes to the literature by demonstrating the importance of credibility and usefulness over quality.

5.2 Managerial Implications

Electronic word of mouth, or eWOM, is play significant role in customer decision-making because of its acceptability and ease in usage, especially in experience product categories like hospitality and tourism (H&T). Findings of this study reveal that online consumer reviews OCR are important sources of information for the tourist in selection of tourism destinations and the hospitality services. The credibility of the information provider and the platform are the most important factor of the OCR adoption. The information providers should ensure the credibility of the reviewers as well as the platforms. This can be achieved through structuring the review in such a way that all the pros and cons of the destination or the service are presented in an understandable format to the audience e.g. visual and appropriate text composition, polarity and semantic structure (Xiao et al, 2024). Secondly, the providers of the information should research the target audience attitude towards the information type and their susceptibility to the influence before structuring the review format. This will ensure the usefulness and adoption of the OCRs.

5.3 Conclusion and future recommendations

The importance of credibility in information adoption highlighted the importance of personal branding in online communication. The reputation of the information provider as honest and expert increases the probability of its information adoption by the receivers. This increases our understanding in eWOM creation particularly in influencer marketing. The moderating role of user susceptibility to informational influence on the relationship between review usefulness and information adoption highlights the importance of accounting for individual differences in eWOM effectiveness. In tourism, where consumer reliance on OCRs is particularly pronounced, understanding this dynamic can provide valuable insights for marketers and platform developers aiming to enhance the efficacy of review systems.

5.3 Limitation and research recommendation

The context of this research was tourism in general; the findings may differ if the context is specified. For example future research may differentiate between cultural tourists vs. vacationers. Second, in the light of susceptibility theory, future research should examine the moderating effect of consumer susceptibility to normative influence, as this study examined the moderating effect of consumer susceptibility to informational influence, which is half picture of the theory (Bearden et al. 1989). Similarly, other moderating variables such as cultural differences or user expertise that may influence adoption behavior may be investigated. Last not

the least; longitudinal studies are needed to understand how sustained interactions with credible and useful information affect long-term trust and information adoption, *Specifically, future researchers can ask questions like; How do different tourists (cultural vs. adventure tourists) adopt information in OCRs? How do two types of susceptibility to influence Informational vs normative influence) impact the OCR adoption in tourism?*

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