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Research article

From online reviews to destination choice: An ADO–TCM framework-based review and future research agenda for tourism in emerging economies

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ABSTRACT

The use of user-generated content (UGC) and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) as information sources for tourists when selecting their travel destinations is an important phenomenon; however, the literature on this topic is scarce and not integrated. This study provides an overview of 20 years of research and brings it together into a single antecedents–decisions–outcomes (ADO) framework, as well as a roadmap for future research with a special focus on emerging and African destinations. The bibliometric review was conducted using a framework-based synthesis methodology. 451 journal articles were downloaded from Scopus using the SPAR-4-SLR protocol; performance metrics were calculated in Biblioshiny, and co-word and thematic analyses were used to illustrate the conceptual structure. The growth in publications has occurred in three stages: emergence, take-off and acceleration, and is geographically focused on China, US and countries from Asia-Pacific and lack of representation from countries in Africa. The synthesis illustrates the field's antecedents, processes, products, and the underlying theory base, which is primarily planned behaviour, technology acceptance, and elaboration likelihood reasoning. The integrative model and research agenda provides a template for Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) to manage digital consumer voice based on evidence.

KEYWORDS

User-generated content; visit intention; ADO framework; African tourism; emerging destinations

Introduction

From broadcast advertising and travel agents to the peer-to-peer digital voice of fellow travellers, the means of choosing holiday destinations have definitely changed. User-generated content (UGC) and electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), such as reviews, ratings, photos or short videos, and influencer posts, are now at the centre of pre-trip information search (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Leung et al., 2013). Since it is impossible to sample a holiday before booking it, potential visitors rely heavily on others' experiences to alleviate uncertainty and form intentions (Litvin et al., 2008; Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). eWOM, defined as any informal and Internet-based statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or service (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004), has been integrated into models of online influence (Cheung & Thadani, 2012), and online travel reviews have become a standard source of information when making decisions about travel destinations and accommodations (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Yoo & Gretzel, 2008). A lot of empirical research has shown that the credibility, quality, and valence of this digital voice influence visit, travel, booking, and revisit intentions (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009; Sparks & Browning, 2011; Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). The stakes are high, too, for management. The returns of curating, moderating and responding to the destination narrative competently accrue to destinations whose digital reputation is actively managed, not left to accumulate, as DMOs no longer control the destination narrative, but curate, moderate and respond to it (Pan et al., 2007; Ye et al., 2011). The stories of what happened to previous visitors may be the most important marketing tool for destinations new to the international travel market or for destinations whose products are unfamiliar to distant tourists. In addition, tourism is an extremely information-intensive activity, as the product is intangible and consumed beyond the point of

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purchase, and therefore cannot be inspected before purchase, which means that pre-purchase information search is both extensive and consequential (Litvin et al., 2008). With the introduction of consumer opinion platforms, the amount of information available at the point of search, as well as its source, changed (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and search behaviour has adapted to this change (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

However, the field has expanded rapidly across various disciplines, including marketing, information systems, hospitality and tourism geography, and the results are fragmented and hard to synthesise. While there have been periodic bibliometric and narrative reviews that mapped adjacent areas like social media in tourism (Leung et al., 2013) and online reviews in the hospitality industry, few studies have synthesised the specific evidence on how UGC and eWOM translate into tourist visit intention, and even fewer studies have translated the evidence into a usable theoretical model. A bibliometric account alone does not tell the field and cannot be used in guiding future enquiry without other information. For this, science mapping has to be linked with a framework-based synthesis that groups together antecedents, mechanisms, and outcomes (Paul & Benito, 2018; Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019; Lim et al., 2021). Another gap is geographical. Digital transformation of travel is happening all over the world, but the scholarship is not. Yet, despite the rapid growth of mobile internet, a youthful population, and significant tourism potential, Africa is largely missing from this literature, with only a few African-based studies indicating strong impacts of social media and eWOM on destination decision-making in Africa (Matikiti-Manyevere & Kruger, 2019; Susanto et al., 2024). It is therefore timely and appropriate to consolidate the global evidence and clearly place an African and emerging-economy agenda on the map. To fill these gaps, this study has three objectives, formulated into research questions:

