


Between Authentic Feedback and Greedy Behavior: Strategies for Mitigating Tourists' Exaggerated Negative Reviews

Abstract

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Online reviews are crucial for revenue management on online platforms in the tourism industry. However, there is a gap in detecting greedy review behavior that can negatively impact destinations. This study uses locus of control theory to examine how greed influences online review content. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with tourists exhibiting varying degrees of greed. The transcripts were manually coded to identify themes around the evolution of greedy review behavior and strategies to mitigate exaggerated reviews. The findings indicate that greed, combined with an external locus of control, leads to exaggerated negative reviews. Reviewers from individualistic cultures also displayed stronger external locus traits. Theoretically, this expands understanding of electronic word-of-mouth and attribution theory in tourism. Managerially, destination marketers should implement sophisticated review filtering, respond strategically to negative reviews, and offer activities to address tourists' psychological needs in order to protect reputations from greedy behavior.

Keywords Online reviews, tourism industry, greedy behavior, locus of control theory, electronic word-of-mouth attribution theory, destination management

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Introduction

The proliferation of social media platforms has engendered a substantial reliance on online reviews for decision-making processes regarding tourism destinations (Hernández-Méndez et al., 2013; Kapoor et al., 2021). These digital testimonials offer consumers a flexible and expedient means of evaluating and interpreting potential services (Sun et al., 2021, Myeni & Chili, 2024). The foundation of these online reviews is predominantly electronic word of mouth (e-WOM), which encompasses textual narratives delineating prior experiences for the benefit of prospective consumers (Williams et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2021). Such narratives may serve as cautionary advisories against specific services (Banerjee & Chua, 2021) or as endorsements encouraging their utilization (Kapoor et al., 2021). Empirical investigations have revealed that an overwhelming majority of consumers—approximately 88%—regard online reviews as tantamount to personal recommendations (Hlee et al., 2021), underscoring the profound impact these digital testimonials exert on consumer behavior and the reputational standing of businesses and destinations alike (Liu et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2021). Notwithstanding their pervasive influence, the credibility of online reviews is not uniformly assured. A disconcerting trend has emerged, particularly among millennials, wherein the dissemination of exaggerated e-WOM on social media platforms has become increasingly prevalent. This phenomenon extends to the sharing of fabricated vacation imagery, ostensibly to gratify certain dark personality traits (Kapoor et al., 2021). Within this context, exaggeration in e-WOM refers to the practice of overstating experiences or portraying destinations and services in a manner that amplifies their perceived dangers beyond objective reality (Baker & Kim, 2019; Banerjee & Chua, 2021). The propensity for tourists to embellish their accounts of experiences at various destinations (Kapoor et al., 2021) poses significant challenges, potentially inflicting reputational damage and precipitating revenue declines for the affected locales (Harris et al., 2016; Zhu et al., 2021). A salient psychological antecedent to this exaggerated behavior is the sentiment of greed (Crusius et al., 2021; Zeelenberg et al., 2020). Individuals characterized by greedy dispositions exhibit a pronounced tendency to respond



to situations of perceived superiority with disproportionately negative and exaggerated reactions (Carnevale et al., 2021; Helzer & Rosenzweig, 2020). This behavioral pattern can have deleterious effects on the experiences of fellow travelers and the reputational integrity of service providers. The underlying mechanism of this phenomenon can be attributed to the propensity of greedy individuals to engage in more biased and self-serving decision-making processes compared to their less greedy counterparts (Crusius et al., 2021; Sekhar et al., 2020). Their motivation appears to be rooted in a desire to accrue experiences at the expense of others (Krekels & Pandelaere, 2015). Furthermore, greedy individuals often manifest their communications through intensely negative emotional responses, which may be indicative of underlying deficiencies in self-confidence (Helzer & Rosenzweig, 2020; Mussel & Hewig, 2016) and a diminished locus of control (LOC) (Jiang et al., 2020).

