



Kaunas University of Technology

School of Economics and Business

Credibility and Trust of Online Reviews: The Case of the Tourism Sector

Master's Final Degree Project

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Kaunas, 2021



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Summary

Relevance of the topic. As the number of internet users grows each year, so does the amount of content that users create and share. With the high flow of information, more and more platforms are emerging where people can share their thoughts and experiences. These platforms are especially popular with travelers. In the tourism sector, online reviews are a particularly important aspect that has a significant impact on customers seeking accommodation for a trip Chris Anderson (2012). Online reviews have the greatest impact on the first four steps of a customer purchasing decision-making process, during which people search for information, analyze alternatives, and seek to find out which service is best for them. On the one hand, high availability of information is beneficial because customers can compare and analyze different reviews, but on the other hand, large amounts of information also have disadvantages. The unlimited number of reviews, that can be created by any user with internet access, results in a lot of misleading information. Reviewers have different motivations to share them, which in many cases can lead to uncredible information. Online reviews are also shared by social media influencers who represent the interests of certain companies. Finally, people who share online reviews are exposed to the feelings and moods they experience at the time, which can also distort information. All these aspects lead to the key question when analyzing online reviews - their reliability.

The subject matter of the thesis. Reliability of online reviews in the tourism sector.

The research object. Factors determining the reliability of online reviews.

The research aim – to analyze the main factors of online reviews' credibility in the case of the tourism sector.

The research objectives:

1. Define the problematic field of online reviews' credibility and analyze it.
2. Analyze scientific literature based on eWOM, consumer behavior, and online reviews.
3. Conduct quantitative research on consumers who are using online reviews.

The research method. Based on the analysis of the scientific literature, a quantitative study was conducted to substantiate the previously discussed characteristics of online reviews and to discover new interfaces and suggestions. In the context of the global COVID-19 pandemic, an online questionnaire method was chosen that allowed the collection of survey material without physical contact with respondents. This method is convenient for collecting the responses of the entire sample

of respondents when using the quantitative research method. A total of 382 completed questionnaires were received, the results of which were subsequently analyzed. All people who participated in the study are Lithuanian citizens who have traveled at least once in the last two years and used online reviews. The study was conducted using the Google Forms platform. The study aimed to test the four hypotheses raised, by confirming or refusing them. After the analysis of the research results and testing of the hypotheses, suggestions, and observations were presented.

Matas Maleckas. Internetinių apžvalgų patikimumas ir pasitikėjimas: turizmo sektoriaus atvejis. Magistro baigiamasis projektas / vadovė Prof. Dr. Rimgailė Vaitkienė; Kauno technologijos universitetas, Ekonomikos ir verslo fakultetas.

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Reikšminiai žodžiai: e-WOM komunikacija, vartotojų kuriamas turinys, patikimumas, internetinės apžvalgos, autoriaus tapatybė, viešbučio rezervacijos siekimas, pirkimo sprendimo priėmimo procesas.

Kaunas, 2021. 69 p.

Santrauka

Temos aktualumas. Kiekvienais metais augant interneto vartotojų skaičiui, daugėja kuriamo turinio, kuriuo vartotojai dalinasi tarpusavyje. Esant dideliame informacijos srautui, atsiranda vis daugiau platformų, kur žmonės gali dalintis savo įspūdžiais ir patirtimis. Šios platformos yra ypatingai populiarios tarp keliautojų. Turizmo sektoriuje internetinės apžvalgos yra ypatingai svarbus aspektas, kuris daro didelę įtaką klientams, kurie ieško apgyvendinimo paslaugų kelionei (Chris Anderson, 2012). Didžiausią įtaką internetinės apžvalgos daro klientų pirkimo sprendimo priėmimo proceso pirmiems keturiems žingsniams, kurių metu žmogus ieško informacijos, analizuoja alternatyvas bei siekia išsiaiškinti kuri paslauga jam yra tinkamiausia. Iš vienos pusės didelis informacijos prieinamumas yra naudingas, kadangi klientai gali lyginti ir analizuoti įvairias apžvalgas, tačiau žvelgiant iš kitos pusės, didelis informacijos kiekis turi ir blogų savybių. Esant neribotam skaičiui apžvalgų, kurias gali kurti bet kuris, prieigą prie interneto turintis vartotojas, atsiranda daug klaidinančios informacijos. Apžvalgų kūrėjai turi skirtingas motyvacijas jomis dalintis, dėl ko daugeliu atveju informacija gali būti klaidinga. Taip pat internetinėmis apžvalgomis dalinasi ir socialinių medijų nuomonės formuotojai, kurie atstovauja tam tikrų įmonių interesus. Galiausiai, žmonės, kurie dalinasi internetinėmis apžvalgomis yra veikiami tuo metu patiriamų jausmų ir nuotaikos, kas taip pat gali iškreipti informaciją. Visi šie aspektai veda prie pagrindinio klausimo, analizuojant internetines apžvalgas – jų patikimumo.

Tema. Internetinių apžvalgų patikimumas turizmo sektoriuje.

Darbo objektas. Faktorai, lemiantys internetinių apžvalgų patikimumą.

Darbo tikslas. Išanalizuoti pagrindinius internetinių apžvalgų patikimumo veiksnius turizmo sektoriuje.

Darbo tikslai:

1. Apibrėžti internetinių apžvalgų probleminę sritį ir ją išanalizuoti.
2. Išanalizuoti mokslinę literatūrą susijusią su eWOM komunikacija, vartotojų elgsena ir internetinių apžvalgų patikimumu.
3. Atlikti kiekybinį vartotojų, naudojančių internetines apžvalgas, tyrimą.

Tyrimo metodas. Remiantis mokslinės literatūros analize, buvo atliktas kiekybinis tyrimas, kurio metu siekta pagrįsti prieš tai aptartas internetinių apžvalgų charakteristikas, bei atrasti naujas sąsajas

ir siūlymus. Pasaulyje vyraujant COVID-19 pandemijai, buvo pasirinktas internetinio klausimyno metodas, kuris leido surinkti tyrimo medžiagą, nepatiriant fizinio kontakto su respondentais. Šis metodas yra patogus, siekiant surinkti visos imties respondentų atsakymus. Viso buvo gauta 382 užpildytos anketos, kurių rezultatai vėliau buvo išanalizuoti. Visi žmonės dalyvavę tyrime yra Lietuvos piliečiai, keliavę bent kartą per pastaruosius du metus bei naudojęsi internetinėmis apžvalgomis. Tyrimas buvo atliktas pasitelkiant Google formų platformą. Tyrimo tikslas buvo atsakyti į keturias iškeltas hipotezes, jas patvirtinant, arba paneigiant. Atlikus, visą tyrimo rezultatų analizę bei hipotezių testavimą buvo pateikiami siūlymai bei pastebėjimai.

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Introduction

Nowadays, traditional media channels are getting less and less critical. In contrast, new channels use a specific form of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) communication and become the most popular channels. The arrival and expansion of the internet have brought us a considerable change in information sharing and interpreting. It is essential to analyze eWOM when we are trying to understand today's consumer behavior. Gruen et al. (2006) underline that consumers exchange know-how information via electronic word-of-mouth communication, affecting consumer behavior and future intentions. However, in eWOM, unlike in WOM communication, online reviews are primarily from unknown reviewers, text-based information. That is why consumers face difficulty in determining the credibility of the review (Chatterjee, 2001).

When analyzing consumers' credibility and truthfulness towards online reviews, it is important to separate consumers by their knowledge level. In marketing literature, we often find that consumers are divided into two groups: low product knowledge and high knowledge consumers (Alba & Hutchinson (1987), Park et al. (2007)). Both low and high levels of expertise consumers attribute to online reviews differently. They have different outcomes, which are affected by their knowledge and experiences in the product. Also, consumers behave on behalf of their objective and subjective knowledge, where objective reflects information which consumer has in his memory and subjective which involves a perception of how much the person knows (Park et al., 2007).

Online reviews are not only an informational source, which allows consumers to share their experiences, but it is an important tool to impact steps of the consumer purchasing decision-making process. Nowadays, when we are living in the digital era, analysis of purchasing decision making is getting more significant than ever before. New web technologies allow consumers to face large amounts of information, which is available for every internet user. A great amount of information used for purchasing decision-making can be perceived as an advantage. However, within higher amounts of information, specifically online reviews, more drawbacks can be identified. These factors impact eight purchasing decision-making steps suggested by Miklošik (2015).

Motivation. Word of mouth marketing was always one of the most critical factors for the consumer purchasing decision-making process. Nowadays, when people spend much time browsing on the internet, planning their trips, and booking apartments or hotels, electronic online reviews became critical aspects of the pre-purchase search for information. While analyzing online reviews and consumers' behavior, it is essential to understand what factors affect consumers' credibility on online reviews, the primary motivations for creating and using online reviews, and how it influences different groups of individuals.

Problem statement. Nowadays, on the internet can be easily found online hotel reviews of many customers who have already booked it previously. As the number of online reviews is snowballing in both visual and text formats, there is more and more unverified and misleading information, which can harm the consumer purchasing decision-making process. There comes a question – what makes an online review credible for online users?

Aim of the work – to analyze the main factors of online reviews' credibility in the case of the tourism sector.

Main tasks:

1. Define the problematic field of online reviews' credibility and analyze it.
2. Analyze scientific literature based on eWOM, consumer behavior, credibility, and trust of online reviews.
3. To test the research hypothesis, using a quantitative analysis method.

Keywords - electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), user-generated content, credibility, online reviews, source identity, trust, booking intention, purchasing decision-making process.

1. The Credibility and Trust of Online Reviews: Problem Analysis

Back in the 1980s world discovered many new inventions and opportunities when the internet was first launched. This new technology started to assemble an evolutionary network, which soon became the modern internet. The internet took a huge part in most of the fields. It began to improve businesses' efficiency; people had new possibilities to communicate without any restrictions. News and media content started to reach every internet user instantly. Moreover, the online world allowed people to share their ideas and knowledge freely. All these processes soon allowed people to collaborate and connect to online communities, where they have started communicating and sharing their thoughts (Faraj et al., 2011).

Evolving internet and development of Web 2.0 has powerfully changed the way of communication in the past ten years. Web 2.0 allowed new possibilities on the World Wide Web, which has enormously grown active users number, implemented various new technologies like social networks, new types of communication, and content (Cormode & Krishnamurthy, 2008). All these innovations have significantly implemented the evolution of electronic word of mouth. In 2020, more than 4.6 billion active internet users (Statista, 2021) shared their thoughts on the internet more and more actively. New technologies allowed users to share their content in visual and text formats via many different web pages or social media sites. These new processes have opened new opportunities and enabled all four types of eWOM: one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, and many-to-many. New communications models brought new possibilities for internet users to communicate via direct messaging or e-mails and via blogs, chats, online forums, Wiki sites, social media searching, and tagging functions (Weisfeld-Spolter et al., 2014). New eWOM types have created an easier way to communicate for private users, enabling new markets for businesses to advertise their products or services more efficiently. New possibilities for online advertising introduced the online world with concepts, which nowadays are being used daily: influencer marketing, influencer sponsorships, online vlogs, online reviews, etc. All these new user-generated content creation forms brought innovative ways of product advertising. Also, these technologies allowed people all around the world to reach new communication possibilities, open new business models, connect in the network. One of the well-known business models, which came with the internet is E-commerce. Nowadays, internet shopping is widely used method, with a worldwide sale of 4 206 billion dollars in 2020 (Statista, 2021), and the numbers are growing fast. It is essential to notice that people not only started to purchase goods online, but they are also reviewing, commenting, and discussing products online.

However, most of the new things people invent and discover usually come with two-sided effects. On one side, there are all advantages and opportunities created: new communication methods, new business models, new marketing and advertising solutions, etc. Unfortunately, there are always harmful elements on the other side, which are inevitable and vital to analyze. Nowadays, millions of online users generate content on the internet, creating blogs, videos, commenting, and communicating in all other ways. There are more users with different experiences, attitudes, and purposes within the growing numbers of online users. Naturally, as the number of active users grows, so does the number of misleading information and scams. False information would be ineffective if readers could recognize it and just ignore it, but usually, it is hard to do it. Studies show that people can identify fake information with accuracy between 53 % and 78 % across many experiments with dishonest behaviors, including hoaxes, fake reviews, and fake news (Kumar & Shah, 2018).

When analyzing the specific format of online information – online reviews created by other users, it is important to mention that online reviews strongly influence the customer purchasing decision-making process in different stages. Online reviews are growing, as there are growing numbers of internet users and online purchases worldwide. However, online shoppers are watching or reading online reviews, consumers who are purchasing products or services physically also. During the COVID-19 pandemic, while people cannot leave their homes without a necessary matter, browsing and purchasing goods online have become more important than ever before. While people are spending more time on the internet, it is natural that online reviews are growing. Also, the pandemic has changed customer behavior towards e-shopping. Numbers of customer purchasing goods and services via the internet are constantly evolving, but the pandemic has increased this growth even more. Most retailers and service providers are already adopting their sales strategies and delivering their service via e-shops. Also, these processes are changing consumer consumption habits and behavior. Sheth (2020) has analyzed the impact of COVID-19 on consumer behavior and pointed out eight aspects, which were impacted the most:

1. Hoarding. During the pandemic, consumers tend to stock more daily usage products, a natural process while managing future uncertainty.
2. Improvisation. When people face new living conditions, they look for new consumption methods, which can strongly change old habits.
3. Pent-up demand. During a time of crisis, consumers tend to postpone the purchase of any products or services.
4. Embracing Digital Technology. People find more time and motivation to use digital technologies, while there is a minimal approach to the physical world.
5. The store comes home. During the lockdown, people are unable to leave their homes and reach physical stores. In that way, people use more product and service deliveries to their homes.
6. The blurring of Work-Life Boundaries. Any people can work from home, which traps them in minimal space, where they have to work and have their leisure activities.
7. Reunions with Friends and Family. During the pandemic, people tend to interact with their family members more than previously to share experiences and check if they are okay.
8. Discovery of Talent. Spending more time at home, people have more time to experiment with recipes, practice their talent, share learning activities, or shop online more creatively.

These aspects have strongly affected people's lives, purchasing, and consumption habits, affecting their purchasing decision-making process. Digital technologies are more influencing this process. While focusing on online reviews posted on various reviewing websites and social media channels, it is important to mention that it is also a type of information, which often can be misleading. There are several reasons why online reviews can include fake or inaccurate information. In most cases, it can be linked with reviewer motivation and purposes for creating the review. Main reasons, which impact the quality of online review:

- Loads of online reviews, including misleading ones. An online review should significantly improve consumers' ability to choose the best product or service for them; however, nowadays, there

is a diverse selection of already created content by other users, which is not always reliable. Previous literature has shown that there were examples of algorithms made to detect fake or misleading reviews. For example, Ott et al. (2011) system which works on hotels' fake reviews identification. They have found out that fake reviews have different language patterns and that accurate reviews are more specific about details, which fake reviews do not include. Also, more paper has tried to create a way to filter fake reviews from the true ones, like Hu et al. (2012). They have analyzed online review ratings, readability, and sentiments via textual analysis. These studies brought some progress for the fake reviews identification process, but it is still a very questionable topic.

- Influencer marketing and work on sponsorships. Social media influencers are the second reason why there are more and more online reviews, which cannot be fully trusted. This phenomenon became very popular nowadays, and that happens for an apparent reason. An influencer can influence other individuals and has a big audience of followers on social media platforms (Bakshy et al., 2011). For social media influencers, creating online reviews and other content online is daily work, for which they get paid salaries. This is a usual way of sponsorship work with companies willing to advertise their products or services online. Behind every influencer, a client is purchasing this way of advertisement, and he strongly controls how the review will be created. In that way, often, the review is designed to promote the product or service but not to communicate its characteristic truthfully.

- Online review creators limited experience and knowledge in the field. Every individual, who is seeking to share user-generated content online, can do that freely. There are only a few restrictions, which limits the way of sharing opinion online. In this case, a big part of online reviews creators are regular people who have not used the product or service they are reviewing. Many individuals share their reviews without having a more profound knowledge of the field, which results in an unreliable online review. To solve this issue, most social media channels and review sites have made systems, which help customers identify trusted reviewers and save on search costs. These systems mostly show reviewers' ratings, comments, number of followers, and positive responses by other users. Also, sites like Amazon ask customer "Was this review helpful to you?", after gathering answer, the system can position the most helpful reviews at the top of the product description page, and customer can sort reviews by their level of helpfulness (Mudambi & Schuff, 2010).

- Anonymity. On online review sites and social media channels, users can choose under what name they will operate. Every individual can use his own real-life identity or create an account under a fictitious nickname and keep anonymous in that way. The study made by Kang et al. (2013) shows many reasons why people are browsing the internet anonymously: to protect personal safety, avoid being disliked by others, give honest ratings, feel comfortable, save efforts to log in, etc. From the study, it is evident that there are many positive reasons to keep your identity unknown on the internet. Although, one of the most important reasons is security. But, on the other hand, when analyzing online reviews creators, many individuals are anonymous because of negative reasons like avoiding responsibility for their created content, sharing misleading information, or even scamming. Online reviews creator, who hides his identity does not increase the level of truthfulness but lowers it.