- RQ1. How has research on UGC/eWOM and tourist visit intention developed over time, and where (by country and outlet) is it concentrated?
- RQ2. What is the conceptual structure of the field, and how can its evidence be organized into an integrative antecedent–decisions–outcomes (ADO) model and a theory–context–method (TCM) profile?
- RQ3. What research agenda, particularly for emerging and African destinations, follows from the gaps revealed by this synthesis?

The contribution is threefold: the performance overview highlights a periodisation of the field and the geographic imbalance; an original ADO–TCM synthesis leads to the conceptual framework and propositions; and a research agenda is set out, with particular emphasis on the Global South. The Introduction (Section 1) is followed by methodology (Section 2), bibliometric landscape (Section 3), conceptual structure (Section 4), integrative ADO – TCM synthesis and framework (Section 5), research agenda (Section 6), implications (Section 7) and conclusion (Section 8).

Methodology

This study was a hybrid review combining quantitative bibliometric analysis with a qualitative framework-based synthesis (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019; Lim et al., 2021). The bibliometric component addresses RQ1 by measuring the field's growth and structure, and the framework-based component addresses RQ2 and RQ3 through the antecedents-decisions-outcomes (ADO) and the theory-context method (TCM) lenses (Paul & Benito, 2018). The rationale for combining the two is that bibliometric indicators describe scholarly activity, whereas frameworks describe knowledge (Donthu et al., 2021). The ADO framework is useful when the object of the phenomenon, its processing, and its output are separated, and it is applicable when mediation is the predominant analytical approach (Paul & Benito, 2018); the TCM framework is useful when it outlines the theories that are called upon, the contexts in which they are analyzed, and the methods that are used, and it is effective when a field has become narrow (Lim et al., 2021). Scopus was chosen for its broad, curated collection of peer-reviewed research in the social sciences (Donthu et al., 2021). A two-block Boolean query was used for digital-voice terms (UGC, eWOM, online/consumer reviews) with intention terms (visit, travel, behavioural, and revisit intention) searched in the titles, abstracts, and keywords. The corpus was created, organised, and evaluated in accordance with the SPAR-4-SLR protocol (Paul et al., 2021). The articles were filtered by year (2002-2025), subject area (related to the problem), document type (article), language (English), and source type (journal), and a total of 451 articles remained (Table 1).

Table 1. Corpus assembly following SPAR-4-SLR

Stage and Criterion	Retained	Removed
Identification (digital-voice AND intention terms)	643	–
Screening – year (2002–2025)	569	74
Screening – subject area	507	62
Eligibility – document type (articles)	451	56
Eligibility – English-language journals only	451	–

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Scopus (2025)

Performance indicators (number of publications per year, leading countries, prolific authors, and key sources) were computed in the R environment using the package Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017), while co-word analysis was used to analyze the conceptual structure, which was visualised in a strategic thematic map in terms of centrality and density (Cobo et al., 2011). The coordinates of that map are also not plotted here but rather given in tabular form, as the assignment of the quadrant is the analytically relevant output, and is expressed more precisely and more legibly in tabular form. In a qualitative synthesis, the high-frequency constructs were then fed into the ADO structure (which comprises antecedents, decision/processing structures and outcomes) and the dominant theories, contexts, and methods (TCM) were profiled. This integration is the key that sets a descriptive bibliometric exercise apart from a review that can lead to theory and an agenda (Paul & Rosado-Serrano, 2019).