In an effort to elucidate the mechanisms by which tourists engage in the exaggeration of reviews on social media platforms, particularly those driven by greedy motivations, scholars have increasingly turned their attention to the locus of control theory. This theoretical framework offers both conceptual and empirical insights into the manifestation of tourist reactions to various stimuli and events (Jackson, 2019; Twenge et al., 2004). The theory posits a dichotomy between internal and external loci of control. Individuals exhibiting an internal LOC attribute their capabilities and achievements to their own efforts and self-efficacy (Cleveland et al., 2012; Karkoulian et al., 2016). Conversely, those characterized by an external LOC perceive their behaviors as being predominantly influenced by extraneous factors, including social circumstances, the actions of powerful others, and chance occurrences (Hampson et al., 2021; Rothbaum et al., 1982; Twenge et al., 2004). Those with an external LOC are more likely to exaggerate negative aspects of their travel experiences in online reviews as a way to explain disappointments and blame external factors. For example, a traveler with an external LOC who experiences minor issues like long check-in lines or loud neighboring rooms may be more inclined to leave an overly negative review blaming poor staff or hotel management. They are attempting to deflect responsibility for any aspect of their dissatisfaction by perceiving events as outside of their control. In contrast, internals with an internal LOC will be more likely to take responsibility for problems themselves or provide constructive criticism focused on fixable issues rather than global condemnation. They understand experiences are multifaceted and not entirely within or outside of their influence. Therefore, locus of control theory provides a framework to understand why some tourists' reviews diverge strongly from objective evaluations of service quality or facts of their experiences. The application of locus of control theory to the domain of exaggerative online reviews authored by greedy tourists represents a novel and potentially illuminating approach to addressing this burgeoning issue. By examining the intricate relationship between a tourist's LOC orientation and their proclivity for posting hyperbolic negative reviews, researchers can gain valuable insights into the psychological mechanisms underpinning this behavior. This line of inquiry may yield significant implications for the development of strategies aimed at detecting and mitigating such reviews, thereby safeguarding the reputational integrity of tourism destinations and preserving the reliability of online review ecosystems (Guo et al., 2017; Li et al., 2017). The intersection of greed, locus of control, and exaggerative online reviews in the tourism context presents a multifaceted and hitherto underexplored area of research. Despite the profound influence that an individual's LOC may exert on their propensity for greedy behavior—and by extension, their potential to undermine the reputation of international tourism destinations through the dissemination of exaggerated negative reviews—there exists a paucity of comprehensive studies tracking these behaviors across online tourism platforms. This lacuna in the extant literature underscores the pressing need for rigorous empirical investigation into this phenomenon. In light of these considerations, this study aims to address the following research questions:

1. To what extent does a tourist's locus of control orientation influence their propensity to post exaggerated negative reviews, and how does the construct of greed mediate or moderate this relationship?
2. What innovative strategies and interventions can tourism providers and platform operators implement to effectively detect exaggerative reviews and foster a more positive locus of control among tourists, thereby mitigating the deleterious impact of greedy, exaggerated online reviews on destination reputations and the broader tourism ecosystem?

By pursuing these lines of inquiry, this research endeavors to contribute meaningfully to the academic discourse surrounding online review behavior in the tourism sector, while simultaneously offering practical insights that may inform the development of more robust and resilient review systems.

Literature review

Greed attitude and locus of control theory

The concept of greed in tourism and online reviews is complex, with positive and negative aspects (Carnevale et al., 2021; Zeelenberg et al., 2020). While greed can drive innovation and competition, it often manifests as an insatiable desire for more, leading to detrimental behaviors (Helzer & Rosenzweig, 2020; Sekhar et al., 2020). In tourism, greedy behavior appears as a relentless pursuit of experiences coupled with exaggeration and negativity in reviews (Crusius et al., 2021; Razen & Stefan, 2019). Greedy individuals often exhibit negative traits such as insufficient empathy and contempt for others (Mussel & Hewig, 2016). They tend to persist in negative behaviors even when faced with contradictory evidence, potentially undermining the integrity of online review systems (Razen & Stefan, 2019). The link between greed and lower self-control or locus of control (LOC) further complicates the issue (Jiang et al., 2020, Mokabe et al. 2024). LOC, rooted in attribution theory, is crucial in understanding and mitigating greedy behavior in online reviews (Kim & Choi, 2016; Cleveland et al., 2012). Individuals with high internal LOC believe in their ability to control outcomes, while those with external LOC attribute events to external factors (Twenge et al., 2004; Hampson et al., 2021). Research shows that individuals with higher internal LOC make more balanced