- Facts merged with opinions, feelings, and attitudes. A big part of the online reviews posted online are created by regular customers, but not experts. People who are creating online reviews often express their own opinion or feelings about the product or service, but not facts, which can often mislead the reviewer. Studies show that individuals with extreme views are more motivated to post a review. It means that an individual who is very satisfied or unsatisfied with the product or service is

more willing to share his review. And mainly, it works with the opposing side. When a customer is disappointed with the product or service, he seeks to post a negative review more than a customer who has a reasonable opinion (Han & Anderson, 2020). Moreover, prior studies show that negative reviews have a more significant impact, and if a user is finding only positive reviews, he continues searching for a negative one (Zehrer et al., 2011).

When analyzing online reviews, it is essential to define the specific sector or industry diagnosed. In this research case, it is the tourism and hospitality industry, more specifically, the apartment booking process. In the digital age we are currently living in, almost every industry is involved in online sales, and the hospitality industry is not an exception. Although the current situation in the world hit the tourism industry hard and total spendings have decreased drastically by 49.4 % in 2020 (Statista, 2021). Even though the pandemic has turned around the whole hospitality services industry, travel and tourism are still among the most significant parts of the hospitality industry, contributing to around 9.25 trillion USD GDP globally (Statista, 2021). The growth of domestic tourism is now providing a much-needed boost to the sector. Also, pandemic restrictions allowed the creation of new business models like online tours. Various platforms now allow visiting the most famous places, like museums and galleries virtually, without leaving home. For example, a platform for visiting one of the most famous museums, The Louvre, was created on its website (*Online Tours*, 2021).

Also, consumers tend more to make their plans and reservations online rather than physically. There is a growing market of online digital travel sales, online review websites, and more travel-related services, which can be done online.

In the travel and tourism sector, online reviews are among the most important factors that strongly affect the consumer purchasing decision-making process. Consumers tend to search for information about apartments on various online reviewing websites such as TripAdvisor, Trivago, Booking.com. Also, consumers look up online reviews on different social media channels. On these websites' consumers can find various online reviews, which allows gathering information about the hotel or apartment they are willing to book. TripAdvisor currently is one the biggest hotel reviewing websites, where people can find more than 884 million online reviews worldwide (Statista, 2021). The number of online reviews posted on TripAdvisor is multiplying; while in 2014, there were 200 million reviews, the number exceeded more than four times.

Online review, by its nature, is an information tool that helps customers share helpful information or experiences about a specific product or service with other online community users. Also, it helps to observe product or service features before purchasing it and saves time and costs on searching for product or service information within other sources. To have a qualified online review, it must be well trusted with accurate information. Otherwise, if the online review is made of false or misleading information, then not only will it not be useful, but it can also be harmful. When an online review delivers incorrect information, both the product or service and the reviewer suffer. Online reviews strongly affect the customer purchasing decision-making process, and fake reviews can interfere with it from the first step and lead customers to a different product or service choice. While analyzing the hospitality sector, online reviews' credibility is crucial. Consumers who are booking a hotel prioritize reviews as one of the main criteria, allowing seeking information and other consumers' experiences. Hotel or apartment booking online reviews consist of comments, ratings, pictures, and videos. Usually, the previous consumer shares his experiences after visiting the apartment, which helps others evaluate its quality before booking it.

Summarizing all the problematic fields discussed above can be combined into one main challenging area – online reviews credibility. There are many questions in the credibility field, which can be analyzed and discussed, but the main significant ones can be divided into two fields: customer and business parts. This paper will focus on the main question, which is the most important for both sides – how to make online reviews more credible and trustworthy?

2. The Credibility and Trust of Online Reviews: Theoretical Solutions

In this technological and information age we are living now, usage of the internet and technologies became a big part of everyday life. People are working through the internet, communicating with each other, spending their free time, purchasing products online, and sharing their thoughts and ideas. In the past ten years, the number of internet users worldwide has doubled, daily usage of the internet per capita has grown even higher – from an average of 75 minutes in 2011 and 181 minutes in the 2020 year (Statista, 2021). People spend more and more time sharing their content and reviewing other users' generated content. That is why important to analyze new ways of information sharing through social media channels, online blogs, online product reviews, and others.

Word of mouth (WOM) is a term that has existed in the world from the very beginning; human beings started to speak and share thoughts. Over time word of mouth has been the subject of many marketing studies and articles. Scientific literature authors have analyzed word of mouth importance and defined its definition in different contexts:

Arndt (1967) defines word of mouth as a communication method between customers regarding products, brands, or services.

Richins (1983) suggests that word of mouth is a form of interpersonal communication between product or service consumers, based on their personal experience or evaluation of the product.

Berger (2014) states that word of mouth is informal communications directed at consumers about the product or service usage, characteristics and it includes literal face-to-face discussion.

As we can see from literature analysis, WOM definition has been used for more than 70 years. Marketing specialists who analyze market operations, consumer purchasing behavior has realized a long time ago that WOM communication is one the most effective ways of ideas, opinions spread between customers. When analyzing consumer behavior, it is essential to understand how WOM affects the purchasing decision-making process, consisting of five stages: problem recognition, information search, competitive evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase. Consumers use WOM to reduce uncertainty at every purchase decision-making stage, find more comparable information, and form an opinion towards the product or service provider. Many scholars agree that negative WOM usually has a more powerful influence on consumer decision-making towards product purchase (Chiou et al., 2018).

2.1. Electronic Word of Mouth Communication Method

The importance of the electronic word-of-mouth communication method has an undeniable role in marketing research nowadays. If we look back to history, word of mouth was one of the strongest communication methods when there was no internet and digital technologies. Nowadays, it has a new electronic form. eWOM works in the same way but generates way more available information for one consumer. The Foundation of Web 2.0 introduced a new way of sharing user-generated content and sharing it worldwide. It allowed the creation of a variety of most popular information-sharing formats, like social networks, creative work-sharing websites, collaborative websites, blogging sites, and forums (Chu & Kim, 2011). All these new formats allowed the consumer to access information that they need about products or services quickly. The significance of eWOM processes and structures emergence has drawn many marketing and communication academics' attention. A new form of

electronic word-of-mouth communication method is a significant technological step, allowing analyzing information without traditional face-to-face communication, allowing more substantial amounts of data within less time and financial costs. Instead of going to the library or physically communicating with other individuals, internet users can access all sources of information with several clicks on the computer. eWOM brings many advantages, but with all these new possibilities, several challenges and difficulties come.

The electronic word of mouth communication method uses the only electronic channel for information sharing; it has many differences from the regular word of mouth method. One of the most distinctive differences between WOM and eWOM is the strength of communication between a communicator and an information receiver. The power of ties in eWOM is usually considered weak because there is no connection between communicator and receiver. On the other hand, in traditional WOM, there are typically strong ties between both parties. In the WOM method, the communicator and receiver usually have any kind of relationship prior. People are used to communicating face-to-face with their friends, family members, neighbors, etc. In eWOM communications, any user can create posts, and its reviewer can be any other user, usually not related to each other.

Moreover, in eWOM communication, there are no time, geographical limits. The only thing needed to access the information is an internet connection. There is no difference for which time or from which place users connect to the web.

All these previously mentioned eWOM characteristics introduce the positive side of the method. It allows people to access vast amounts of information anytime, from any place with only an internet connection. Unfortunately, that is only one side of this phenomenon, and there is another side, which is not that positive. The more information becomes easily accessible; the more there is questionable quality information. It is hard for the user to determine which information sources are credible and can be trusted. Online content creators usually feel less responsibility for their created reviews, as they know that strangers will read their content. Or content creator does not use his real identity but hides under an anonymous name. Because of these factors, there is a great possibility of incorrect information or different types of fraud which could cause negative consequences (Chatterjee, 2001).

To better understand the eWOM method, it is essential to analyze its types and concepts. Many scholarly authors have already defined different ideas by their points of view. Xia et al. (2009) explore online communities' eWOM by Ballot Box Communication (BBC), a system that reflects the shared experience and opinions among users. In the table below (Figure 1), four types of communication are scaled by their level of interactivity and accessibility. It begins with one-to-many style, one user information sharing to all users who can access it; usually, it is blogs, vlogs, or professional reviews. The next type is many-to-one, which has a lower level of interpersonal interaction and gathers many users' perceptions and opinions; usually, it is ranking, voting, searching. The last two types are many-to-many, like the online forum type, where many users interface with each other, and one-to-one, with the highest level of interactivity, such as private messages and email.

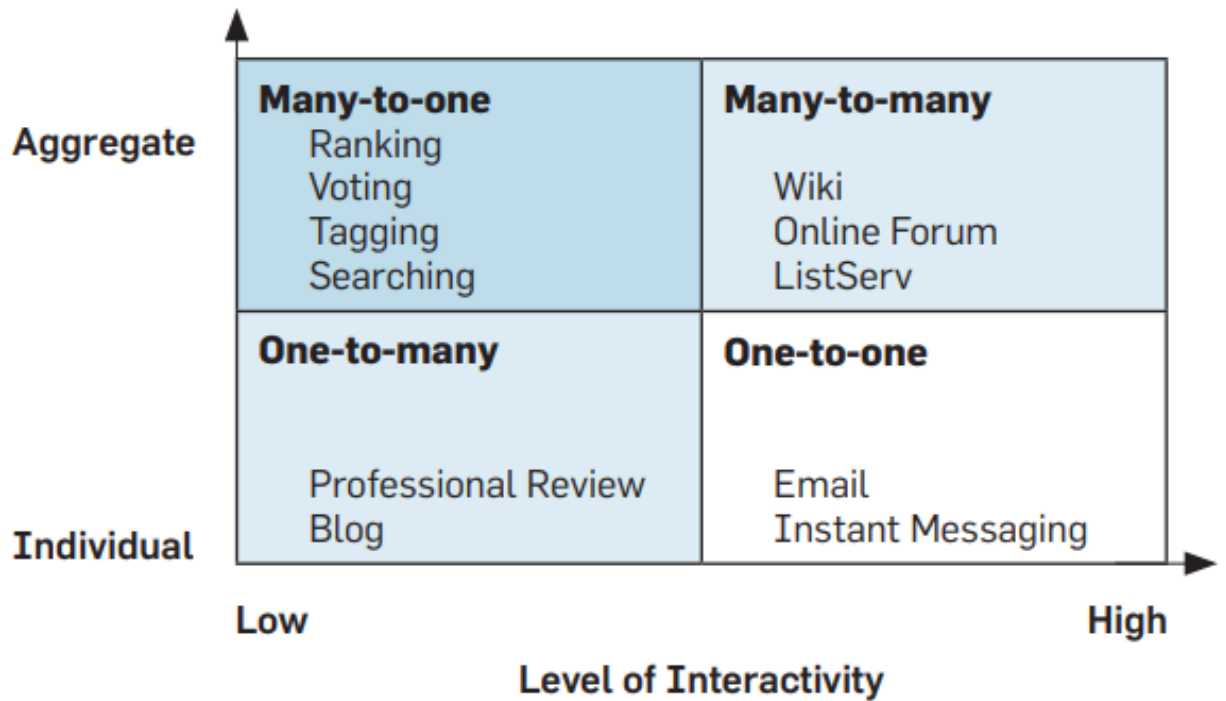


Fig. 1. Types of eWOM. Source: Weisfeld-Spolter et al., (2014).

Many sources of literature have addressed differences between these electronic communication types in eWOM. Weisfeld-Spolter et al. (2014) has made a study on these types in the context of business-to-costumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) content creation. This study is based on finding consumer persuasiveness and credibility differences between B2C and B2B social network sites. The field of information analyzed is movies DVDs. After testing four hypotheses and conducting study results, the authors found many differences between B2B and B2C communication types (Figure 2). The results have shown that source credibility was higher from a C2C sponsored SNS than from a B2B. Also, it was found out that there is a small effect between eWOM and MC, where eWOM only extends the impact of MC, but it is contextual depending on the sponsoring source (B2B or B2C) and eWOM type.

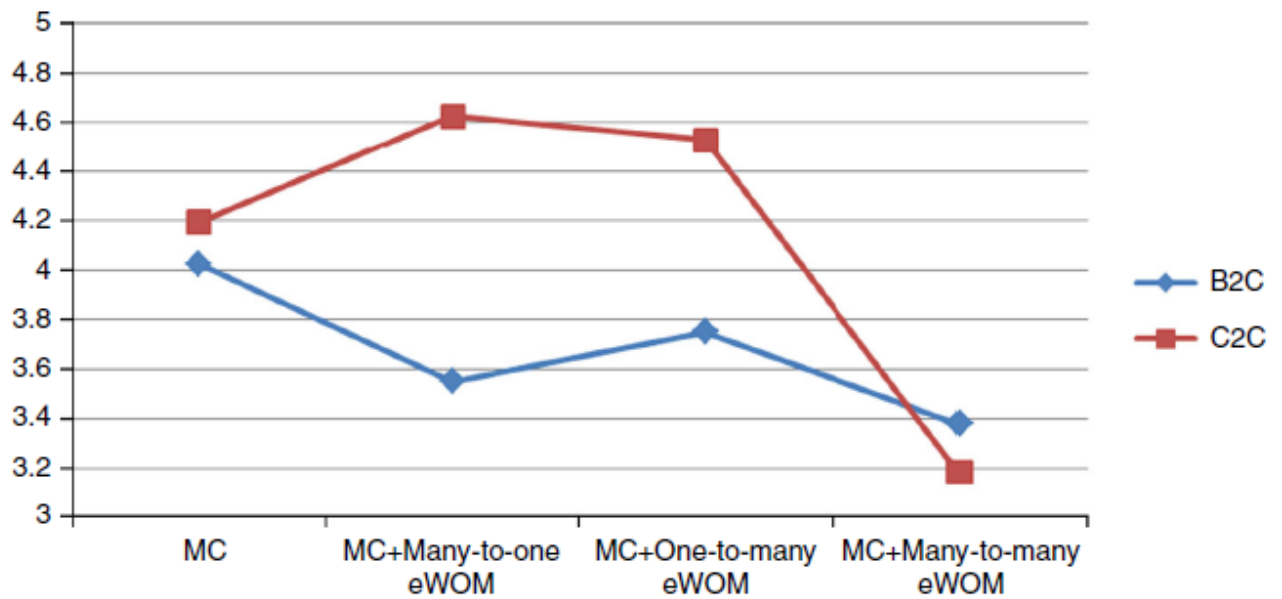


Fig. 2. Differences between eWOM in B2C and B2B. Source: Xia et al., (2009)

Chu & Kim (2011) has focused on analyzing consumer engagement determinants in social networking sites (SNSs). Authors note that SNSs are a perfect tool for eWOM, where consumers can freely generate content and share it with other network users. Article creators understand that SNSs are the engine for eWOM and that it is important to analyze it. To get more into the details, the authors use a proposed model of eWOM ties created by Granovetter (1973).

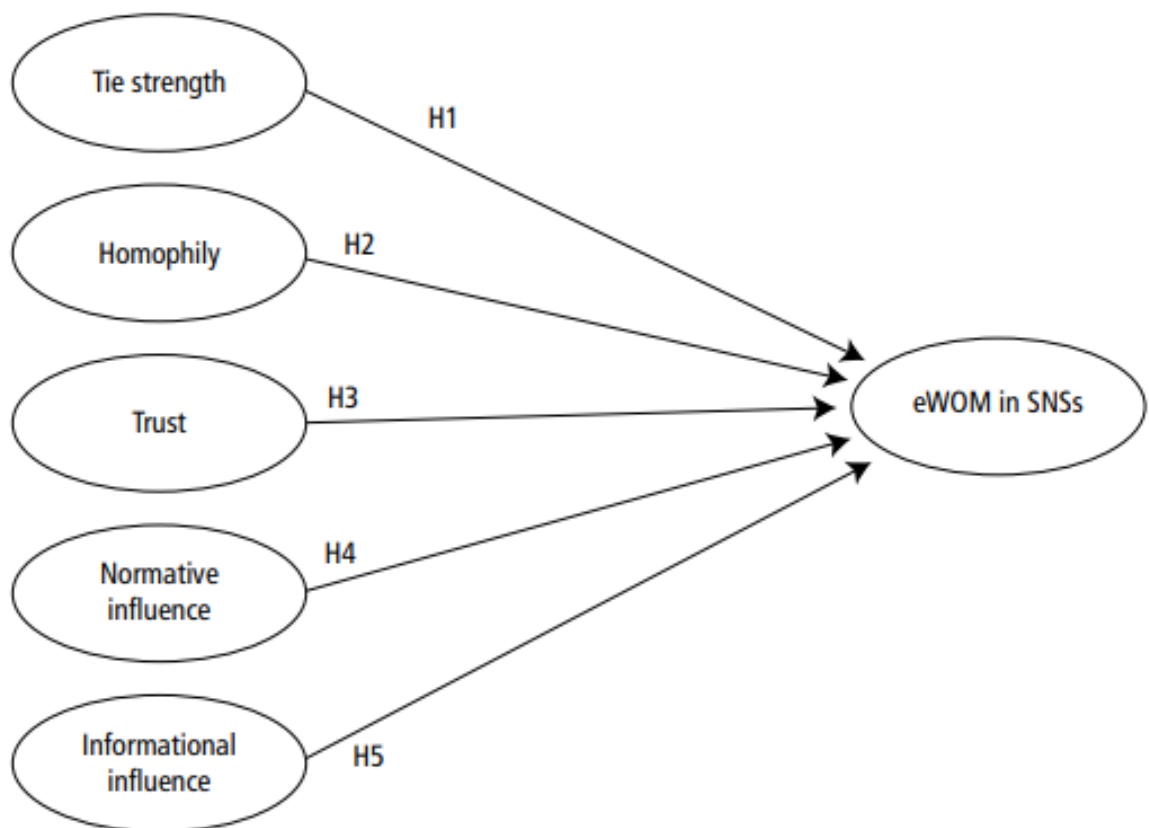


Fig. 3. Proposed model of eWOM in social networking sites. Source: Granovetter (1973).