The bibliometric landscape (RQ1)

A field in three phases

The annual output is not a smooth curve but shows three stages of development. During a period of emergence (2002-2013), output was limited and sporadic, reflecting early conceptual work, as review platforms were still developing (Buhalis & Law, 2008). There was a take-off phase (2014-2019) of consistent year-over-year growth, during which social media became part of travel planning (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Finally, the growth stage (2020–2025) accounted for the majority of the corpus, with counts ranging from 35 articles in 2020 to 67 in 2023, 75 in 2024, and 101 in 2025, driven by the shift to digital media and the emergence of visual and influencer media during the pandemic. This trajectory is shown in the present study in Figure 1. The periodisation is an issue for interpretation: over two-thirds of the evidence base is from after 2019, and the field's conclusions are drawn from an environment of platforms within platforms, only a few years old, and from travel behaviour during a period disrupted by the pandemic.

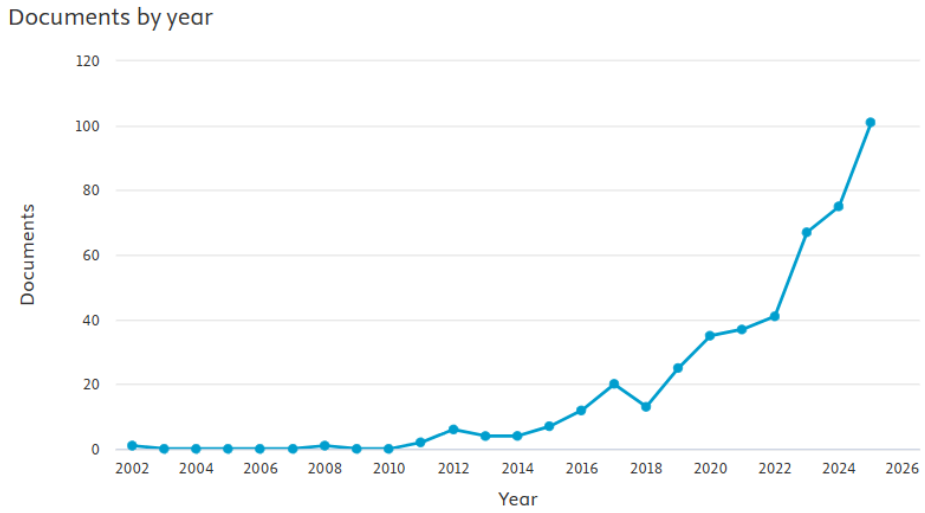

Figure 1. Annual scientific production showing the three developmental phases.
Source: Scopus

A geographically imbalanced field

China (77 articles) and the United States (76) top the list, followed by the Asia-Pacific countries: Malaysia (50), India (44), South Korea (40), Spain (32), Taiwan (32), Indonesia (28), UK (27) followed by Vietnam (27). For the present journal's readers, perhaps the most remarkable aspect is the lack of representation of African countries among the top contributors, given the emerging African research on the influence of social media and eWOM on destination choice (Matikiti-Manyevere & Kruger, 2019; Susanto et al., 2024). This is an imbalance that indicates the need for African and other Global-South scholars (Figure 2) to be mindful of the knowledge gap, and to also recognise an opportunity. The imbalance doesn't just exist on the surface. If these processes linking digital voice to visit intention are culturally, connectivity and platform-mix, and travel-risk perception dependent, then it is not reasonable to assume that a corpus primarily from two areas would travel, and the gap is at the same time a statement of caution about external validity and an invitation to Global-South scholarship.