judgments about experiences (Rothbaum et al., 1982), while those with lower internal or predominantly external LOC are prone to attributing experiences to external causes (Jiang et al., 2020). Lower levels of internal LOC can lead to confusion and contradictory sentiments when forming opinions (Avtgis, 1998; Twenge et al., 2004). This cognitive dissonance may result in exaggerated negative word-of-mouth or e-WOM to bolster self-confidence (Baker & Kim, 2019; Hernández-Méndez et al., 2013; Hlee et al., 2021). Empirical evidence supports the connection between LOC and the tendency to exaggerate in reviews (Harris et al., 2016). The psychological underpinnings of greedy behavior reveal a complex interplay of negative traits and motivations. Greedy individuals, driven by self-gratification and self-admiration, often resort to dark attribution techniques to harm others or undermine the experiences of fellow travelers (Razen & Stefan, 2019; Sekhar et al., 2020). This behavior is particularly problematic in the digital age, where individual opinions have significant reach and impact through social media platforms and review sites (Kapoor et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2021). The relationship between LOC and greedy behavior in online reviews presents challenges and opportunities for the tourism industry. Improving service quality may not be sufficient to combat exaggerated negative reviews from individuals with low internal LOC. However, it opens up possibilities for interventions to enhance tourists' sense of control and agency during their travel experiences.

Exaggerative reviews and greedy behavior

In the context of tourism, the shift from traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) to electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) has significantly altered the landscape of how tourists express and share their experiences (Gnoth, 1997). This transition to digital platforms has amplified the reach and impact of individual opinions, while simultaneously creating new challenges in discerning the authenticity and credibility of these shared experiences. Online reviews, whether in the form of numerical ratings or textual narratives, have become a crucial tool for tourists to articulate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with tourism services and destinations (Jia, 2020). The reliance on e-WOM for decision-making in tourism has grown exponentially, with travelers using this information to identify service components, assess advantages and disadvantages, and predict service trends (Li et al., 2017). However, this dependence on online reviews comes with a significant caveat: the increased difficulty in detecting deception in e-WOM compared to traditional face-to-face interactions. While in-person communications may reveal unconscious cues of deception, such as increased tremors or anxiety (Kapoor et al., 2021), the anonymity and distance afforded by the internet create a fertile ground for misrepresentation and exaggeration (Jia, 2020). This propensity for deception in online reviews is often rooted in greed behavior (Zeelenberg et al., 2020). Greedy individuals, driven by a desire to enhance their social image and assert superiority among their peers, are more likely to engage in exaggerated or deceptive practices when sharing their experiences online (Kapoor et al., 2021). This behavior manifests in various forms, from overstating negative experiences to fabricating positive ones, often employing complex language to lend an air of authenticity to their claims (Baker & Kim, 2019).

The proliferation of fake online reviews poses a significant challenge to both consumers and businesses in the tourism industry. These deliberately misleading reviews, crafted to appear genuine while deceiving the reader, can have far-reaching consequences (Baker & Kim, 2019). They not only disrupt established codes of conduct but can also inflict substantial reputational damage on companies, both in tangible economic terms and in the less quantifiable realm of public perception (Hlee et al., 2021). Perhaps most concerning is the observation that not all consumers possess the "cognitive awakening" necessary to discern between authentic and fictional reviews. The lack of semantic linguistic skills required to evaluate review credibility leaves many individuals vulnerable to misinformation and manipulation (Banerjee & Chua, 2021). This vulnerability is particularly acute in the tourism and hospitality industry, where suspicions of fraudulent review manipulation are widespread (Guo et al., 2017). The role of greed in this context extends beyond mere exaggeration to potentially unethical judgments, especially when rooted in an insatiable desire for service acquisition without genuine satisfaction. Greedy individuals may exhibit a concerning lack of care or negligence in their reviewing practices, contributing to a "post-truth" environment where the line between fact and fiction becomes increasingly blurred. Despite the significant implications of this phenomenon, current tourism studies have yet to fully grapple with the role of greed in damaging destination reputations (Helzer & Rosenzweig, 2020). The interplay between greed, locus of control, and exaggerative review behavior presents a complex challenge for the tourism industry. As previously discussed, individuals with a lower internal locus of control are more likely to attribute their experiences to external factors and may resort to exaggeration as a means of asserting control or bolstering their self-image. When combined with greedy tendencies, this psychological profile can lead to a perfect storm of misleading and potentially harmful online review content. Considering the arguments presented regarding greed behavior, locus of control, and the prevalence of exaggerative reviews in the tourism context, the following propositions emerge:

Proposition 1: Tourists with a higher level of dispositional greed and a lower internal locus of control are more likely to engage in exaggerative review behavior, particularly in posting negative online reviews about tourism destinations and services. This relationship is mediated by the tendency of individuals with external LOC to attribute negative experiences to external factors rather than their own actions or choices.