Model in Figure number 3 outlines the main five criteria which influence consumers' behavior and connections between each other in SNSs. All these criteria have either a solid or weak tie. The perceived tie strength based on reliable and weak links developed via SNSs triggers users to communicate with each other and share product-related information, encouraging eWOM behavior. An online survey was conducted to test the relationships between key variables in the proposed model. The research was carried on students because they are the biggest user group of SNSs. A total of 400 students have participated in the study. There were several different conclusions conducted from the study results. The hypothesis is telling that SNSs users are strongly associated with opinion seeking and sharing behavior. The connection between homophily and eWOM in SNSs was found negative. Another exciting point found out by the study is that consumers tend to share their online reviews with all their contacts, allowing users to provide information easily and quickly without thinking. Trust was another vital construct, which showed that the higher level of trust the user has, the more he will engage in opinion seeking and passing behavior on SNSs. Also, trust brings an important role when the consumer is valuing the information from another user. The more user is trusted in the community; other users will value the more information share. The next point, which was not confirmed, is the user's susceptibility to informational influence and opinion giving. When SNS users are sensitive to informational social impact, they will share less information with others (Chu & Kim, 2011).

As this study has analyzed only a limited set of determinants of eWOM, which are used only in SNSs, it proves important points that eWOM makes a significant impact on consumer product judgment and that it is an important tool for companies who are working on marketing strategies and promoting products or services.

Other academic authors also analyze consumer information sharing about products in eWOM communication form. Bickart et al. (2001) have studied consumer behavior in internet forums and compared its information value to the marketer-generated online information. In this case, there are several main components to be analyzed – information credibility, trustworthiness, and relevancy to the customer. In this study, participants were assigned five topics on which they had to look up information online. The topics were related to specific product categories that participants were interested in. After gathering test results, it was found out that participants showed greater interest in learning more about their topic when they were reading online forums rather than corporate web pages. Authors suggest that it is the nature of the information that causes these results.

2.2. Web 2.0 and Social Media Channels

To better understand online users' behavior and social interactions, it is essential to analyze Worldwide web development. The Worldwide web, better known as the web, was invented back in 1989 by English scientist Tim Berners-Lee. The starting idea of the project was to allow users to view text documents by referring to them with unique links. Users connected to the internet could browse basic web pages to read information shared by the web page's author. No other user could go to a link and edit the information. It could be done only by an authentic author who has shared the link. After some time, this first introduction of the internet browser was named Web 1.0, in other words, the first version of the Worldwide Web (Berners-Lee & Cailliau, 1994).

After 15 years of first web usage, the term Web 2.0 was officially introduced by Tim O'Reilly. This new version of the web was a huge improvement from the first generation and brought internet

concepts like social media, user-generated content, creative consumer, etc. This new phenomenon describes a new innovative way of technical solutions and content creation. The connection between Web 2.0, SNSs, and creative consumers can be seen in Figure number 4. This graph also describes three main effects caused by the beginning of Web 2.0:

1. Main online activity shift from the regular desktop to the Web.
2. Power shift from the firm to the consumer.
3. Value production transfer from the firm to the consumer.

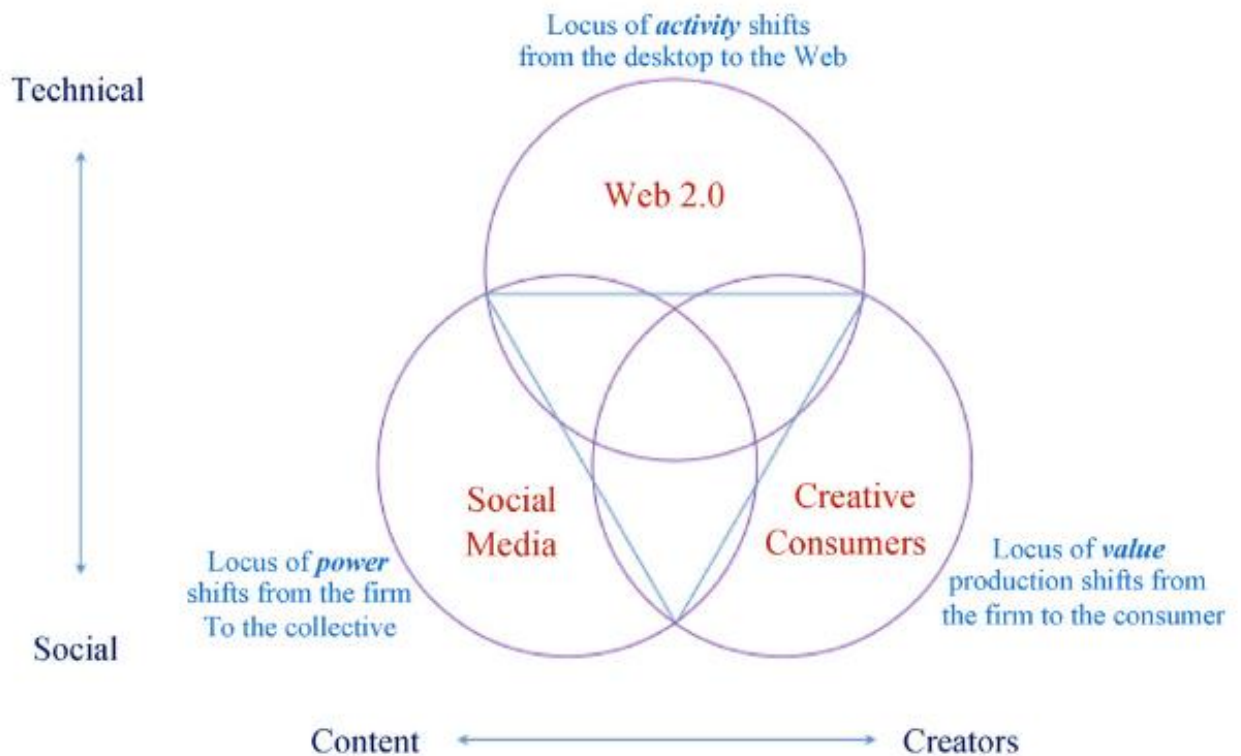


Fig. 4. Web 2.0, social media, and creative consumers (Berthon et al., 2012).

These three effects describe the development of social media channels (e.g., Youtube, Facebook, Instagram), which became platforms for user-generated content. Users who are generating online content (e.g., pictures, blogs, videos, text) are the creative consumers who became the dynamos of Web 2.0 (Berthon et al., 2012).

Many marketers describe Web 2.0 as a technical solution or the environment, allowing users to create content on social media or interact with each other. With the new generation of the Web, the internet has brought many advantages like more prosperous websites with interactive, user-friendly interfaces, allowed users mass collaboration. All these new abilities of Web 2.0 have strongly affected global markets.

The following important improvement, which was enabled by Web 2.0 technologies, is social media channels. Social media websites are platforms, which allow users and organizations to interact with each other via sharing different types of content: text, pictures, videos, or networks. At this part, a new generation of the Web plays a significant role, which grants the possibility to share media content with many other users at one time (many to many) and changes the traditional media method one too

many. During past years, while the world is facing the COVID-19 pandemic, which does not allow travel typically, social media for people is becoming more and more critical. While people must spend most of their time at home, social media channels are used for communication with each other and as a platform for socialization. Social media channels like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter became an integral part of everyday life for many people. It allows users to communicate with each other without any limits, sell or purchase items, view the newest world news, or their relative's news feed, read blogs, etc. To better illustrate this phenomenon, it is always helpful to look up the statistics.

After analyzing the types of social networks, it is worth emphasizing that each of them is designed for different purposes and meets the needs of the user only when used in a targeted manner, i.e., it is up to the consumer to choose which social network it is worthwhile for him to participate in achieving specific set goals. In some of them, the individual can realize himself as a creator to meet other people or find a new job. However, all social networks are linked by common characteristics that are examined in the scientific literature.

Gillin P. (2007), in his book "The New Influencers: A Marketer's Guide to the New Social Media," highlights one of the most important features of new social networks - effective communication. The author mentions the old effective word-of-mouth marketing communication, which states that one individual can pass on positive or negative feedback to eleven other individuals living in his immediate environment, and emphasizes that this method is already obsolete when new tools exist. A message can be transmitted in a virtual environment to 10 million other users simultaneously on social networks. This feature establishes the social network as a powerful tool in business, media, and many other areas.

Durukan & Bozaci (2013) point out another feature of social networks - freedom of choice for consumers. According to the authors, internet users, with the help of social networks, gain the power to choose information. Not only are they empowered to create and share publicly the information they want to share, but they can also explore the broadest range of information that other social network participants share. These amounts of information open a broader perception of a person, give them freedom and thus influence people's choices. Although, freely disclosed information is, in many cases is not checked and can become harmful to other social network users.

Baird & Fisher (2005) point out popular social networks that are shaping new ways of learning. Networks provide opportunities to create virtual classes, seminars, and lectures for learners. At that time, students can share relevant information and, at the same time, delve into the subject. Old learning system often does not meet the learning needs of the modern generation, and that social media and networks give them more motivation to learn.

The fourth distinctiveness of social networks was formed with the change of the Internet and the emergence of user-generated content—XX a. At the end of the 19th century, with the beginning of the Internet, the information available on it was limited and published only by certain institutions. This content was practically no different from what humanity had before. However, with the formation of social networks, scope grew as more and more users generated it. It is true that with the increase in the amount of information, a lot of low-quality content has emerged. Still, filtering systems made it possible to find much more significant amounts of helpful information (Agichtein et al. 2008).

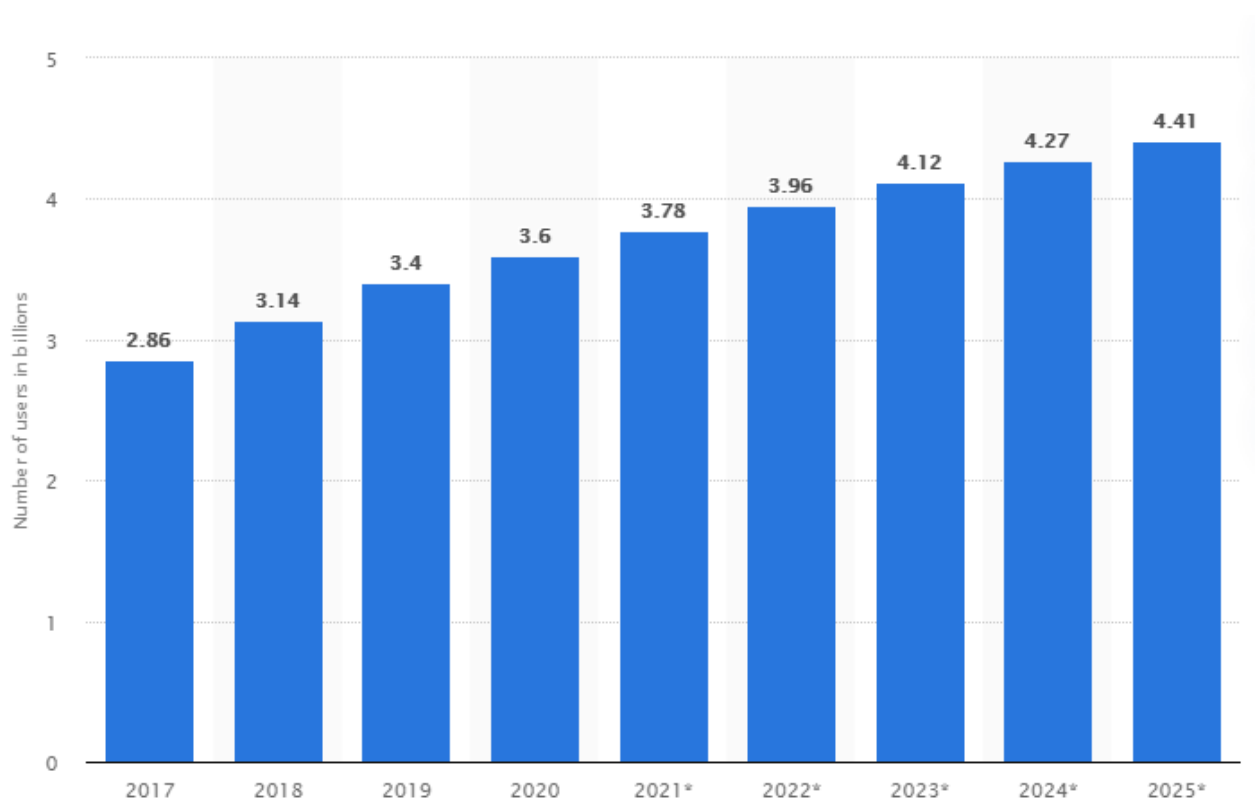


Fig. 5. Number of social network users worldwide from 2017 to 2025 (in billions). Source: (Statista, 2021)

Looking at Figure number 5, we can see that number of social network users is constantly growing worldwide. With 2.86 billion users in 2017, we now have 3.78 billion users in 2021, and it is predicted that the growth will continue. The statistic shows that more and more people are connecting to social media channels and in the future, this type of behavior will be even more popular.

On the other hand, it is essential to mention that social media channels had many advantages, but they have several disadvantages. Bolton et al. (2013) have investigated users of generation Y on social networks. According to the results and various statistics, it is evident that generation Y is one of the most significant social media users, accounting for about half of all active users. In their research with psychologists, authors note that the impact of social networks on young people is evident. Most of the consequences are psychological. Generation Y is described as skeptical, incomprehensible to other individuals, impatient, and less obedient. These changes are formed by a person using social networks every day, with their active participation. Because scholars single out social networks as a phenomenon that influences its members, it can be argued that it is a great place to convey the desired message to opinion leaders whose primary goal is to control.

As social media channels gather more and more users, who review other peoples' created content daily, marketers found a new way of promoting their products or services. Social media networks are channels where people can share their opinions, reviews, and other content. User-generated content is what enables the growth of social media channels. On websites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, there can be found online reviews of various products and services,

We find the phenomenon of social media influencers and sponsored content, which was first found out by Balasubramanian (1994). This new way of advertising products allows companies to work with social media influencers (SMI), who are working every day on creating content on social media networks, like, for example - YouTube. SMIs are mainly working with products or service brands

who are willing to invest in paid collaborations and get an advertisement on social media in that way. In this advertising, the influencer creates and publishes a post in a social media channel, including product recommendations or reviews. In return, SMI is getting paid by the company, promoting the product (Stubb et al., 2019).

In different internet sources, we can find a variety of descriptions for social media influencer:

- People have the power to influence other people's consumption decisions because of their actual or perceived authority, knowledge, status in society.
- Social media users who determine reliability, quality in specific industries. Social media influencers have access to a large audience and can convince them of authenticity and acquisition of goods or services.
- People who have a significant influence on public opinion about certain things. These are individuals who not only form but also create opinions.

In the scientific literature, the concept of social media influencers is distinguished more constructively:

- A person, or group of people, influences others through words and actions (Keller & Berry, 2003).
- Individuals with distinctive traits, such as the ability to influence, competence in a particular field, leadership, and the ability to use those traits to influence many other individuals (Bakshy et al., 2011).
- People with large numbers of followers on different social networking platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube (De Veirman et al., 2017).

In other words, a social media influencer is a person who has his opinion about certain things, which other users in the media value. Social media networks allow great opportunities for people to get well-known and achieve high numbers of followers. To acquire more significant numbers of followers, social media influencers have to dedicate their daily life to sharing it on social media. To be famous and well-known, SMI must sustain its daily content, which allows him to keep growing numbers of followers. The more followers SMI can achieve, the more opportunities it can have from companies that seek to advertise their products online. For companies, one of the essential things in collaboration is to connect with the most successful influencers. In that way, an advertisement can reach the biggest audience of potential customers.

It is a challenging process for SMIs content viewers to understand which parts of the content are sponsored by a specific brand and which are not. To avoid misleading information consumers, there are strict rules on how the sponsored content must be regulated. For example, one of the most famous social media channel YouTube has its own Ad policies and guidelines how content creators must behave regarding paid advertisements. Every video, which has included paid advertising, has to be marked with starting text: "This video is sponsored by (Brand name)." There is prohibited content, which cannot be advertised on the channel, like counterfeit goods, dangerous products or services, inappropriate content. There are also categories of restricted content like adult content, alcohol, copyrights, gambling, etc. Moreover, all created advertisements' content automatically goes through

the review process, where every detail of the ad is checked carefully (*Ad Policy Overview - YouTube Help*, 2021).

In conclusion, the rise of new Web 2.0 technologies has significantly changed the internet, changed communication between individuals, and allowed the creation of new business models. Electronic word-of-mouth communication method have implemented new ways of communicating on the world wide web and changed the classic word-of-mouth method rules. New ways of information transmission have opened new opportunities for regular internet users and various businesses as well. Unique activities like e-commerce have successfully started operating and now grown into one of the most significant business models worldwide.