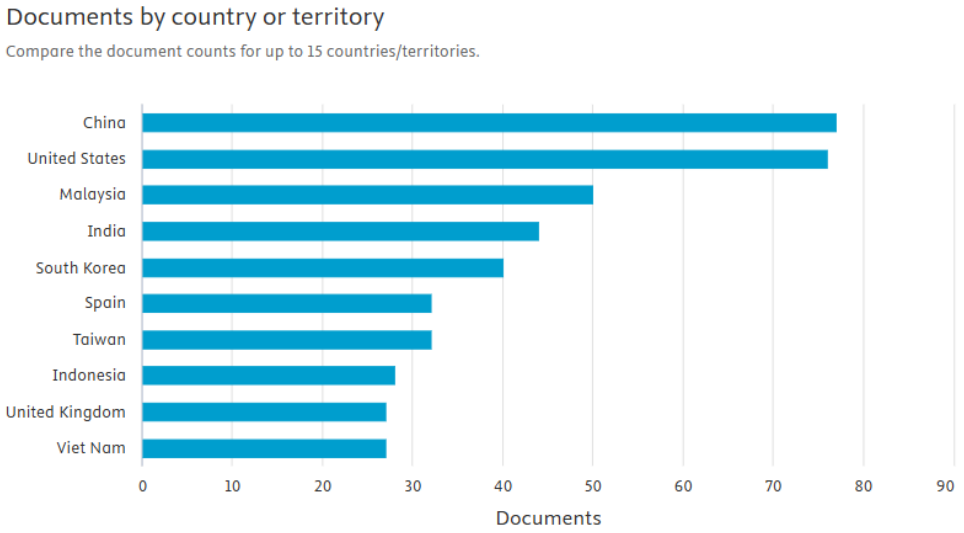

Figure 2. Geographic distribution of output, highlighting the absence of African contributors among the leaders Source: Scopus

Productive authors and influential outlets

There is no single dominant set of names; Ha leads with 7 articles, 5 articles each for Filieri and Phua, and a group of authors with 3 articles each. Citations-based influence is more concentrated, as it pertains to the few impactful empirical studies. Table 2 shows an overview of the most prolific and the most cited authors. Interestingly, the outlet itself, the African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure (AJHTL), is featured in the list of outlets, indicating its relevance in promoting this agenda in African contexts. The publications are also distributed across outlets. The top journal is Sustainability (Switzerland) (17), followed by the International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management (12), the International Journal of Hospitality Management, Journal of Tourism and Geosites (10 each), Computers in Human Behaviour (8), and Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights and Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing (7 each). Six articles are published in the AJHTL and six in the Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics. AJTHL is one of the outlets that are still active, which means there is already a publishing route for the very kind of African evidence the global corpus is missing.

Table 2. Most productive and most influential authors

Most productive (TP)	TP	Most cited (TC)	TC
Ha, H.Y.	7	Acikgoz, F.	211
Filieri, R.	5	Silaban, P.H.	179
Phua, J.	5	Silalahi, A.D.K.	120
Abdou, A.H.	3	Abdou, A.H.	98
Bigne, E.	3	Wang, P.	65
Dens, N.	3	Chen, W.-K.	59
Dixit, S.K.	3	Aziz, N.A.	34

TP = Total Publications; TC = Total Citations. Source: Biblioshiny.

Conceptual structure (RQ2, part I)

Co-word analysis reveals the components of the field. The most common author keywords were eWOM (45), social media (40), behavioural intention (34) and online reviews (30), followed by destination image (18), marketing (17), tourism (17), perception (14) and tourist destination (10). The complementary story is told through the total link strength, which identifies marketing, social media and tourist destination as the strongest interconnected nodes that serve as conceptual bridges between otherwise disconnected clusters. These keywords together foreshadow an antecedents–mechanisms–outcomes logic, digital stimuli (eWOM, social media, online reviews) that work through perceptual mechanisms (perception, destination image) to create intention outcomes (behavioural intention). The top keywords are shown in Table 3. They are added to the strategic thematic map by centrality and density (Cobo et al., 2011). The final column in Table 3 will report the positions on the strategic map. The clusters of behavioural intention, online reviews, and electronic word of mouth have high centrality and are basic, anchoring the field; eWOM and destination image and marketing are foundational and basic; social media and UGC are broadly relevant and developing; and the rest – Instagram, consumer behaviour and travel behaviour – are in the emerging/declining region suggesting a new frontier for platform-specific and behaviourally granular questions. A small niche cluster focused on analysing review documents is quite well-developed internally but is extraneous to the field's central concerns. Their positions are directly reported to the agenda, which is prepared in Section 6.