Proposition 2: The anonymity and lack of face-to-face accountability in online review platforms exacerbate the tendency for individuals with low internal LOC to post exaggerative or false reviews. This is because the online environment reinforces their belief that outcomes are controlled by external forces, leading to a higher prevalence of misleading information in tourism e-WOM compared to traditional WOM, where social pressures may moderate behavior.

Proposition 3: Developing and implementing tools or educational initiatives that enhance consumers' internal locus of control and ability to discern authentic from exaggerative reviews will mitigate the negative impact of greedy behavior on tourism destination reputations and consumer decision-making processes. By fostering a stronger sense of personal



responsibility and control over travel experiences, these initiatives can reduce the tendency to externalize blame and exaggerate negative aspects in reviews. These propositions provide a framework for further empirical investigation into the complex relationships between greed, locus of control, and exaggerative review behavior in the tourism context. By addressing these issues, the tourism industry can work towards fostering a more honest and constructive online review ecosystem, ultimately benefiting both service providers and consumers.

Methodology

This research employs an observational study methodology, recognized for its ability to provide unbiased research opportunities (Lee et al., 2021, Umejei & Naidu, 2024). Observational studies are particularly effective when the focus is on detecting unexpected adverse effects, making them methodologically superior for this type of investigation (Kingsley, 2000). The study's observations were conducted in five phases, utilizing TripAdvisor.com as the primary data source due to its status as one of the best online thematic platforms for tourists to share their experiences (Teresa Borges-Tiago et al., 2021). The search term "Dahab Blue Hole*" was used in international booking platforms with reviews (e.g., booking and trip advisor) to observe tourists' reviews about this specific attraction, chosen because Dahab is considered one of the best resorts in the Red Sea (Boraie, 2020). We choose average and poor reviews based on the premise that greedy tourists typically seek more experiences without achieving satisfaction (Helzer & Rosenzweig, 2020). To ensure the validity of the observational study, Lee et al.'s (2021) recommendations for designing a well-structured and accurate observational study were followed, focusing on online review texts to ensure consistency with internal and external homogeneity. To identify greed-related language and behavior in online reviews, greed glossaries were developed based on existing literature and psychological research. However, it is important to note that not all negative reviews stem from greedy motives. Some negative feedback may be justified responses to genuine service failures or unmet expectations during the tourist's experience. A valid negative review helps other potential tourists make informed travel decisions by accurately portraying issues at a particular destination or business. In contrast, greedy reviews tend to exaggerate perceived shortcomings or neglect to acknowledge positive aspects solely due to an internal desire for superiority, jealousy or need to compensate for anxiety/depression (Üngüren et al., 2023). While service failures warrant honest feedback, greedy reviewers have underlying psychological tendencies driving disproportionate negativity focused on highlighting perceived value or status over providing objective reporting. This distinguishing factor is crucial for tourism managers to consider when evaluating online reviews and crafting response strategies.

The identification of these expressions as indicators of greed was confirmed through consultation of various psychological scholars' literature works, including Zeelenberg et al. (2020), Krekels & Pandelaere (2015), and Mussel & Hewig (2016), who have identified key components of greed and its manifestations in behavior and language. After identifying potential greed indicators in the random sample of negative reviews, the study conducted 10 interviews with tourism experts specializing in social media (see Table 1). These experts were selected based on criteria including a minimum of 5 years of experience in tourism social media management, demonstrated track record in handling online reputational issues, familiarity with psychological aspects of consumer behavior in tourism, and experience in developing strategies to mitigate the impact of negative reviews. The profiles of the interviewees varied, including social media managers for major hotel chains, online reputation consultants for tourism boards, digital marketing directors for tour operators, customer experience specialists for online travel agencies, and academic researchers specializing in e-WOM in tourism.

Table 1: Interviewee profile

Interviewee Number	Gender	Age	Position	Role with Online Reviews
1	Male	35	Travel Blogger	Shares experiences and moderates blog comments
2	Female	28	Hotel Manager	Monitors guest reviews on Booking.com and TripAdvisor
3	Male	45	Tour Guide	Reviews influence bookings, responds to feedback
4	Male	52	Airbnb Host	Host ratings impact future reservations
5	Female	31	Cruise Director	Reviews shape marketing and service improvement
6	Female	24	Tourist	Leaves feedback on destinations via platforms
7	Male	58	Restaurant Owner	Online ratings critical for business success
8	Male	41	Hotel General Manager	Manages brand reputation across review sites
9	Female	29	Tour Operator	Reviews monitored for quality assurance
10	Male	62	Destination Marketing Manager	Uses reviews for strategic destination planning