Growing numbers of internet users started to create online communities, which later have developed into social media networks, which now are inseparable from people every day. Social media networks have opened new possibilities for users to easily connect, share thoughts, ideas, various media, etc. For businesses, it has opened new opportunities for advertisement, widening networks, etc. Also, networks allowed the creation of new phenomena – social media influencers, who share daily content of various channels, advertising products and services, and influencing other users in numerous ways.

2.3. The Credibility of Online Reviews and Trust

Growing numbers of social media and reviewing website users brings more and more user-generated content, which users share on the media for various reasons. Online reviews form eWOM, which is user-generated content created by users who have used a product or service (Bae & Lee, 2011). Online reviews can be found in different formats: text comments, pictures, videos. While analyzing hospitality sector reviews, the most common type is text comments and ratings. There are various websites like Amazon, TripAdvisor, or Yelp, operating in different sectors, but all have online reviewing. For example, Amazon has started to offer customers to post their comments about the product in 1995, and now more than 5 million users have published tens of millions of online reviews. In January 2020, a survey was conducted on US Amazon users, who asked to rate reasons to shop on Amazon. 40,5 % of customers noted that they are choosing Amazon to shop because of product reviews and recommendations (Statista, 2020).

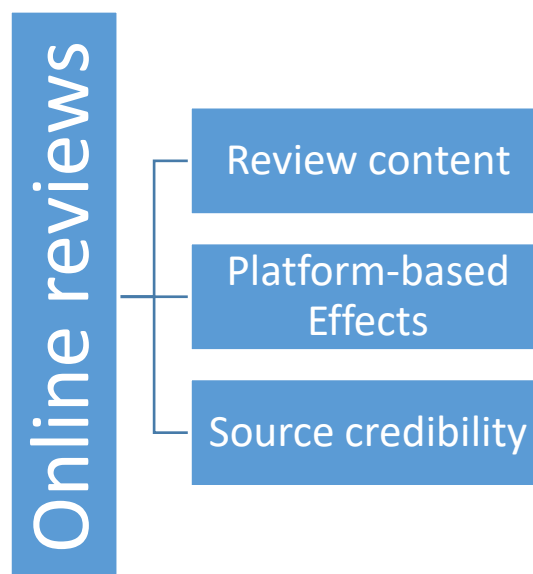


Fig. 6. Significant components of online reviews (Shan, 2014).

Review content. There is three most important subject when analyzing online reviews content – valence, volume, and quality. The valence of eWOM characterizes its nature by defining whether the review is positive or negative. Previous studies show that negative online reviews have more influence on consumer attitudes. Volume simply reflects the popularity and importance of reviewed products or services. A more significant number of online reviews leads to more favorable attitudes towards the product or service. Review quality is analyzed through the perspective of information characteristics. A high-quality review must contain understandable and objective comments with sufficient reasons, rather than arguments that express feelings or observations without any specific reasoning.

Platform-based Effects. It is proven that the platform used to post online reviews affects the context of the message. Online reviews can be shared on various media: online review websites (e.g., TripAdvisor), retailers' websites (e.g., Amazon), personal blogs/vlogs, social network sites, forums, or commercial websites.

Source credibility. The credibility of the online review author is one of the most critical factors for this research. Many previous studies have proven that a source with higher credibility produces more attitude change than a source with a lower level of credibility. Consumers tend to trust more people who have more experience and higher knowledge in products or services. That is why reviewing websites have invented peer-rating systems, which allow users to recognize expert customers who have already posted an increased number of reviews and have proven to be a valuable source of information.

Online product or service reviews play a significant role in the customer purchasing decision-making process. Searching online reviews made by another customer who might have already used the product or service allows the potential customer to evaluate the quality of the product before purchasing it. Studies show that customers typically spend much time learning from others, i.e., reviewing online reviews, because the experiences of other users substantially impact purchasing decision making (Huang et al., 2009). Also, more studies have found out that consumers who have read online reviews selected these products twice as often as those who did not review them (Senecal & Nantel, 2004). Referring to previously mentioned studies, a conclusion can be made that online reviews allow customers to gather information about the product or service and motivate them to purchase the product more. One more aspect that can be mentioned here is volume. The more online reviews consumer can find before making a purchasing decision, the more they intend to purchase that product or service.

Another important thing to underline is the sector or industry in which online reviews are being analyzed. The importance of online reviews for the purchasing decision-making process may vary in different sectors. In this case, the hospitality – tourism sector was chosen, as in this sector, reviews are a significant factor. Chris Anderson (2012) has analyzed the impact of online reviews on the hospitality services industry. The author has focused on hotel guests booking behavior and has found out that more than 51 % of all guest's decisions made for booking a hotel room were made by reviewing a previous guest's online review. This study results show that online reviews are one of the critical factors in customer purchasing decision making. Although, there are industries, like hospitality services, where online reviews are the most important element for the customer to make a purchasing choice.

Various studies already prove that online reviews have an essential role in the consumer purchasing decision-making process. Online reviews help people gather information and form their attitudes and feeling about a specific product or service. It is a beneficial type of information, while consumers can see the particular product, analyze its specifications, and compare it to other alternatives before purchasing. Although this process is helpful, there is an essential point that all online reviews are instead created by other consumers or people with specific aims. These exact aims or questionable consumers' experiences can mislead the information of the study. There is an essential uncertain field – the credibility of online reviews.

Chakraborty & Bhat (2018) have investigated the effects of brand images of online reviews on functional and hedonic brands. The authors have chosen to analyze the consumer electronics product category, the world's highest online reviewed product category. Consumer electronic products are one of the groups, which usually requires an increased knowledge of the field to understand the effects well. That is why there are a lot of online reviews about smartphones, TVs, computers, etc. There is a strong connection when analyzing online reviews in the tourism sector and consumer electronics sectors because in both sectors online reviews play a vital role. Moreover, brand images are being used in hotel online reviews as well. The purposive sampling method was chosen for the data collection. (Figure 7).

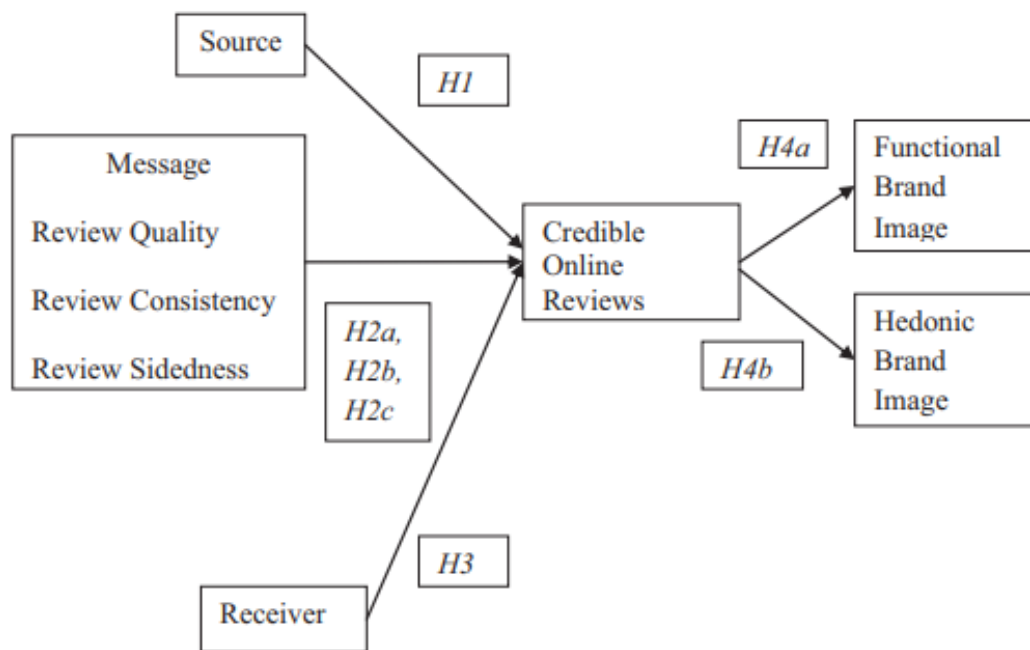


Fig. 7. Research model of the study (Chakraborty & Bhat, 2018).

Following the proposed research model of the study, the authors linked the hypothesis to the credibility of the online reviews, which were linked with brand images. Authors have defined objects that can influence the credibility of online reviews: source, quality, consistency. The source of online study, which in most cases is a person who has created an online review, is an essential subject - consumer values more reviews created by a well-known author. Review quality showed a very high score, which shows that consumers trust more high-quality reviews. The next object was consistency, which has achieved a high score, as well. Consumers trust more consistent online reviews. With the

results of the hypothesis, authors have also analyzed credible review effects on brand images. They have figured out that credible online reviews impact a hedonic brand image in consumer electronic products rather than functional.

Other scientific literature authors, like Kusumasondjaja et al. (2012), have also analyzed the credibility of online reviews. Authors have studied the hospitality industry, where online reviews have significant importance on consumer purchasing decisions. Nowadays, travelers got used to checking websites like TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Hometogo before ordering a visit to chosen accommodation. These sites help to check many consumer reviews, which were staying at the accommodation before. In the study, there was an experimental design chosen. There were two online hotel review prototypes created as stimulus materials to examine the credibility of reviews. Two variables were manipulated in the study: the message valence and reviewers' identity. Two types of messages are manipulated – positive and negative. The source identity was also run at two different levels: the anonymous author and the author, given a complete description of the individual's name, location, age, length of membership, picture, and explanation. Chosen process for the study is a hotel booking because, in the travel-decision-making process, it is often the first decision after the destination is already determined. Bali was chosen as the location for the survey, which is a well-known and top-rated destination for tourism.

The credibility was analyzed using five elements: accuracy, believability, bias, completeness, and trustworthiness. After gathering and analyzing the data, main results were conducted:

- The main effect of message valence and initial trust was perceived as significant.
- A negative online review was perceived as significantly more credible than a positive one; however, a positive review had a more significant effect on initial trust. Only when the author is anonymous is there no significant difference between review credibility.
- The identity effect was found to be very significant both on the trust and credibility of the reviews.
- An important effect between information valence and information source on credibility and trust was confirmed.

Xie et al. (2011) have studied online reviews' credibility from a different perspective (Figure 8). The authors note that a customer who is looking for an online review already has his pre-decisional disposition. Disposition can be either negative or positive, and it strongly influences how customer perceives review credibility.

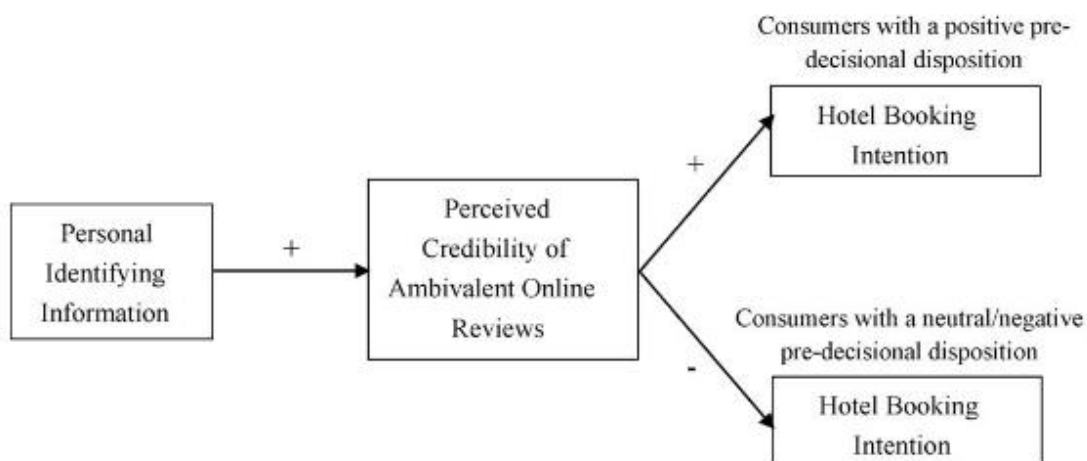


Fig. 8. Effect of pre-decisional disposition of online reviews and hotel booking intention, Xie et al. (2011).

Study results have shown that the presence of personal identifying information (PII) has a positive effect on credibility, while reviews are ambivalent PII has a different impact. When the customer had a negative or neutral pre-decisional disposition, the PII effect was negative. When the customer had a positive pre-decisional disposition, then PII effect positively affected booking intentions. Overall, online reviews' credibility contains many aspects, mainly part of their quality, source, and composition, but personal customer attitude, opinion, and pre-decisional disposition. It means that the different customer can differently perceive the same online review.

2.4. Consumer Types and Purchasing Decision Making Process

Consumer segmentation is one of the most important topics for marketers. Many studies and models were created to group consumers by their demographic characteristics like gender, age, religion, income, education, etc. Also, there are different models of segmentation, like psychographic, where consumer are grouped by five traits, proposed by Goldberg (1990):

- Intro-/Extroversion – a person's tendency to seek connection with other people.
- Agreeableness – a person's tendency to be cooperative with other people.
- Conscientiousness - a person's tendency to act thoughtfully.
- Emotional Stability - the extent to which a person's emotions are sensitive to their environment.
- Openness to New Experiences - the extent to which a person is willing to experience new activities.

Many other studies suggest their consumer segmentation models related to the topic; for example, Teichert et al. (2008) have analyzed consumer segmentation in the airline industry. Authors have group airline passengers into four main groups: business class with business reasons, business class with leisure reasons, an economy class with business reasons, and economy class with leisure reasons. This segmentation method was explicitly made for the airline customers, which were analyzed in the paper, and that was the best fitting model for authors. Summarizing the discussed consumer segmentation models, it can be stated that there are two main types – traditional models

(psychographic, demographic, geographic, behavioral) and adapted models for specific fields or industries.

While conducting literature research on online reviews, it is necessary to analyze consumers generating and reviewing this kind of user-generated content. There is a lot of academic material that examines many aspects of online consumer types, knowledge levels, and behavior. Information about consumers' knowledge level is essential for marketers who analyze statistics and market segments of their customers. Any company selling products online or physically must know their clients well to make a good product or service proposal. Also, this information is important for online review creators who want to create credible content. Many studies, which have analyzed customer behavior regarding online reviews, have grouped consumers by their knowledge levels - Man et al. (2012), D. H. Park & Kim (2008), Chiou et al. (2018).

Man et al. (2012) divided consumers by their knowledge and involvement in a specific field. The authors noted that individuals without expertise in the area could not access the message of the online review. Also, this group of people who are not involved in the field is less motivated to process messages in detail. The main findings by the study show that when reviewers' involvement or expertise in the area is at a low level, they rely less on central cues, such as argument quality, and more on the peripheral lines, such as source credibility. Also, when reviewers have a low expertise level but a high level of involvement, he relies more on source credibility and reviews consistency.

D. H. Park & Kim (2008) also analyzes online reviews consumers and divides them by their level of knowledge and expertise. Individuals with different levels of knowledge are searching for different types of information. By analyzing how to provide data, authors note that field experts seek information well categorized, shown in tables with specific statistics, while novices prefer knowledge visualizing methods. For example, consumers with high expertise tend to analyze food items by technical information like nutrients. In contrast, low expertise individuals rely on benefits information on the package (e.g., this product is suitable for you). The same example authors adapt to online reviews and group them into two groups: attribute-centric and benefit-centric. In attribute-centric studies, information is oriented to facts, statistics, and technical attributes. By contrast, in the benefit-centric type, reviewers make personal interpretations of the technical data and numbers. Reviewers have interpreted benefits of each attribute are evaluated in their way, which cannot be proved by facts.

Chiou et al. (2018) exclude two types of online customer – high and low knowledge. High knowledge consumers usually have a higher cognitive ability in analyzing the contents of the online review than consumers with a low level of product knowledge. The study argues that consumers with different levels of knowledge make different inferences regarding the reviewer's motivation for posting an online review, which affects their judgment towards the review's credibility. Also, the authors found out that high knowledge customers have more increased intellectual capabilities in recognizing the substance of the online data. It is easier for them to distinguish untrusted channels of information. When analyzing negative reviews, high knowledge consumers tend to understand better which of the data can be relatable and ascribed to reviewers' self-serving purpose or other non-product-relevant reasons.

In contrast, low-knowledge customers tend to be more persuaded by negative information because they lack cognitive abilities. Moreover, it was confirmed by the study that high knowledge costumers tend to make more non-product-relevant attributions while reviewing negative online reviews, where

low knowledge consumers make product-relevant attributions. All these differences between consumers strongly affect their product or service purchasing decision-making process.

For a better understanding of customer purchasing behavior, it is important to analyze the steps of the purchasing decision-making process. In the scientific literature, we can find several ways how authors describe the process. Miklošík (2015) suggests that the decision-making process consists of eight main steps:

1. Perception of the need. The first step of the process in which the consumer realizes that he has some kind of problem, which must be solved. The duration of this step mainly depends on if the need is primary, secondary, or tertiary. If a consumer feels that the discomfort is strong enough and can afford goods or services financially, he moves to the next step; otherwise, a consumer can leave at this point.
2. Converting the demand into goods description. In this step, the consumer realizes which tangible goods or services can help to satisfy his needs.
3. Evaluation of alternatives. This is a crucial step when the consumer gathers information and analyzes which way of problem-solving is the best for him. The intensity of this step depends on various factors: time limits, discomfort level, and available financial costs. The result of this step is a specific item,
4. Decision regarding purchasing conditions. In this step consumer already knows which item or specific service he needs to solve his problem. He now chooses between different retailers, online or offline purchases, payment methods, etc.
5. Purchase. The main step where the items are purchased and received or the service is provided.
6. Consumption of goods or services. The consumer uses the item, depending on its nature, for one time or longer.
7. Evaluation of the purchase. In this step consumer uses and evaluates the product, collects more information about it. If the product does not meet consumer expectations, this step can lead to the last eight-step.
8. Return of the product. This step includes the warranty, spoilage issues. The consumer can try to return the product if there are any issues related to it.