Table 3. Leading author keywords by occurrence, link strength and position on the strategic map

Keyword	Occurrences	Total Link Strength	Position on Strategic Map (Centrality × Density)
Ewom	45	32	Basic – High Centrality, Low Density
Social Media	40	34	Transversal – Broadly Relevant, Developing
Behavioural Intention	34	22	Basic – Anchors the Field
Online Reviews	30	12	Basic – High Centrality, Low Density
Destination Image	18	22	Basic – Clustered with eWom And Marketing
Marketing	17	34	Basic – Strongest Bridging Node
Tourism	17	16	Basic – High Centrality, Low Density
Perception	14	19	Transversal – Developing
Tourist Destination	10	24	Transversal – Bridging Node
Instagram / Consumer Behaviour / Travel Behaviour	<10	<10	Emerging – Platform-Specific Frontier

Source: Authors' elaboration (Co-word analysis).

An integrative ADO–TCM synthesis (RQ2 part II)

This section organises the evidence of the field into an antecedents–decisions–outcomes (ADO) framework and profiles its theories, contexts, and methods (TCM), building on the conceptual structure. The ADO logic is particularly appropriate for a maturing behavioural field, as it distinguishes what causes a phenomenon, how it is processed, and what it produces (Paul & Benito, 2018). This evidence is grouped below into three distinct lines of development. Previous studies have found that both review valence and volume influence consideration and sales (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009; Zhu & Zhang, 2010), as well as hotel booking behaviour (Ye et al., 2011). A second stream had focused on which properties make a particular review influential: argument quality and source credibility/diagnosticity were both key (Park et al., 2007; Filieri, 2015; Filieri, 2016). A third of the stream shifted the focus from the property to the destination image, which in turn influences travel intention (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012b; Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016). In all three, the explanation is similar: What is not directly predicted from the message and source is a cognitive state and an affective state. With this constant antecedent-mechanism-outcome format, the field is open to an ADO reading, and is the format used in the present synthesis over an author-driven/chronological format.

Antecedents

The antecedents found in the corpus are the characteristics of the digital message and its source. Trustworthiness and source credibility are always cited as the most important factors influencing travellers' online opinion (Filieri et al., 2015; Filieri, 2016), as are information and argument quality (Filieri, 2015; Park et al., 2007). The volume and valence (how many and how positive) of reviews are significant (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Zhu & Zhang, 2010; Ye et al., 2011), as is a newer antecedent, visual and influencer-generated content, which is increasing in relevance in a more visual platform (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014; Pan et al., 2007). Consumer involvement in eWOM communication on Social Networking Sites is itself influenced by personal and platform characteristics (Chu & Kim, 2011), and the impact of eWOM on brand image and purchase intention has been demonstrated across various industries (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012a). This content has two characteristics that set it apart from supplier-provided communication and can account for the pattern highlighted above. The first is that it is perceived to be independent and provides the credibility advantage of consumer reviews over official destination material (Filieri et al., 2015). The second is that it's heterogeneous: There are short numeric ratings, long narrative descriptions, photographs, and now more and more short videos and influencers' comments, and these different forms of media offer different cues and are therefore processed differently. The latter is far less researched than writer reviews, even for visual and influencer content.

Decisions (processing mechanisms)

Antecedents do not directly influence intention but are mediated by certain mechanisms. Among these are perceived usefulness, information adoption (Cheung et al., 2008; Filieri et al., 2018), trust in the review and trust in the destination (Sparks & Browning, 2011; Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016), and destination image, which is a long-established determinant of tourist behaviour (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Bigné et al., 2001; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Wang & Hsu, 2010). The last layer of processing is attitude and satisfaction. While the pattern holds across contexts, it is important to note that the mechanisms actually modelled are overwhelmingly cognitive; affective and identity-oriented processing is acknowledged in discussion sections far more than it is measured, a point taken up in the agenda in Section 6.