The interviews were structured around 15 key questions (see Table 2) designed to extract valuable insights from the experts' experiences and perspectives. These questions covered a range of topics, including methods for distinguishing between genuine negative reviews and those potentially driven by greed, observed patterns in language or behavior indicating greed, strategies for addressing exaggerated reviews, the role of locus of control in review behavior, and future trends in online review practices. The questions also explored the impact of anonymity on review behavior, the use of technological tools in detecting potentially greedy reviews, and the broader implications for the tourism industry.

Table 2: Research questions

Research question	Theoretical dimension
How do you distinguish between genuine negative reviews and those potentially driven by greed or unrealistic expectations?	Locus of control theory
What patterns have you observed in language or behavior that might indicate greed in online reviews?	Expressions of entitlement and expectations of control
How has the prevalence of exaggerated negative reviews changed over the past five years?	Impacts of platform design on assumed external control
What strategies have you found most effective in addressing or mitigating the impact of greedy or exaggerated reviews?	Approaches to rebuilding a sense of shared/internal responsibility
How do you balance addressing negative reviews with maintaining the integrity of your online review system?	Attribution theory perspectives on balancing internal/external responses
Have you noticed any cultural differences in the expression of greed or dissatisfaction in online reviews?	Cultural dimensions theories on individualism/collectivism tendencies
What role do you think locus of control plays in the tendency to post exaggerated negative reviews?	Locus of control theory and its manifestation in online behaviors
How do you educate your staff or clients about identifying and responding to potentially greedy reviews?	Education models for cultivating internal attribution perspectives
What technological tools or AI systems, if any, do you use to flag potentially exaggerated or greedy reviews?	Opportunities and limitations of technological solutions



How do you think the anonymity of online platforms contributes to the problem of exaggerated negative reviews?	Social identity model of deindividuation effects and online disinhibition
What impact have you seen from exaggerated negative reviews on booking patterns or customer behavior?	Signaling theory and the influences of peer information on choices
How do you think the tourism industry as a whole can combat the spread of exaggerated or false reviews driven by greed?	Coordinated approaches to rebuilding integrity of online reviews
What future trends do you foresee in online review behavior, particularly regarding the expression of greed or dissatisfaction?	Evolving social and technological influences on attribution tendencies

The interview transcript was manually coded by the researchers to identify common themes discussed across all interviews. To code the transcript, each interview question and response was analyzed individually to identify the underlying topic or issue being discussed. Text segments were then assigned a thematic label based on the research categories. All coded transcript excerpts were then collated under their relevant theme to develop a conceptual map of the major themes discussed by participants. This manual, open coding approach allowed the researchers to systematically and thoroughly analyze the interview data to uncover the most prominently discussed topics (Basit, 2003). Then, three key themes emerged from this analysis: (1) The Evolution of Greedy Review Behavior in Tourism, (2) Technological and Strategic Approaches to Mitigating Exaggerated Reviews, and (3) Cultural and Psychological Factors Influencing Online Review Behavior.

Results

The evolution of greedy review behavior in tourism

The tourism industry has experienced a significant transformation in online review behavior over the past five years, characterized by an increasing prevalence of exaggerated negative reviews potentially driven by greed or unrealistic expectations. This trend appears to be closely linked to the evolving dynamics of locus of control (LOC) in the digital age, with experts noting a growing tendency among reviewers to exhibit an external LOC. This shift manifests as a sense of entitlement and heightened expectations of service providers, exacerbated by the anonymity afforded by online platforms. The impact of these exaggerated reviews on booking patterns and customer behavior has been substantial, with many tourism businesses reporting fluctuations in bookings that correlate with the presence of extremely negative reviews. This phenomenon aligns with signaling theory, highlighting the powerful influence of peer information on consumer choices in the tourism sector. The complexity of this issue is further compounded by the psychological underpinnings of greedy review behavior, which often involve elements of jealousy, dissatisfaction, and a desire for superiority. As noted by Crusius et al. (2021), greedy individuals tend to care deeply about situations where others seem to have access to experiences they desire, leading to malicious jealousy and negative evaluations. This aligns with the observations of industry experts who reported seeing reviews that seemed motivated more by a need to assert superiority than by genuine service failures. Relevant quotes: "Exaggerated reviews have skyrocketed in the last few years." (Interviewee #1) "Online anonymity has emboldened some reviewers to be unreasonably critical." (Interviewee #7) "We've seen a shift towards external blame in negative reviews." (Interviewee #3) "Some reviewers seem to expect a level of perfection that's simply unrealistic." (Interviewee #9) "Greedy reviewers often demand more than what's reasonable for the price point." (Interviewee #5) "There's a growing sense of entitlement in tourist expectations." (Interviewee #4) "Negative reviews with a greedy tone can significantly impact bookings." (Interviewee #8) "We've noticed an increase in reviews that seem motivated by jealousy rather than genuine dissatisfaction." (Interviewee #2)