Word of mouth communication can be found almost in every step of the product purchase decision making. It is one of the essential parts for customer purchasing decision making and turning into further steps. For marketers, the most important is working on the customer's first steps of purchasing, where he gathers information about the product, compares it to other brand products, or evaluates alternatives. At these first steps, customers start to build their opinion towards the development of service. It is essential to mention that at this point, it is very important to divide customers into two groups: low knowledge and high knowledge. These two groups have different levels of knowledge before entering the first step of the purchasing decision-making process.

2.5. The Motivation Behind Online Reviews Creation and Engagement Process

Despite all the benefits online reviews bring to customers, people are not doing anything without motivation, especially for free. That is why it is important to analyze online users' motivations to share online product or service reviews with other media participants. Many studies have examined users' motivation to post an online review, and there are different results. Han & Anderson (2020) notes that customers' level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction is the key factor to their motivation for posting a review. Especially costumers with extreme opinions (either positive or negative) tend to post more reviews. Users who have a moderate opinion tend to post less. Also, there are more factors, like long-term user activity in the social media network or reviewing platform. If the user is already registered in the network, he is more willing to post reviews. Because the customer is already familiar with the web, he does not need to create a new account, and the posting process is way easier. The following motivation would be the growth of the user channel. For example, suppose a user has his own YouTube channel, and there he is posting online reviews of the products. In that case, his primary motivation is to keep growing his channel, gaining more subscribers and watchers. In this case, there is a need to categorize online review creators: people who perceive this activity like their work and those who post reviews rarely. Also, it is essential to underline the third category of online review creators – social media influencers. Influencers are creating online reviews, but mostly they do it for advertising purposes, working with sponsorships from the companies.

Hyan Yoo et al. (2008) have studied users' motivation on writing an online travel review. Their study found out that the most important motivations for traveling reviews are expressing positive feelings, concern for other consumers, exercising collective power over companies, and enjoyment or hedonic motivation. Authors point out that enjoyment of creating content is one of the main motivations for travel review creators. Travelers make online reviews to provide helpful information for others and give reviewers enjoyment and fun while reading or watching the study. In the meantime, travelers enjoy reading and watching other users' travel experiences and reviews of services or products they have used. While analyzing online reviews creators' motivation in the traveling industry, it is good to note that it is essential to define the specific sector to explore reasons. In different sectors, there can be found different motivations for creators to share online reviews.

Creating and reviewing online reviews is mostly activities highly connected with the product or service purchasing process. With the fast development of technologies and the economy, online shopping is becoming a more critical shopping method. Although most customers still choose standard stores for daily shopping, there are increasing numbers of online store customers. If we look at the statistics graph of retail e-commerce sales worldwide, we can see that from 2014 to 2020, there is a growth of 2.870 billion U.S. dollars, and its predicted growth is that in 2023 there will be 6.542 billion U.S. dollars (Statista, 2021). When analyzing online product reviews, it is important to understand the growth of online shopping tendencies (Figure 9).

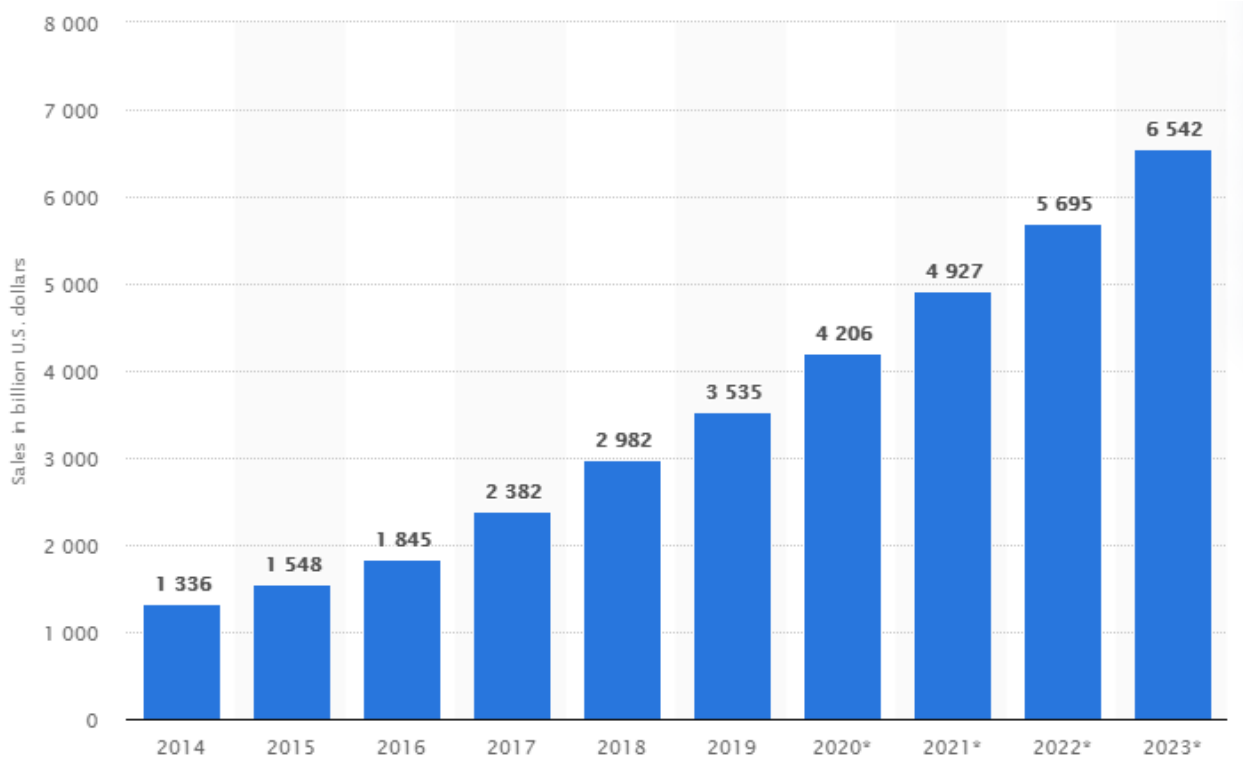


Fig. 9. Retail e-commerce sales worldwide from 2014 to 2023 (in billion U.S. dollars). Source: (Statista, 2021).

The current world's situation during the COVID-19 pandemic is another critical circumstance, which has impacted every business and customer behavior. During a pandemic, people have fewer possibilities to go shopping in regular physical stores. In most countries, there were periods of quarantine where most physical stores were closed at all. According to research, 52 % of consumers avoid going to physical stores, and 36 % will avoid regular shopping until they get the coronavirus vaccine. These processes have highly impacted e-commerce and the use of social media. Shopping online was the best option because people do not need to get out of their homes to shop online. For example, sales of Walmart groceries through e-commerce channel has grown by 74 %. Also, sales of online stores have increased mainly in developing countries (Bhatti et al., 2020). All in all, pandemic situation causes people to use social media, create online content and shop online even more, and in this way, it changes the nature of purchasing behavior.

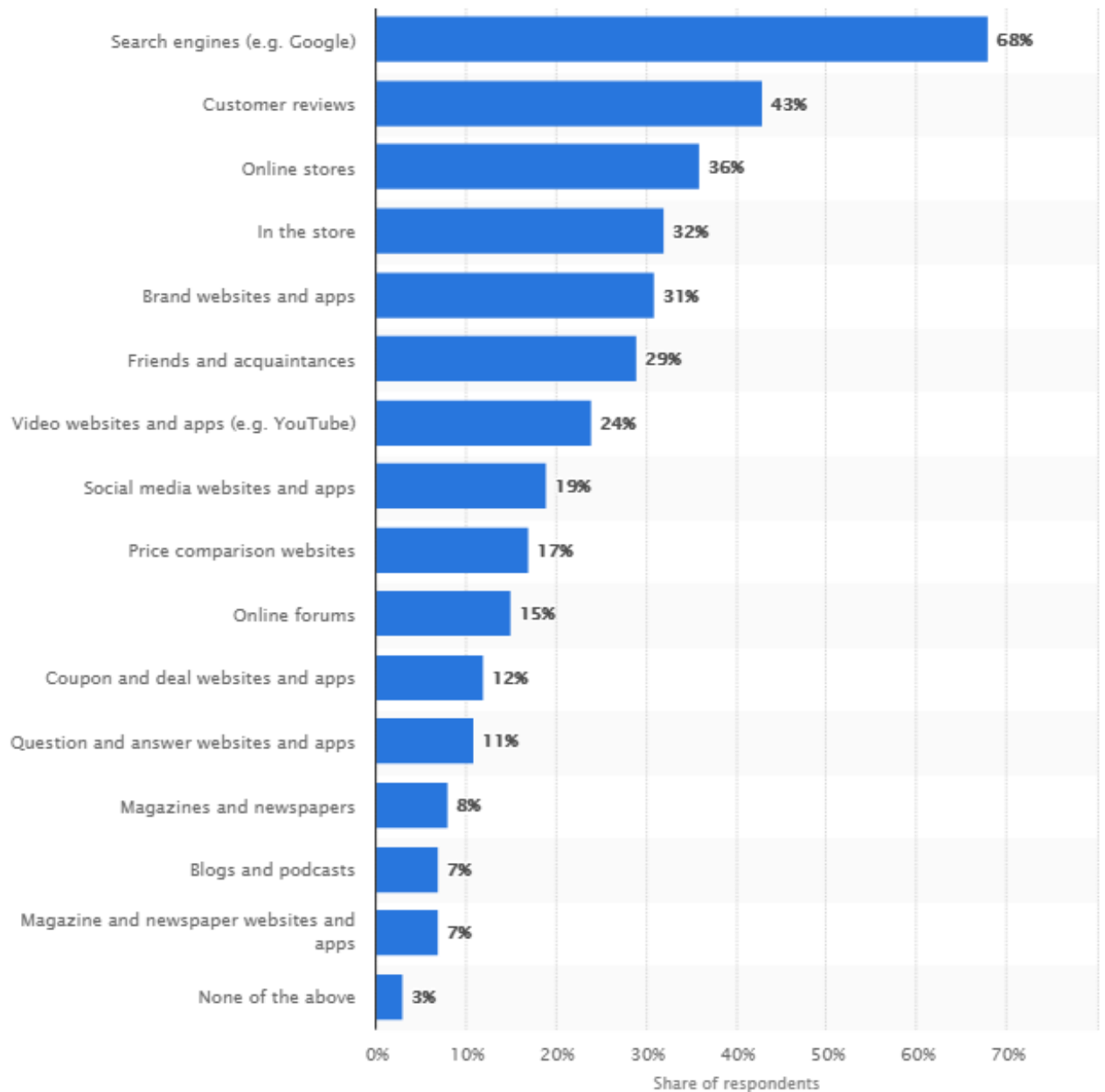


Fig. 10. Sources of information about products in the U.S. 2020. Source: (Statista, 2021).

In Figure number 10, there can be seen most popular sources of information used to search for information about a specific product or service in the U.S. The most popular search engine is Google, which takes 68 % of all searches in the graph, but Google may lead to many other websites, which can be any of all other listed options. Online reviews are a practical option, as it is in the second place, 43 %. Although Google was removed from the list because it is a search engine, which leads to other types of information sources, online reviews would be the most popular type of information source. This statistic proves that customers often rely on online reviews before purchasing the product or service itself.

Online customer reviews are user-generated content about a product or service, which helps other customers decrease the confusion and risks associated with the online purchasing decision-making process (Hong et al., 2017). Online reviews are viewed as a form of online eWOM, influencing customer purchase decisions or attitudes toward products or services. Therefore, many businesses put

a lot of effort into online advertising and review online reviews as part of their marketing strategy. Studies estimate that online reviews are the fundamental factor, which influences around 20-50 % of all purchase decisions (McKinsey, 2010). With the growing importance of online reviews, user-created content has grown rapidly in both textual and video formats.

Despite all the benefits that online reviews bring to customers, there are a lot of questionable topics. First of all, it is essential to mention that every person, who has an internet connection and device connected to it, can create accounts on social media sites or reviewing webpages and start posting online reviews for free. As there is permitted for everyone to start posting his thoughts, there is always a massive variety of different people with specific purposes and understandings, which generates various online reviews. Some rules cannot be violated on most sites, but most users can share whatever they want.

Secondly, as every online social network user can post content without permission, there are many questions regarding online reviews' trustworthiness and credibility. A growing number of online product reviewers are working for a company or being sponsored by the company.

Thirdly, online review creators can be categorized into two categories: regular people who post online reviews to share their thoughts about a specific product or service and influencers for whom content creation online works.

Fourthly, one more issue, which is often encountered from the beginning of internet creation, is anonymity. On social media sites, forums, online users can choose to act with their real-life identity or create a nickname, which helps keep you anonymous. Anonymous authors are trusted less, as there always comes up a question, why a person chooses to keep himself under a fictitious name. One of the purposes could be cybersecurity, which is very important, as an online world has many threats. Still, the other purpose of hiding your identity is sharing fake information, or the information, which is beneficial for online review creators, but not the reviewer. Also, it is hard for customers to pick out trusted online reviews when there is a lot of content created by anonymous authors. To solve this issue, many networks and electronic stores are introducing ranking systems. One good example is Amazon, which has introduced a public ranking system, which helps to observe genuine reviewer contributions and reward review quality by paring the social influence of feedback with interactive communication (Mathwick & Mosteller, 2017). When online reviewers are ranked in the system, it is easier for customers to see which of the reviewers are more trusted over time.

One of the most important components to analyze in online reviews is trust. Trust is an essential component that highly influences customers' loyalty to providers, online review credibility, and finally, customer purchasing behavior. Kusumasondjaja et al. (2012) analyze the credibility of online reviews in the tourism industry. Authors have measured media-perceived credibility using five dimensions: accuracy, namely, bias, trustworthiness, and completeness. In the study, subjects were asked to rate online review provider if he is accurate, complete, unbiased, trustworthy, and complete. For results gathering, a 7-point Likert scale was used. The findings of this study indicate that a negative online review is more credible than a positive review, especially when the reviewer is anonymous. This point proves that negative information usually has a more significant impact than positive. Another finding is that positive online reviews are more influential on consumers' initial trust formation in travel services. One more important point found out by the research is that online

reviews with identified sources are more credible. Still, when the reviewer is anonymous, there is no significant difference between positive and negative consumer perception.

Forman et al. (2008) have noted that nowadays, customers face an overload quantity of information, which forces users to process information differently. Usually, people process information heuristically when they must find out which information source is valuable and not. As online reviews are typically posted on social media channels or specific reviewing platforms, many indicators help find a trusted online review author. Users rely on numbers of followers or subscriptions to the author channel, positive or negative ratings, comments, and other merits that the author has achieved over time. Primarily online review creator, who has high numbers of subscriptions, has done previous reviews and has a good rating, will be trusted more than a new user of social media channel or reviewing platform.

In conclusion, online reviews have developed into a solid informational source, affecting consumers' decision-making process. Online reviews consist of three significant components – review content, platform-based effects, and source credibility. The quality of all these components combined impacts the trust and credibility of the review. In previous studies, various methods were used to analyze what are the main factors and processes impacting the level of credibility. The main elements can be grouped into two categories – authors' input and platform effects. Every online review is created by an author who has a unique motivation to share the review, and it is posted on a website, which forms the review. Various sources exist that post online reviews - customers, influencers, company representatives, service providers, or anonymous authors. Also, multiple websites exist where authors post online reviews – social media platforms, forums, reviewing platforms.

2.6. A Theoretical Framework of the Credibility of Online Reviews

The theoretical framework was created to better understand the process of all literature reviews and to connect it with the methodological part of the study. The theoretical model helps to better relate the whole structure of the topic and create a hypothesis for the following research.