Outcomes

All the outcome variables (visit intention and travel intention, booking intention, and revisit intention, as well as onward recommendation) are grouped around intention, and the results of the analysis are very close together (Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012b; Filieri & McLeay, 2014; Alsheikh et al., 2021). As the final outcome, consumers who adopt eWOM later produce it, indicating that the field can be considered a closed

communicative loop rather than a linear funnel. Data on behavioural outcomes (actual arrivals, length of stay, or expenditure) outside the intention dimension are rarely reported, and the field's core conclusions are based on stated rather than realised behaviour. Table 4 summarises the synthesis.

Table 4. ADO synthesis of the UGC/E-wom–visit-intention field

Antecedents (A)	Decisions / Mechanisms (D)	Outcomes (O)
Source Credibility & Trustworthiness	Perceived Usefulness & Information Adoption	Visit Intention
Information & Argument Quality	Trust In Review & Destination	Travel / Booking Intention
Ewom Volume & Valence	Destination Image	Revisit Intention
Visual & Influencer (UGC) Content	Attitude / Satisfaction	Recommendation (Onward Ewom)

Source: Authors' synthesis of the reviewed corpus

Theory–context–method (TCM) profile

The cross-section of the TCM profile, showing its thickness and thinness, is displayed. Theoretically limited models have been used in literature, such as the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991; Jalilvand & Samiei, 2012b); the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis, 1989); the Elaboration Likelihood model (ELM) and information adoption model (IAM) (Cheung et al., 2008). As far as contextualization is concerned, it is overwhelmingly Asian and Western contexts, and hotels/general destinations, with very few emerging-economy contexts, and almost none in Africa. Regarding the methodology, the research field is dominated by quantitative and cross-sectional designs, with some experimental, longitudinal, and qualitative designs, using partial least squares (PLS) structural equation modelling and the validity conventions of Fornell & Larcker (1981) and Hair et al. (2019). Together, these concentrations imply that the central tenets of the discipline are based on a single measure at a single time in a limited set of countries, and on a limited set of theories, in the field. The research agenda is presented in Table 5, along with the profile and gaps it suggests.

An integrative conceptual framework

Combining the ADO structure with the theoretical lenses and context moderators yields the integrative framework presented in Figure 4. The relationship between digital antecedents and visit-intention outcomes is mediated by a series of cognitive and affective mechanisms, and is shaped by the prevailing theories in the field and by moderators such as involvement, gender, culture, platform type, risk perception, and, of particular relevance to this journal, the destination context (including emerging and African destinations). The dashed return path represents the recommendation loop through which eWOM adoption generates further eWOM.