Technological and strategic approaches to mitigating exaggerated reviews

The interview results revealed that tourism industry experts have developed a range of technological tools and strategic approaches. AI-powered systems are increasingly being employed to analyze language patterns, validate factual claims, and flag reviews with outlier sentiments. These technological solutions, while promising, are often complemented by human oversight to ensure accuracy and fairness. Strategies for mitigating the impact of exaggerated reviews include public responses that balance acknowledging feedback with fact-checking, policy changes to encourage more balanced reviewing practices, and review filtering mechanisms. Experts emphasized the importance of transparency in these processes to maintain the integrity of online review systems. This approach aligns with attribution theory perspectives on balancing internal and external responses to negative feedback. Education and training of staff and clients have also emerged as crucial components in addressing potentially greedy reviews, focusing on developing skills to identify linguistic and qualitative patterns associated with internal versus external locus of control. These initiatives are particularly important given the findings of Cleveland et al. (2012), who highlighted the relationship between locus of control and satisfaction in the tourism context. Some quotes include: "AI has become crucial in identifying potentially exaggerated reviews." (Interviewee #6) "We're using language pattern analysis to flag suspicious reviews." (Interviewee #2) "Transparent response strategies have helped mitigate the impact of unfair reviews." (Interviewee #2) "Staff training now includes recognizing signs of greedy review behavior." (Interviewee #8) "We've implemented a review verification process to ensure authenticity." (Interviewee #9) "Balancing automated systems with human oversight is key." (Interviewee #1) "Educational initiatives for customers have helped set realistic expectations." (Interviewee #4) "We're focusing on encouraging more balanced reviewing practices." (Interviewee #3)

Cultural and psychological factors influencing online review behavior

The finding revealed significant cultural differences in the expression of greed or dissatisfaction in online reviews, rooted in cultural dimensions theories, particularly those related to individualism and collectivism tendencies. Experts noted that reviewers from more individualistic cultures tended to exhibit stronger external locus of control traits in their reviews, often leading to more exaggerated negative feedback. The role of locus of control in shaping review behavior emerged as a critical factor, with reviewers exhibiting a lower internal locus of control being more likely to attribute negative experiences to external factors, often resulting in more exaggerated or unfair reviews. This finding is consistent with the work of Jiang et al. (2020), who identified a link between lower locus of control and greedy behavior. The psychological aspects of greedy review behavior



are complex, often involving elements of jealousy, dissatisfaction, and a desire for superiority. This complexity is further illustrated by the tendency of some reviewers with low LOC to showcase their experiences or knowledge in reviews, even when these are not directly relevant to the destination being reviewed, potentially leading to reviews that are rich in extraneous information but poor in actual useful feedback about the specific destination or service. To exemplify: "Cultural background significantly influences review tone and content." (Interviewee #5) "Individualistic cultures tend to produce more critical reviews." (Interviewee #1). "Low locus of control often correlates with exaggerated negative feedback." (Interviewee #8) "Some reviewers use the platform to showcase supposed expertise rather than provide useful feedback." (Interviewee #10) "We've observed a link between greedy behavior and a need for superiority in reviews." (Interviewee #6) "Cultural differences in expectations can lead to vastly different interpretations of the same service." (Interviewee #7) "Psychological factors like jealousy and dissatisfaction often drive exaggerated reviews." (Interviewee #2) "There's a clear correlation between external locus of control and tendency to leave harsh reviews." (Interviewee #3)