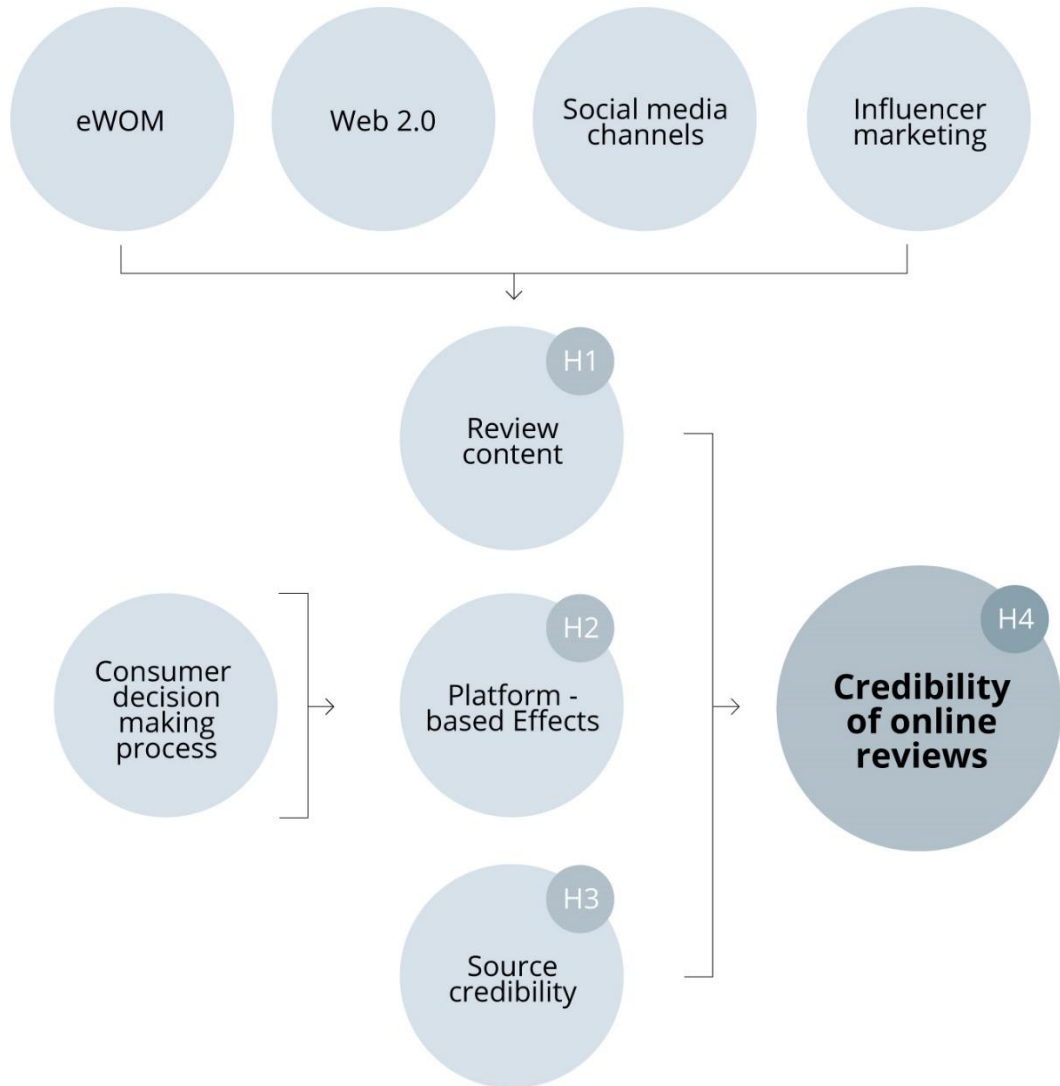


Fig. 11. The credibility of online reviews theoretical framework. It was created by the author.

To better understand and analyze the topics of online reviews, it is important to start the literature analysis from its foundation. At the beginning of the literature analysis, the eWOM communication method was examined, which defines the features, types, and principles of operation of this communication method. To find out the origins of electronic reviews and the development process, Web 2.0 innovations were reviewed. Aspects that contributed to the formation of online reviews were also analyzed: social networks and influencer marketing. These factors strongly influence the credibility of online reviews.

After analyzing the literature on the above topics, the focus was on the analysis of the structure and operating principles of online reviews. The further study focused on three main parts: review content,

platform-based effects, and source credibility. Online reviews create certain content that can be positive and negative. Content of online reviews reveals a wide variety of aspects that show the motivation of the reviewer, the quality and credibility of the review. Also, the content of online reviews may vary depending on the review type, it can be written in text format, presented in a video, in photos, or mixed. After analyzing the content aspects of online reviews, the first hypothesis was pointed out - H1: There is a positive relationship between the value of online reviews and reviewing intentions.

The second aspect that strongly affects the credibility of online reviews is the platform where the review is published. Different platforms have various reliability and rating systems that help to manage online reviews, sort them by ratings, and author credibility. A website that hosts online reviews automatically builds a level of trust for the user if they have heard of the website before. The level of trust in a website depends on many aspects: search engine placement, number of users, popularity, recommendations. The second hypothesis was created after analyzing online review platforms – H2: The most popular type of online reviews among customers is other customer reviews posted on the hotel reviewing website.

The third, very important aspect when examining the credibility of online reviews is the source of the reviews. Before reading an online review, the user usually pays attention to its source, more precisely the author, so it is important to analyze the influence of the author's identity on the credibility of the reviews. Analyzing these aspects it was observed that the greatest influence on the author's credibility is made by his photograph, revealed real identity, picture, rating, number of previous contributions. Users tend to trust authors who are well-known or have previously reached a high ranking on the platform. Another important aspect is anonymity, which is associated with a lower level of trust and is very commonly found in forums, reviewing websites. Analyzing the importance of the authors of online reviews, the third hypothesis was specified - H3: Customers trust online reviews the most, which are posted by a well-known author.

The last-fourth hypothesis was singled out after analyzing all the factors influencing the credibility aspects of online reviews - H4: Factors making online reviews more credible are positively connected and increases credibility only when they are enabled altogether. To summarize, it is significant to mention that online reviews takes an important part in the consumer decision-making process. Online reviews have a strong influence on consumer decision-making, resulting in consumers' decision to use service, or not.

3. The Credibility of Online Reviews: Research Methodology

After analyzing scientific literature and statistics about consumer credibility and attribution on online reviews, it is relevant to conduct research. The following research scheme (Figure 12) will be used to gain data to analyze online reviews' credibility in the tourism industry.

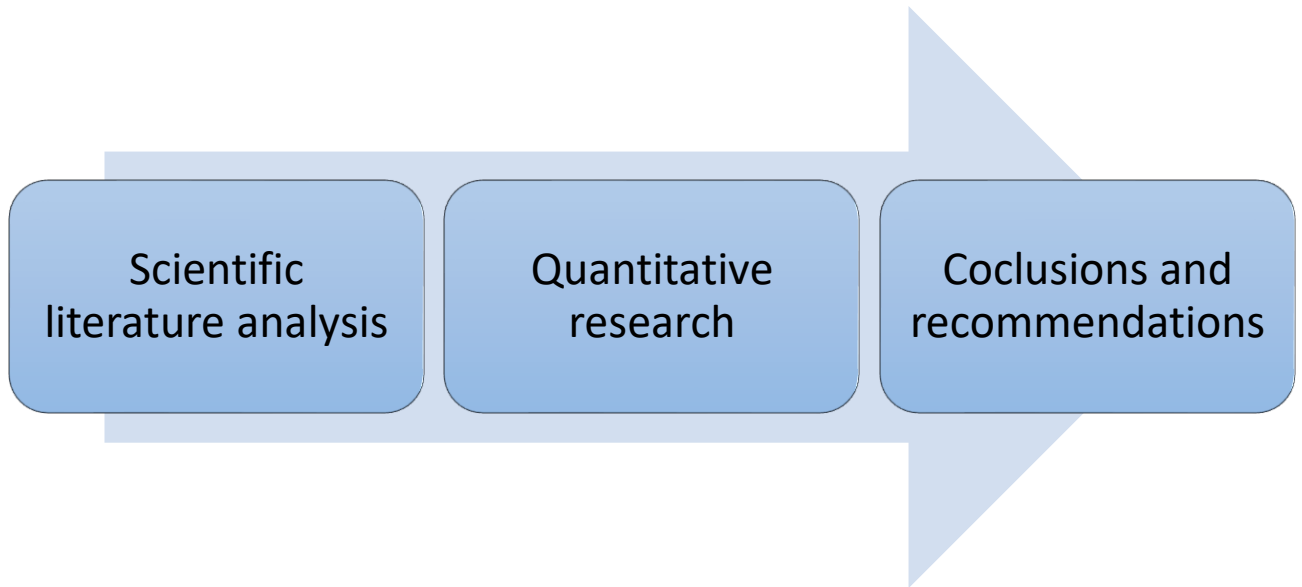


Fig. 12. Research logic. It was created by the author.

Quantitative analysis is conducted with online reviewers' in the hotel booking process. An electronic questionnaire was used to collect the research data. Due to the current pandemic situation in the country, there are active quarantine restrictions, which affect the way of research. An electronic form of a questionnaire in this situation fits the best, as the whole study is done virtually, without having unnecessary physical contact with respondents.

The questionnaire is divided into different parts: online reviews usage frequency, critical aspects of online reviews credibility and attribution, knowledge questions, practical part, and demographic information. Part of the questions will have to be closed questions and other part ordinal questions – using rating scales, which will allow a deeper understanding of questionnaire results. In the practical part, there are given several examples of different online reviews, which respondents evaluated.

The research aims to analyze key aspects that affect the credibility of online reviews in the tourism sector.

To implement the study, the following process steps were set:

1. Create an online questionnaire based on the Google forms platform.
2. Share the questionnaire with online reviews reviewers and creators.
3. Systematize and analyze the obtained data.

Research design. To analyze the credibility of online reviews, a chosen experimental study was chosen to test the research hypothesis.

The study aims to confirm or refute these hypotheses:

H1: There is a positive relationship between the value of online reviews and reviewing intentions.

H2: The most popular type of online reviews among customer is other customer reviews posted on the hotel reviewing website.

H3: Customers trust online reviews the most, which are posted by a well-known author.

H4: Factors making online reviews more credible are positively connected and increases credibility only when they are enabled altogether.

The sample of the questionnaire. One of the main requirements for quantitative studies is the determination of the sample size. Quantitative research sample size will be determined using Paniott's formula. The chosen territory of analysis is defined by the territory of Lithuania (Kardelis, 2016).

$$n = \frac{1}{\Delta^2 + \frac{1}{N}}$$

n – initial sample size.

Δ – confidence level (=0.05).

N – population size.

Official Lithuanian statistic department shares yearly statistics of domestic tourism in Lithuania. The questionnaire was sent only for people who have traveled in the past two years. According to the statistics department, approximately 830 thousand Lithuanians travel domestically (Portalas, 2020a). The questionnaire participated only those respondents who have used hotel or apartment online reviews at least once before booking an apartment. The questionnaire was shared with 950 employees working at the same company. Three hundred responses were collected from these respondents. The remaining 82 responses were collected from social media channels, family members, and friends. After sharing the questionnaire on social media, it was noticed that many of the questionnaires were corrupted, which led to their elimination from the results.

$$n = \frac{1}{(0.05)^2 + \frac{1}{830000}} = 384$$

Data collection period – 2021.03.14 – 2021.05.01.

Research data processing - The survey was created on the Google Forms platform. This platform features beautiful visual details, a convenient data display system, and a convenient way to share. The questionnaire questions were divided into six blocks:

1. Use of online reviews – starting questions, which help to analyze consumer behavior. Main aim to study the user types and methods, frequency.
2. Credibility of online reviews – questions part dedicated to analyzing consumer credibility and trust of online reviews.

3. Knowledge of online reviews – questions part whose main aim is to evaluate consumer reviews usage within high and low knowledge levels.
4. Online review creation – questions parts dedicated to analyzing consumers' motivation for creating online reviews.
5. Practical part – questions with giving real examples to choose from and check which factors influenced the choice.
6. Demographic questions – designed to study if demographic factors affect other questionnaire parts.

Limitations of the study:

Quantitative analysis method. Every method of research has its advantages and disadvantages. Questionnaire type is a good way to gather many responses, but while respondents are filling it on their own, you never know if respondents have correctly understood the question and answered it honestly. It depends on whether the respondent had enough time to carefully read the whole question, did not get bored at some point of the questionnaire, etc. Fake answers are another significant aspect, which misrepresents the results of the questionnaire.

Demographical limitation. Although the questionnaire was delivered through the online platform, mostly it was gathered from people working at the same company, which has narrowed the variety of respondents in geographical aspect.

Corrupted questionnaires. After starting to share the questionnaire with unknown respondents on social media, it was noticed that most of them were corrupted. After analyzing log sheets of answers, the answers of these respondents were excluded.

4. Aspects of the Credibility of The Online Reviews: Quantitative Research

In this part, there is an analysis of the research results gathered from the questionnaire. As mentioned in the previous part, the research method is quantitative analysis, carried by an online questionnaire generated via the Google forms platform. The questionnaire includes 30 questions which are divided into six sections. Respondents were mostly gathered from Lithuania's territory, but some deviation might be because the online form is in the English language. The questionnaire begins with two security questions:

- Agreement for volunteer participation and age (more than 18) confirmation.
- Question asking if respondent have ever reviewed an online review of hotel or apartment before booking it.

These two questions have only a positive possible answer. Both beginning questions were used to get answers only from the respondents, who agree to participate in a questionnaire by their own will, are older than 18 years old, and have previously reviewed at least one online review in the past.

4.1. Demographic Information of Respondents

The questionnaire was delivered to 789 people living in Lithuania and traveling at least once within the past three years. The chosen period was extended to three years due to the current pandemic situation in the world, which does not allow people to travel freely. Specifically, in Lithuania, there are quarantine restrictions for more than a year. People who were not traveling during the past three years were asked not to fill the questionnaire. A total number of 382 answers were collected. Most of the answers were collected using Google forms online questionnaire. Questionnaires were delivered through social media networks and e-mails.

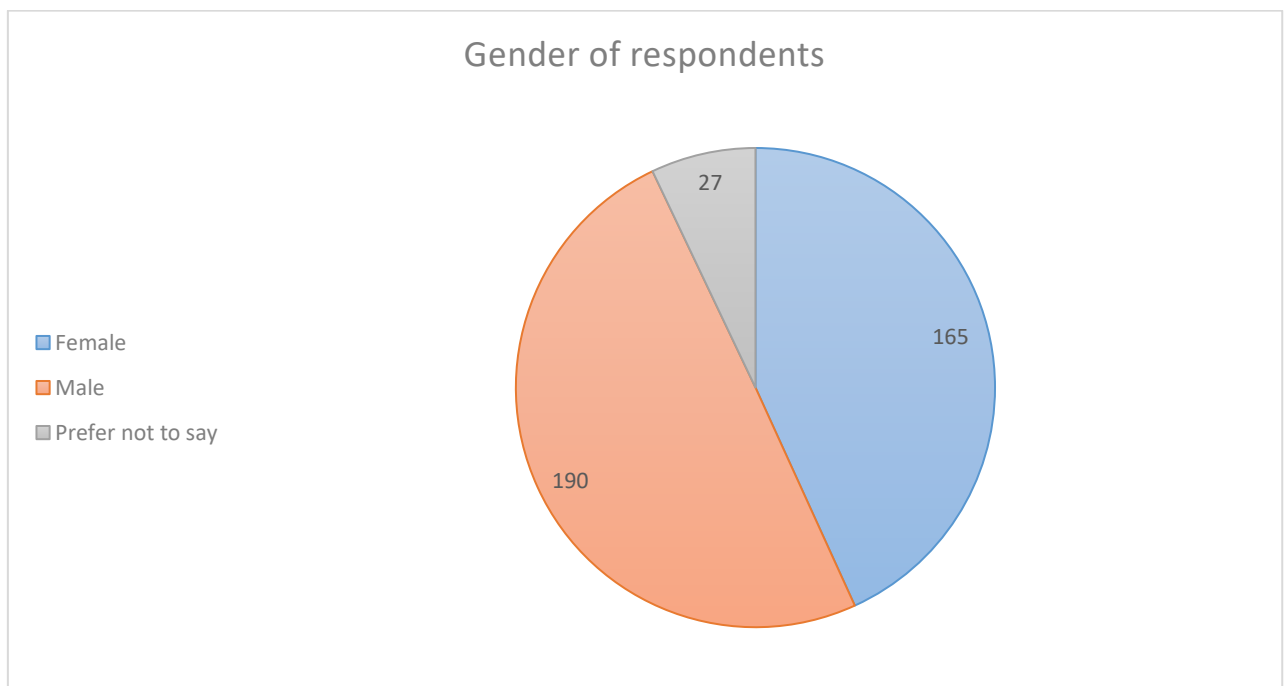


Fig. 13. Gender statistics of respondents.

Among all respondents, there were gathered answers from 190 males, 165 females, and 27 respondents who preferred not to specify their gender (Figure 13).

Table 1. The distribution between respondents' gender and age.

Genders	Age intervals						Total
	18-28	28-38	38-48	48-58	58-68	69 or more	
Male	164	38	2	1	1	2	208
Female	127	20	0	0	0	0	147
Total	291	58	2	1	1	2	355

As shown in Table number 1, 46 % of respondents were males between 18-28 years old, and 36 % were females between 18-28 years old; other groups were minor. Respondents who have chosen not to specify their gender were not included in this data. Sample size were formed from young, working-age Lithuanian citizens, who have been travelling and booking an apartment at least once during the period of the past three years.

Table 2. Average monthly income of respondents according to the place of residence.

Place of residence	Average monthly income				Total
	<500 €	500 - 1000 €	1000 - 2000 €	>3000 €	
Big city	10	13	173	44	240
Small city	2	25	53	2	82
Countryside	0	18	26	16	60
Total	12	56	252	62	382

The following data gathered from respondents was their place of residence within the territory of Lithuania and average monthly income. As shown in Table number 2, more than 45 % of respondents were living in the big city and had monthly payment between 1000 – 2000 €, which is higher than the average monthly salary in Lithuania, which in 2020 were 822,1 € net, according to Lithuania's statistical department (Portalas, 2020). Despite the place of residence, more than 66 % of all respondents were earning a monthly salary between 1000 – 2000 €, 16 % were earning more than 3000 €, less than 15 % were earning between 500 - 1000 €, and only 3 % of respondents were earning less than 500 € monthly.