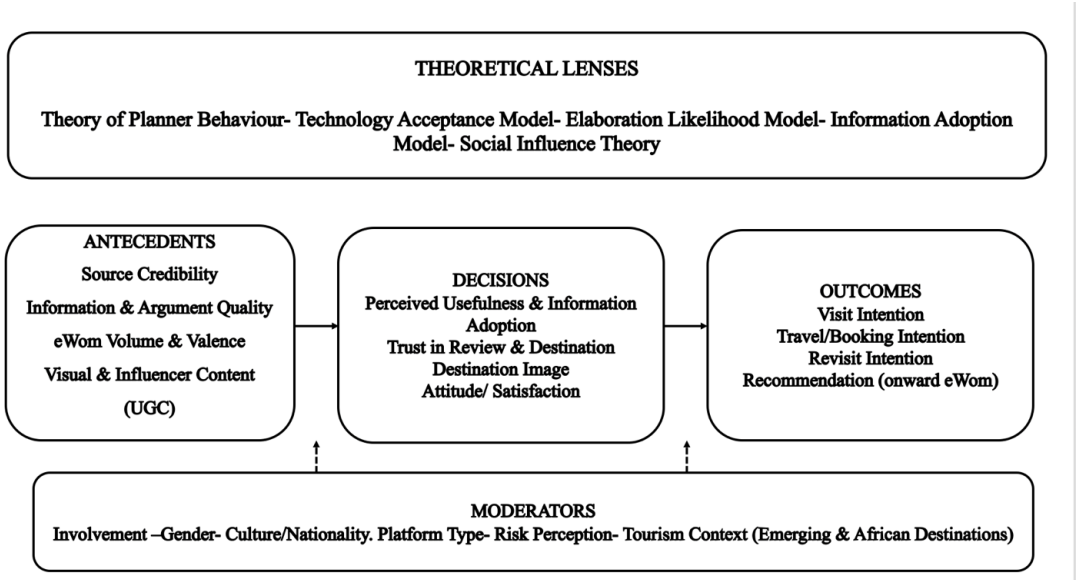

Figure 3. Integrative ADO conceptual framework For UGC/e-Wom and tourist visit intention
Source: Authors

From this framework, four propositions follow that future studies could test:

P1. The effect of UGC/eWOM antecedents (credibility, quality, valence) on visit intention is mediated by trust, perceived usefulness, and destination image.

P2. Visual and influencer-generated content exerts a stronger effect on visit intention than text-only reviews, particularly among younger travellers.

P3. Culture and risk perception moderate the antecedent–intention relationship, such that the strength of this relationship differs systematically between emerging/African and Western/Asian contexts.
P4. Adopting eWOM increases the likelihood of generating onward eWOM, closing a recommendation loop that compounds destination reputation over time.

Future research directions and agenda (RQ3)

The synthesis exposes clear priorities for the next decade of enquiry. We categorise them by three directions: geographic/contextual, theoretical and methodological and then form them into a structured agenda (Table 5) based on the ADO and TCM lenses.

Geographic and contextual directions

Geographic is the most actionable gap. This is remarkable, as evidence is almost entirely absent in Africa despite its rapid adoption of mobile internet, youthful, highly connected populations, and diverse ecotourism, cultural, and community tourism products (Matikiti-Manyevere & Kruger, 2019; Susanto et al., 2024). Future research should investigate the validity of the eWOM–visit-intention mechanism in African and other Global-South contexts, and assess whether settings such as community-based and heritage-tourism contexts, which are common in many African destinations but under-represented in the global corpus, are distinct. Two contrasts are especially worth pursuing: between domestic and inbound travellers, whose information environments and risk perceptions differ substantially; and between destinations with established digital reputations and those whose review stock is still thin, where the marginal value of each additional review is likely to be considerably higher.

Theoretical directions

The theoretical basis of the field is limited; it draws on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Cheung et al., 2008). These models work well for conscious and cognitive processing, but are less applicable to feeling- and identification-based reactions that visual and influencer content is intended to stimulate. Future research should incorporate affective responses, parasocial interaction, source attractiveness, and trust transfer, and construct multi-theory models that explain how affective and identity-related responses (not only cognitive responses) translate into intention through digital content.

Methodological directions

As far as methodological aspects are concerned, the field is dominated by cross-sectional surveys and analyses using the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) approach (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019). This reduces causal and dynamic inferences. Future studies should incorporate experimental and quasi-experimental designs to ascertain causality, longitudinal panels to examine eWOM effects throughout the traveller journey, netnographic and qualitative studies to uncover meaning, and AI-based analysis of review text, images, and short-form video to scale up the evidence and leverage the unstructured nature of modern UGC. Designs that incorporate both review text and survey/experimental evidence would be especially useful in emerging destinations where platform data are increasing more quickly than primary research.

A consolidated agenda

These directions are captured in the concrete, testable research questions in Table 5, in the order of antecedents–decisions–outcomes, while, in theory–context–method, specific attention is given to emerging and African destinations. The agenda is a direct consequence of the synthesis: for each step in the field, the next step can be chosen as a priority question.