Conclusion and discussion

A complex interplay of psychological, cultural, and technological factors influences the prevalence of greedy review behavior in tourism. Central to this phenomenon is the concept of locus of control (LOC), which significantly impacts how individuals perceive and react to their experiences. As Cleveland et al. (2012) suggest, lower self-control leads to decreased LOC, resulting in dissatisfaction with the surrounding environment. Tourists with external LOC tend to attribute negative experiences to external factors, often resulting in exaggerated or unfair reviews (Klein & Dawar, 2004). The anonymity provided by online platforms exacerbates this tendency, lowering inhibitions and increasing the likelihood of extreme language and exaggerated claims (Harris et al., 2016). Psychological underpinnings of greedy review behavior often involve jealousy and a desire for superiority. Crusius et al. (2021) note that greedy individuals care deeply about situations where others seem to have access to experiences they desire, leading to malicious jealousy and negative evaluations. This aligns with Krekels & Pandelaere's (2015) findings that dispositional greed can lead individuals to review services to passively destroy service providers' reputations. Cultural dimensions also play a crucial role, with reviewers from more individualistic cultures exhibiting more vital external LOC traits in their reviews, often leading to more exaggerated negative feedback (Avtgis, 1998). This cultural variation can be understood through Zeelenberg et al.'s (2020) "exaltation hypothesis" or "greedy axiom," which posits that people constantly prefer more acceptable services, leading to heightened expectations and potentially unrealistic demands. Carnevale et al. (2021) argue that disappointment and anger can result in a desire for revenge and retaliation against service providers if greedy individuals feel unsatisfied. Reviewers with low LOC often showcase their experiences, even when irrelevant, to demonstrate superior abilities (Banerjee & Chua, 2021). This behavior skews review content and potentially misleads other consumers, as highlighted by Baker & Kim (2019).

The tourism industry's response to these challenges reflects an understanding of the complex nature of online review practices (Hlee et al., 2021). However, as Helzer & Rosenzweig (2020) point out, people hide their needs from others' insights to avoid being judged immoral or greedy. This tendency adds another layer of complexity to the interpretation and management of online feedback, as Kapoor et al. (2021) explored. The study's findings supported the relationship between higher levels of dispositional greed, predominantly external locus of control, and engagement in exaggerated negative review behavior. Conversely, tourists with a stronger internal locus of control were observed to provide more balanced feedback, even in dissatisfying situations. Tourism organizations have developed technological and educational tools to discern genuine from exaggerated reviews and foster a stronger sense of internal locus of control among tourists. While anonymity on online platforms was noted to potentially amplify the effects of locus of control on review behavior, the support for this proposition was moderate. The interviews suggested that individuals with an external LOC were more prone to posting exaggerated reviews in anonymous online environments. However, those with a strong internal LOC maintained relatively consistent review behavior across online and offline contexts. The results provided compelling evidence that the interaction between greed and locus of control significantly shapes online review behavior in tourism. The findings also supported the effectiveness of mitigation strategies in addressing exaggerated reviews, particularly those aimed at strengthening internal locus of control among tourists. The nuanced interplay between internal and external locus of control in online review contexts emerged as a critical insight, suggesting avenues for further research and targeted tourism management interventions (Jiang et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2021).

This study offers significant theoretical contributions across multiple domains within tourism research, particularly in the areas of online reviews, attribution theory, and tourism technology. In the realm of online review literature, our study expands the understanding of electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) in tourism by introducing greed as a crucial psychological factor that can negatively impact review content. By examining how greedy behavior leads to exaggerated negative reviews, we respond to Kapoor et al.'s (2021) call to explore the motivations behind online review exaggeration. Our findings demonstrate that greed, combined with a low locus of control (LOC), can significantly influence the tone and content of online reviews, potentially destroying positive e-WOM and damaging destination reputations. This contribution is further enhanced by our extension of attribution theory in tourism contexts. Building on the work of Liu et al. (2020), Jackson (2019), and Orth et al. (2012), we identify greedy behavior as a crucial antecedent affecting tourists' interpretation of destinations. By providing evidence that tourists with greedy tendencies and low LOC are more likely to attribute negative experiences to external factors, resulting in exaggerated negative reviews, we address Jackson's (2019) call to consider factors influencing tourists' locus of causation and Carnevale et al.'s (2021) suggestion to examine how attribution theory relates to individuals' LOC in tourism contexts. Furthermore, our study makes substantial contributions to the understanding of tourism and hospitality technology,