Table 3. Relationship between travel/hotel booking frequency and purpose of travel.

Travel/booking hotel frequency	Purpose of travel			Total
	Work	Vacation	Change of living place	
Once a week	4	0	0	4
Once a month	12	5	0	17
Once every half a year	18	31	4	53
Once a year	31	265	12	308
Total	65	301	16	382

Table number 3 shows the relationship between travel frequency and purpose of travel. It is crucial to analyze respondents' travel behavior, as the hotel booking process is an integral part of the traveling process. More than 78 % of respondents in the past three years traveled for vacation, while 17 % for work matters. Collected data shows that more than 69 % of respondents have had their travel vacation once a year, which usually was vacation. In Lithuania, it is a standard habit of working people to have a holiday and visit foreign countries at least once per year, usually during the summer.

4.2. The Use of Online Reviews

The first graph of the questionnaire includes a common question about the usage of online reviews. These questions allow us to understand better how often respondents use online reviews, value online reviews, and how it affects the hotel booking decision-making process. The last two questions of this section focus on the most popular types and sources of online reviews.

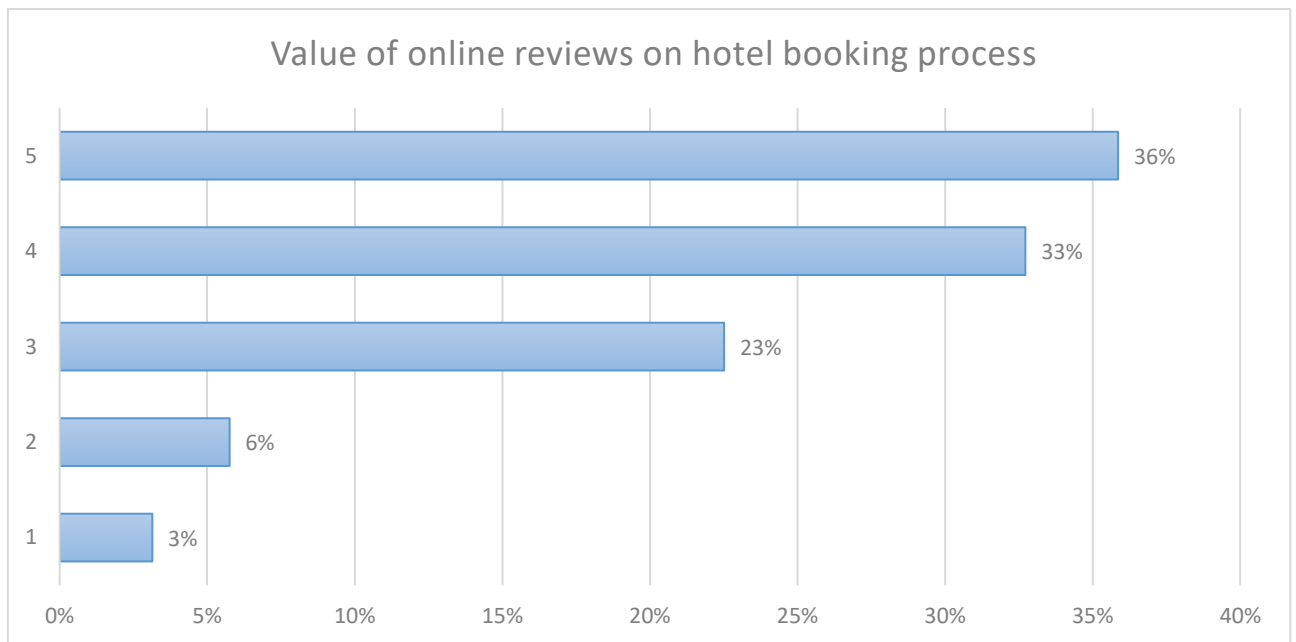


Fig. 14. Value of online reviews on hotel booking process (1).

The first question focuses on the value of online reviews on the hotel booking process (Figure 14). Respondents grade it on the five-points Likert scale. Majority of respondents think that online reviews are very valuable, 36 % have marked 5 points, 33 % - 4 points, 23 % - 3 points, 6 % - 2 points and 3 % - 1 point. Many studies, previously analyzed in the theoretical part, agree that online reviews greatly influence customer purchasing decision-making process, especially in the tourism services industry. As services are intangible products by their nature, it is logical that customers tend to check other people's experiences and thoughts about the service before deciding to purchase. Online reviews are critical while deciding to book a hotel or apartment. Online reviews, in this case, are one of the most valuable information sources, which can be easily reached. Customers can compare several people's previous experiences at the hotel, check pictures or videos, and model their attitude against it. After analyzing online hotel reviews, customers can compare them to others and, after booking it share their online reviews with other travelers.

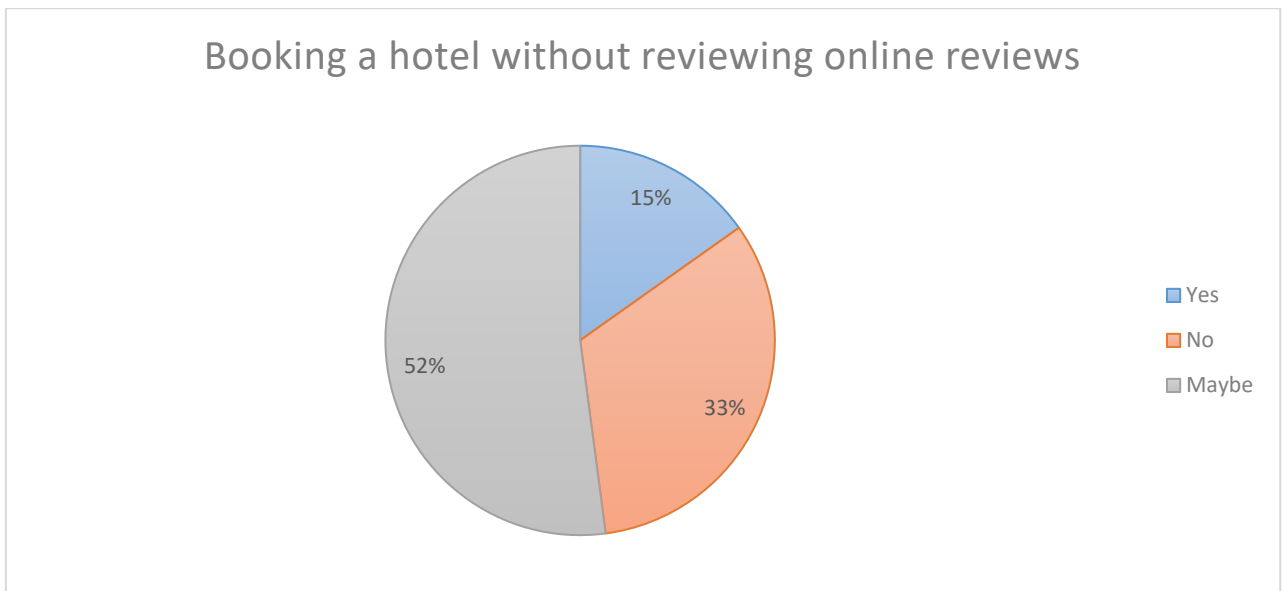


Fig. 15. Value of online reviews on hotel booking process (2).

The next question (Figure 15) is also focused on analyzing the importance and value of online reviews for customers. 33 % of respondents have answered that they would not book a hotel if it does not have online reviews, 52 % responded that they would think about it (Maybe), and 15 % would book a hotel without searching for online reviews. The most significant part of the population reports that they would not book a hotel without reviewing its reviews. These results show that most customers would not trust a hotel without online reviews but still think about booking it. Several online reviews and hotel visibility online have an impact on the decision-making process. The other important point is that nowadays there is a vast range of hotels and apartments. Those who have online reviews have an advantage compared to hotels without any previous reviews. Also, the number of online reviews matter; the more reviews hotel has, the more popular it is among internet users.

H1: There is a positive relationship between the value of online reviews and reviewing intentions.

The first hypothesis was partly accepted, while most of the respondents indicated that online reviews are very valuable for them before booking a hotel. Still, only 33 % answered that they would not book a hotel without reviewing online reviews. More than half of the sample size respondents would book a hotel without reviewing online reviews or think about it. To see if there is a connection between the value of online reviews and reviewing intentions, the Pearson correlation method was used. For the correlation method, two questions Figure 14 and Figure 15 were used. The result of this calculation was $r = 0.96$, which means that there is a strong connection between both indexes. Respondents, who have marked online reviews value with 4 or 5 points on the scale, almost always will use review before booking a hotel, although there are a small group of respondents who will not search for reviews before making a booking decision.

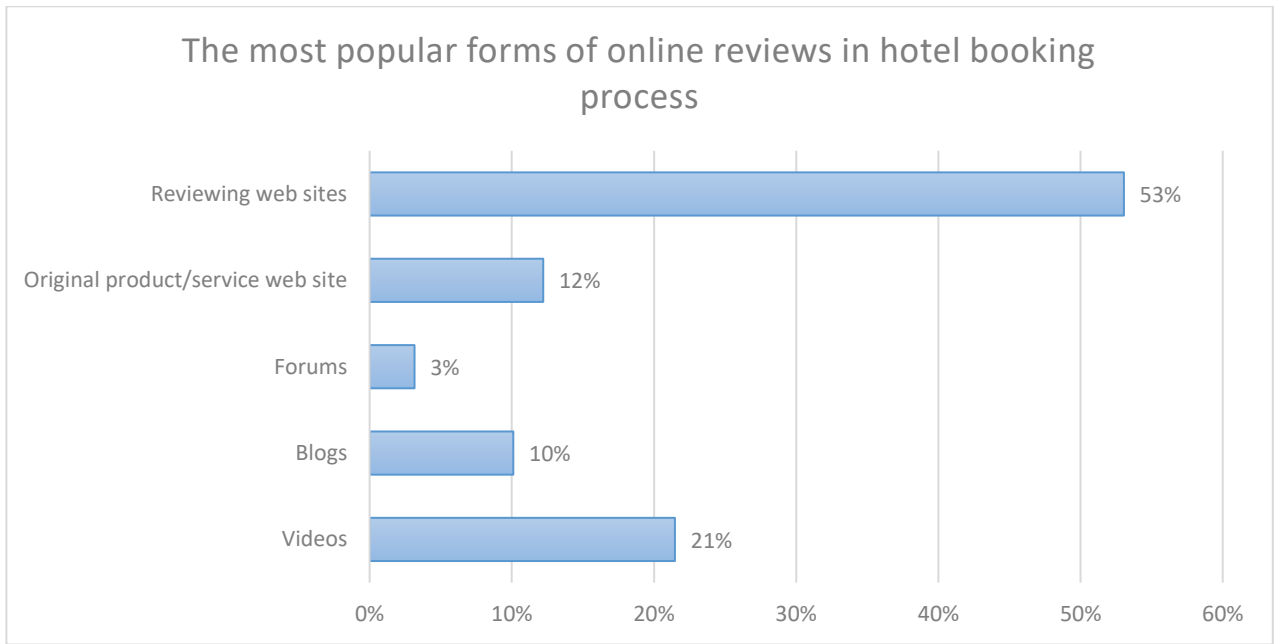


Fig. 16. The most popular forms of online reviews.

The third question of the questionnaire (Figure 16) analyzes the most popular forms of online reviews. The inquiry aims to see which forms of online reviews customers use the most. 53 % of the respondents answered that they primarily use reviewing websites/platforms (like TripAdvisor, Booking.com, etc.). These websites offer a variety of hotels all around the world. The main advantages of these websites are that they give customer chance to compare different hotels, offers various internal rating systems and offers links to various booking sites, where the customer can finalize their booking process. 21 % of respondents have chosen video online review types. Most of these videos can be found on reviewing websites, forums, social media sites as an external link to YouTube, Vimeo, or another video platform. Videos format is always very effective, as it gives a real review of the hotel. 12 % have chosen original hotel website, 10 % blogs, and only 3 % - forums. When social media websites did not exist, forums were a popular way to share online reviews. Still, now more people choose to use reviewing platforms, social media blogs, or videos format.

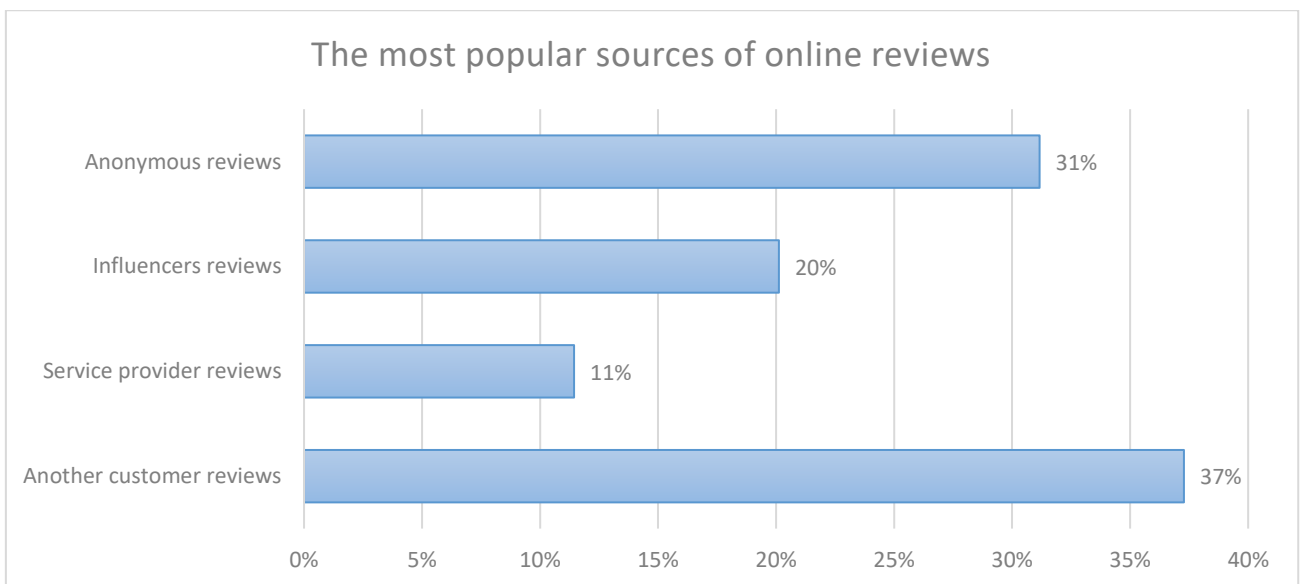


Fig. 17. The most popular sources of online reviews.

Question number 4 (Figure 17) is focused on the most popular sources of online reviews. The source is a vital part of all types of information. Trust of online reviews author plays a vital role in online reviews credibility question. If the customer does not trust the source of the review, its level of credibility will be lower. 37 % of respondents pointed out that they mainly review other customer reviews, which logically connects with previous data, which showed that customer mostly uses online reviewing websites. 31 % have chosen anonymous reviews, which can also be grouped with other customer reviews. 20 % have selected influencers reviews, and 11 % service provider reviews. Data collected from the question number 4 shows that customer mostly uses reviews made by other customers. Still, many people use influencer reviews, which mostly are advertisements, working in sponsorship with hotels.

H2: The most popular type of online reviews among customers is other customer reviews posted on the hotel reviewing website.

Hypothesis number two was supported. More than half of respondents have indicated that they are using online reviewing websites as the main platform when looking for online reviews. These websites are created for customers to share their experiences and thoughts about hotels with each other. More than 37 % of respondents checked that they are using other customers who posted online reviews the most. Also, 31 % of respondents indicated – anonymous reviews, which can be combined with the other customer reviews, because most of the users on online reviewing platform do not share their real identity, rather operates under a nickname or fictitious name.

4.3. The Credibility of Online Reviews

The second part of the online questionnaire is focused on the analysis of online reviews' credibility and trust. To collect data about the credibility of online reviews, respondents have answered questions asking if online reviews are trustworthy, how trust differs on positive and negative reviews, what sources are the most trusted by respondents, and the main factors that make online reviews more credible. Data collected on this section of the questionnaire is essential for further study, which seeks to validate the hypothesis and links with the theoretical part.