Table 5. TCM profile and consolidated research agenda

Focus	Current Concentration	Gap and Priority Research Questions
Antecedents	Text reviews; credibility, quality and valence	How do visual and influencer-generated UGC differ from text reviews in shaping African travellers' visit intention? Which credibility cues matter most on emerging platforms?
Decisions	Cognitive mediators: usefulness, trust, destination image	Through which mechanisms (trust, destination image, perceived authenticity) does eWOM operate in community-based and cultural tourism settings?
Outcomes	Self-reported visit and revisit intention	Does eWOM influence not only visit intention but also onward recommendation, length of stay, and spend in emerging destinations?
Theory	TPB, TAM, ELM, IAM	Can parasocial-interaction and trust-transfer theories extend the dominant TPB/TAM models for influencer-led tourism marketing?
Context	China, USA, Asia-Pacific; hotels & generic destinations	How do eWOM effects vary across African destinations, and between domestic and inbound travellers, relative to Asian and Western benchmarks?
Method	Cross-Sectional Surveys; PLS-SEM	How can experiments and AI-assisted text/image analytics strengthen causal and large-scale evidence beyond cross-sectional PLS-SEM?

Source: Authors' elaboration

Implications

Conceptually, the ADO–TCM synthesis is an attempt to integrate a highly fragmented field into a single, testable model and to clarify directions for conceptual innovation, especially regarding visual and influencer content and the extension of models to understudied contexts. The four propositions and the integrative framework provide a "ready to go" scaffold for future empirical studies. In practical terms, the framework provides DMOs with a template, backed by evidence, to manage the digital voice of consumers by building a credible UGC, actively managing reviews and destination image, and working with trusted influencers to convert digital attention into visits (especially in Africa and other emerging economies) (Alsheikh et al., 2021; Susanto et al., 2024). Socially, the agenda will help attract scholarly and managerial focus to neglected geographies and support the bid for more inclusive tourism development and for emerging destinations to compete on equal footing in an information-mediated marketplace. The synthesis yields three more specific managerial priorities. First, the antecedent set is dominated by credibility and information quality, so it is better to invest in developing a credible, detailed stock of visitor-generated information rather than simply adding more messages. Secondly, as the effects are documented through trust and destination image, rather than around them, active review management, which includes responding to negative reviews, takes place through the mechanism and not only through presentation. Thirdly, the partnership with trusted creators provides a path to driving visits, especially for awareness rather than preference, because it is the fastest-growing antecedent for visual and influencer content. The recommendation loop identified in P4 also merits consideration: every visitor converted by the content is a potential source of content that converts the next visitor, and therefore investments made early on in the review stock of an emerging destination should build over time.

Conclusion and limitations

This study analyzed 451 articles indexed in Scopus (2002-2025) related to UGC/eWOM and tourist visit intention based on bibliometric performance analysis and ADO – TCM synthesis to shift from description to theory. It divided the field into the phases of emergence, take-off and acceleration; it mapped its focus onto China, the United States and Asia-Pacific economies, while highlighting the African gap; it mapped its evidence onto an integrative conceptual model with four propositions; and it outlined a research agenda relevant to the emerging and African destinations. However, three restrictions balance these contributions. A search using Scopus will be incomplete, as records not found by Scopus will also be missed; the English-language, journal-article scope will miss other valuable scholarship, and bibliometric synthesis does not capture a scholar's methodological nuances in individual studies. Furthermore, the language restriction could minimize the impact of Global-South contributions in the regional or non-English-language press, and this bias could exacerbate the one described in the paper. This analysis can be conducted using either a meta-analysis or a qualitative synthesis, and future reviews can supplement it by triangulating across databases. The present framework also defines effect sizes directionally, which could be quantified through such reviews. But science mapping and a theory-based approach have been merged to provide a unique and practical foundation for 10 years of future study of the traveller's digital voice.

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