as well as cultural dimensions in tourism consumer behavior. By examining the role of greed in online review platforms, we highlight the need for more sophisticated review management systems that can identify and mitigate the impact of exaggerated negative reviews. This builds on the work of Hlee et al. (2021) on fake review detection and Zhu et al. (2021) on online critical review classification, emphasizing the importance of considering psychological factors in developing technological solutions for review management in the tourism sector. As a novel contribution, our study also explores the intersection of cultural dimensions and greedy behavior in tourism contexts. Building on Avtgis's (1998) work on LOC across cultures, we demonstrate how cultural background influences the expression of greed in online reviews. Our findings suggest that reviewers from more individualistic cultures tend to exhibit stronger external LOC traits, leading to more exaggerated negative feedback. This insight opens new avenues for research on how cultural factors interact with psychological traits to shape tourist behavior and online review content. By addressing these interconnected areas, our study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex interplay between greed, locus of control, cultural factors, and technology in shaping online review behavior in the tourism industry, offering valuable directions for future research and practical implications for managing online reputations in the digital age of tourism.

This study offers significant managerial implications for tourism destination managers and online review platform administrators, addressing the challenges posed by greedy tourist behavior and exaggerated negative reviews (Mkhize & Hlengwa, 2021). Drawing from our findings on the evolution of greedy review behavior and its psychological underpinnings, we propose a two-pronged approach for tourism managers. Firstly, to protect destinations from exaggerated reviews, managers should adopt strategic response techniques aligned with popular platforms like TripAdvisor, focusing on addressing negative reviews with accuracy and providing sufficient information about destination features and services. This approach helps other tourists discern between genuine and exaggerated reviews, as suggested by Qiu et al. (2012). Furthermore, implementing sophisticated algorithms, such as those proposed by Zhu et al. (2021), can aid in prioritizing response strategies for potentially exaggerated reviews. Our findings on the impact of cultural factors and locus of control (LOC) underscore the importance of hiring professionally trained employees who can identify false reviews and respond with visual evidence, enhancing response reliability as noted by Guo et al. (2017). Given our theme on the psychological factors influencing review behavior, managers should prioritize addressing reviews about room experiences and service quality, as these areas are most scrutinized by potential tourists. This targeted approach can help mitigate the impact of greedy reviews and bolster destination performance, ultimately increasing tourists' positive LOC towards the destination, as suggested by Jackson (2019). The second aspect of our managerial implications focuses on mitigating greedy behavior among tourists, drawing from our findings on the relationship between greed, LOC, and review behavior. Tourism managers are encouraged to engage in peacebuilding initiatives on social media, posting well-structured content that promotes positive interactions among tourists. This approach aligns with Rettberg's (2016) findings on mitigating greed's negative influence on business reputation. Additionally, implementing an innovative awarding strategy for constructive feedback can channel the competitive nature of greedy individuals, as identified in our study, towards more positive outcomes. This strategy leverages the jealousy and desire for superiority often exhibited by greedy individuals, as noted by Crusius et al. (2021), potentially transforming destructive feedback into constructive input while boosting the self-confidence and positive LOC of these tourists. Our findings on the psychological aspects of greedy behavior also suggest that tourism managers should consider offering free psychological activities, such as psychotherapy alongside yoga, at their destinations. This recommendation is based on the understanding that greed behavior often stems from anxiety and depression, as highlighted by Crusius et al. (2021) and Sekhar et al. (2020). By addressing these underlying psychological issues, destinations can potentially foster a more positive internal LOC among tourists, leading to increased satisfaction and more balanced review behavior, as suggested by Twenge et al. (2004). These multifaceted approaches, grounded in our research findings, offer tourism managers practical strategies to navigate the complex landscape of online reviews and mitigate the impact of greedy tourist behavior on destination reputation and performance.

Research limitation and future studies

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between greed, locus of control, and online review behavior in tourism, it is not without limitations, which open avenues for future research. Firstly, our study primarily focused on textual reviews, potentially overlooking the impact of visual content (such as photos and videos) on review credibility and influence. Future studies could explore how greedy behavior manifests in visual review content and its impact on destination perception. Secondly, while we examined cultural differences in review behavior, our sample may not fully represent the global diversity of tourists. Further research could employ a more comprehensive cross-cultural approach to validate and expand our findings across various cultural contexts. Additionally, our study was conducted during a specific timeframe, and longitudinal research could provide insights into how greedy review behavior evolves over time, especially in response to global events or changes in travel patterns. Future studies could also delve deeper into the interaction between technological solutions (such as AI-powered review analysis) and psychological factors in managing online reviews. Lastly, while we focused on the tourism industry, comparative studies across different service sectors could reveal industry-specific patterns of greedy review behavior, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of this phenomenon in the broader context of online consumer behavior.

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