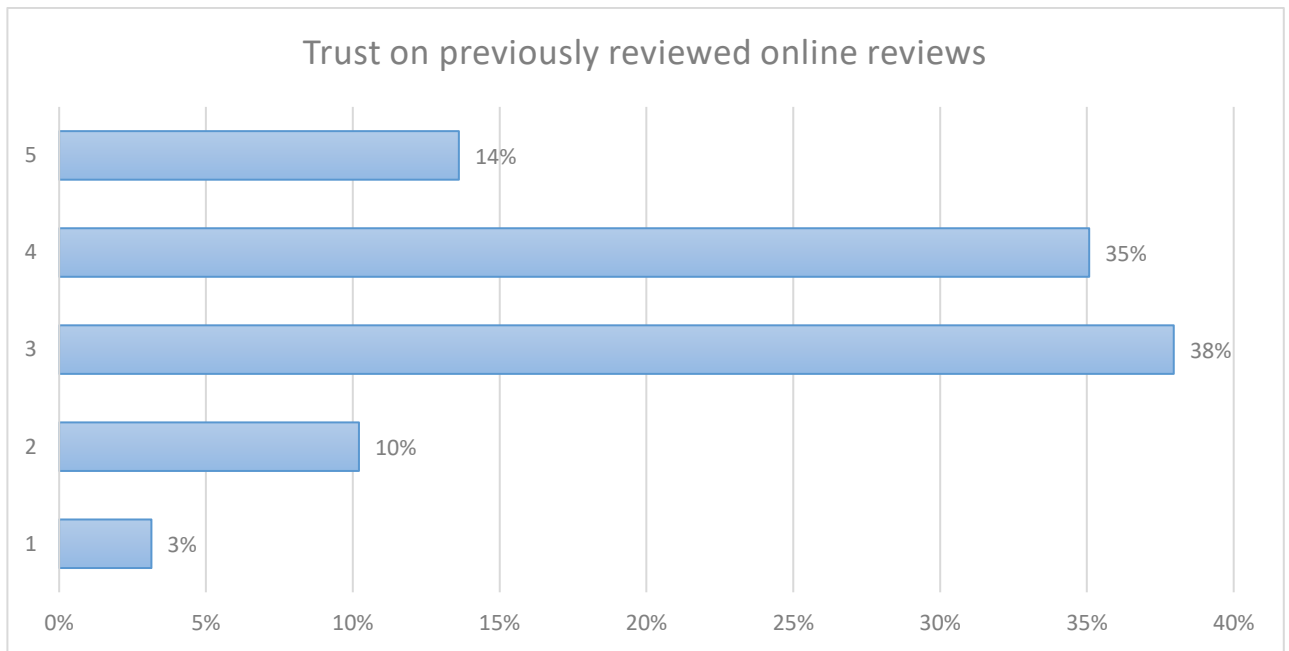


Fig. 18. Trust on previously reviewed online reviews.

The first question of this section (Figure 18) targets respondents' experience reviewing online reviews in the past. Respondents had to estimate their reviewed online reviews trust, where 38 % of respondents valued it with 3, 35 % valued with 4, 14 % with 5, 10 % with two, and only 3 % with 1. Most of the respondents indicate that not all the reviews they have reviewed were trustworthy. Although, the results of this question show that there are more positive ratings rather than negative.

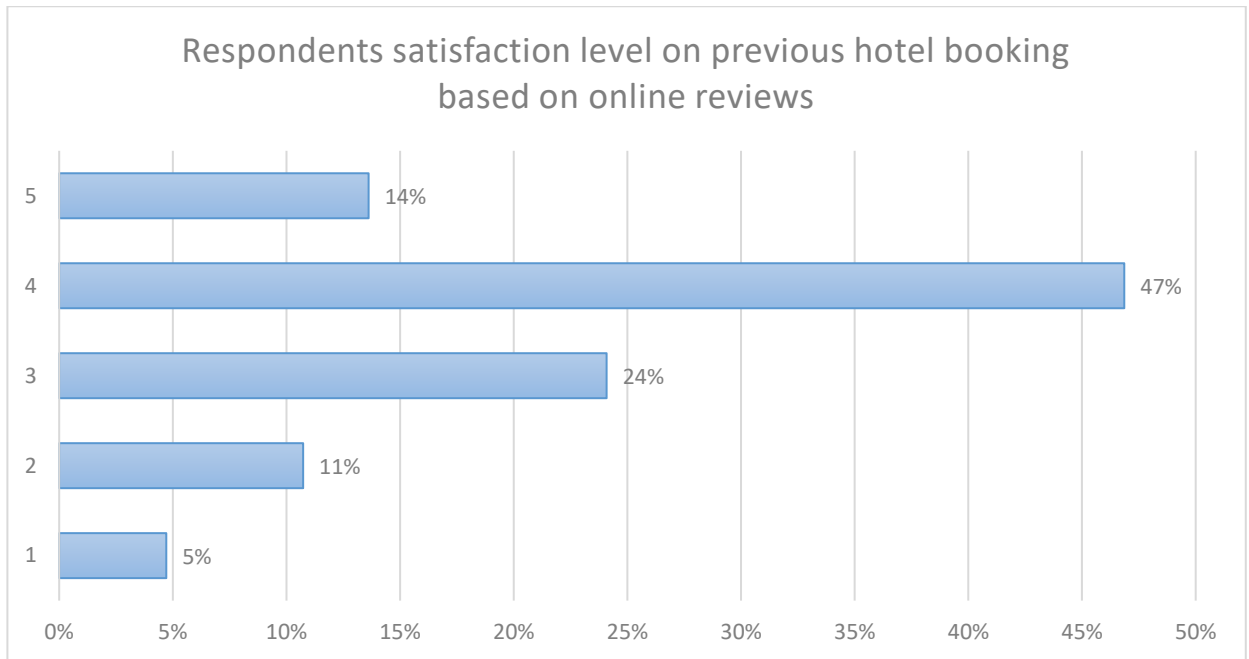


Fig. 19. Respondents' satisfaction level on previous hotel booking based on online reviews.

The second question (Figure 19) has analyzed respondents' satisfaction level booking a hotel after reviewing its online reviews. Data indicates that 47 % of respondents have valued their satisfaction level with 4, 24 % with 3, 14 % with 5, 11 % with 2, and 5 % with 1. The results of the second question got a bit higher result than the first one. Respondents indicate that they find a lower number of credible reviews, but they can filter less trusted reviews and still get a positive result – book a hotel that fits their needs. These first two questions show that a more significant part of the sample was high knowledge costumers, who can analyze online reviews and choose more credible ones.

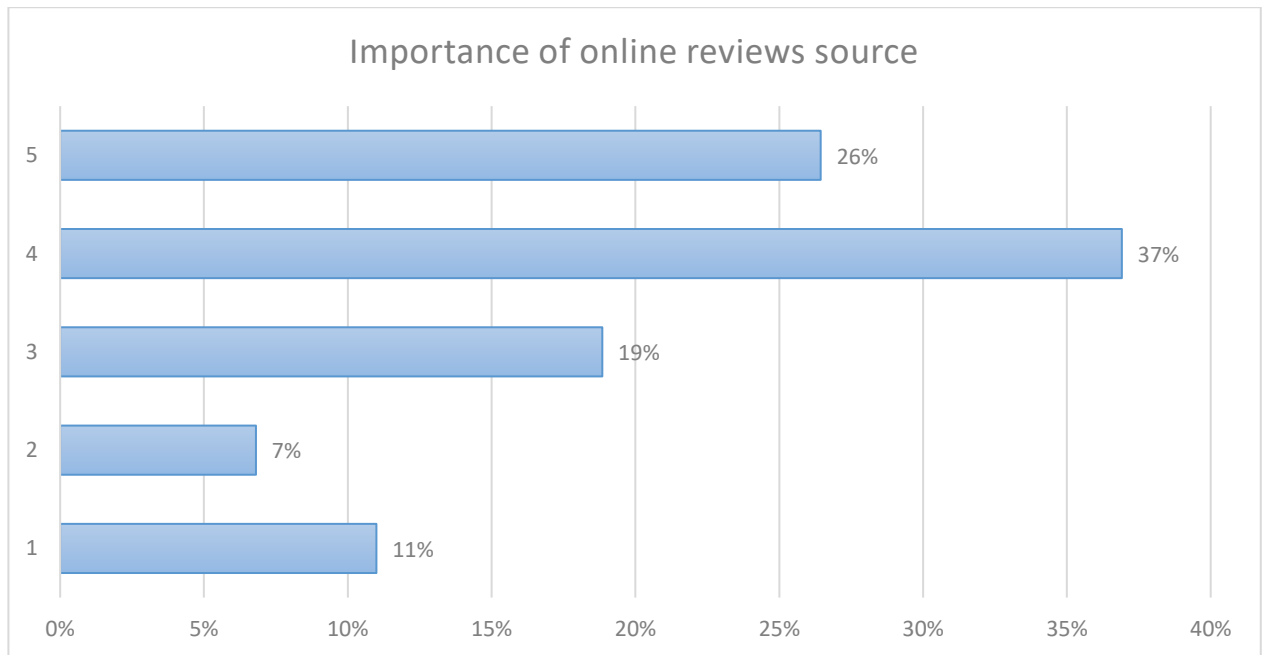


Fig. 20. Importance of online reviews source.

Question number seven (Figure 20) analyzes the importance of online reviews source. Previous studies, analyzed on theoretical part, shows that online reviews source is one of the most important factors when analyzing online reviews credibility. 37 % of respondents indicated 4 in the scale, 26 % - 5, 19 % - 3, 11 % - 1 and 7 % - 2. Results support previous studies that most customers need to know the source or author of online review. Although for 11 % of respondents, the source is not that important factor.

H3: Costumers trust online reviews the most, which are posted by a well-known author.

Hypothesis number three was supported, as a significant part of respondents has indicated that it is important to know the source of the online review. In most cases, the customer will trust more online reviews created by a well-known author because he knows what to expect from that person. The level of credibility could only decline if the author is a well-known media influencer who works with paid sponsorships because then the reviews could be less truthful.

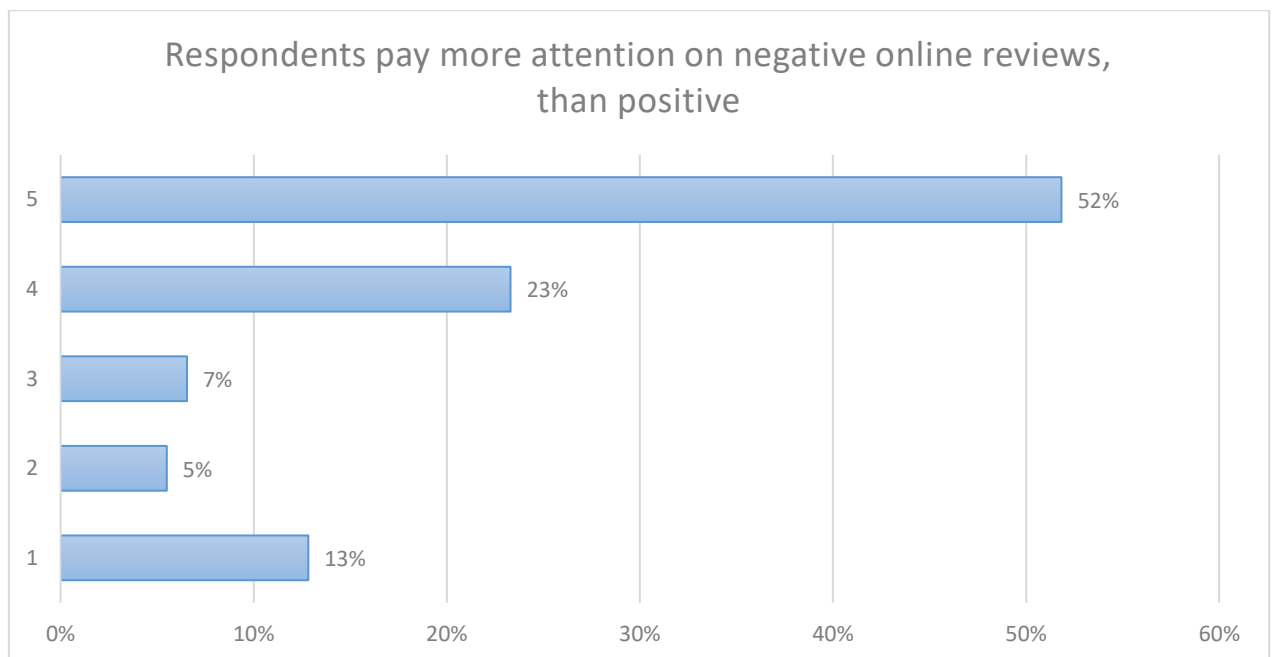


Fig. 21. Difference between positive and negative online reviews.

The next question (Figure 21) also seeks to support studies mentioned earlier, which have found that customers pay more attention to negative online reviews than positive ones. 52 % of respondents valued it with 5, 23 % with 4, 13 % with 1, 7 % with 3 and 5 % with 2. These results show that more than half of respondents indicate that they rely more on negative reviews, supporting previous studies. Many studies have confirmed that negative information usually has more value to the receiver than positive. However, there are not many studies on why customers value more negative information. This questionable field could be analyzed more in future studies.

Table 4. Trust of different online reviews sources.

Source of online reviews	1	2	3	4	5
Another costumer	11%	8%	26%	32%	23%
Service provider	21%	31%	25%	12%	11%
Influencer	32%	18%	26%	16%	8%
Traveler (person with high experience)	4%	4%	18%	32%	42%
Anonymous author	14%	30%	26%	19%	11%

Question number 9 (Table 4) is dedicated to analyzing which sources are the most trusted by online reviewers. Five types of online review authors are valued in the 5-point-Likert scale. Results that were greater than 25 % are marked in bold to recognize relevant data better. The most trusted source for online reviews is a person with high experience in tourism, a traveler. A total number of 281 respondents indicated travelers with 4 and 5 points, which shows that they would trust the most online reviews made by a person who often travels and books different hotels. In the second place, another customer has previously booked a hotel and shares his experience via posting online reviews. Another customer was rated with 4 and 5 points from 212 respondents. Service provider – in this case hotel took a central place; 213 respondents valued it with 2 and 3 points, which means it would be trusted less than another customer. Also, less trusted is an influencer, who shares paid advertisement; 190 respondents valued it with 1 and 2 points. Finalizing this question results, it is noticeable that customers tend to trust more online reviews made by travelers who have high experience in the field or other customers who have already used the hotel. Logically, people think that more credible reviews are done by people who have a high knowledge and experience in hotel booking. Also, previously analyzed studies show that customers tend to trust more customers who have similar values and attitudes.

Table 5. Factors that make online reviews more credible.

Factors that drive the review more credible	1	2	3	4	5
High authors rating	5%	16%	32%	27%	21%
Well-known authors identity	5%	6%	23%	35%	31%
Well-structured ideas	1%	11%	16%	27%	44%
Specific arguments	1%	5%	11%	30%	53%
Fully developed review (with pictures, video)	4%	3%	16%	23%	54%
Expressed feelings and attitudes	9%	19%	32%	26%	14%

The following two questions (Table 5 and 6) are related to factors that affect the credibility of online reviews. Results of factors that make online reviews more credible have been divided evenly. All the elements were rated with 4 or 5 points, which shows that credible online reviews consist of all factors. Two hundred twenty-four respondents have valued high author ratings with 3 and 4 points. Authors'

rating is used on reviewing websites, but not all customers use those sites. That is why the author's rating got less than 5 points values. Well-known author's identity was valued with 4 and 5 points by 253 respondents. That shows that the creator of online reviews is an essential factor for reviews' credibility. Also, it shows that people tend to trust more reviews made by people they know, for example, influencers, celebrities, or travelers. More than 270 respondents indicated that the most critical factors for online reviews' credibility are well-structured ideas and specific arguments. Two hundred five respondents gave 5 points for a fully developed review, which has included pictures or videos. Few respondents have chosen expressed feelings and attitudes as the most important factor. As a result of factors that make online reviews more credible, it is important to mention that respondents value most of the elements. Still, the most important are well-known authors' identity, well-structured ideas, specific arguments, and fully developed review (with pictures, video).

Table 6. Factors that make online reviews less credible.

Factors that make review less credible	1	2	3	4	5
Low authors rating	7%	12%	27%	27%	28%
Anonymity	10%	8%	22%	33%	27%
No arguments, just expressed personal attitudes	4%	8%	12%	31%	44%
Review without any pictures or video content	5%	5%	21%	17%	52%
Influencing/sponsored advertisement	10%	11%	44%	16%	19%
Lack of clearness	3%	11%	21%	23%	41%

Question number 11 is the opposite question from the previous one and focuses on factors that make online reviews less credible. Three hundred twelve respondents have valued low authors rating with 3, 4, and 5 points. Two hundred twenty-eight respondents indicated that authors anonymity makes online review less credible. Two hundred eighty-nine respondents have shown that online reviews which have no arguments, just expressed personal attitudes towards a hotel, are less credible. The highest number of respondents, more than half of the sample, indicated that reviews without any pictures or video content are less credible.

Moreover, 41 % of respondents have marked that lack of clearness also makes online reviews less credible. 44 % of respondents scored influencing/sponsored advertisement with 3 points. In conclusion, both questions regarding factors that make online reviews more and less credible can be rated by respondents' answers.

Factors that make online reviews more credible:

1. Specific arguments.
2. Fully developed review (with pictures, video).
3. Well-structured ideas.
4. Well-known author's identity.

5. High authors rating.

Factors that make online reviews less credible:

1. No arguments, just expressed personal attitudes.
2. Review without any pictures or video content.
3. Lack of clearness.
4. Anonymity.
5. Low authors rating.

H4: Factors making online reviews more credible are positively connected and increases credibility only when they are enabled all together.

Hypothesis number 4 is supported only partly. A significant part of respondents have indicated three or four factors, which were substantial for online reviews to be credible, but another part of respondents marked fewer factors. Results show that most of the elements must be enabled for review to be credible, but not all are obligatory. On the other hand, if an online review consists of four well-developed factors and one that is not prepared, this review could be less credible. For example, if an online review source is anonymous, does not have a rating on the platform, but his text is well-structured, he has added specific arguments and purposeful pictures, when this kind of review will have a high level of credibility. Although, if the author is well-known, has a high rating, but his review has no pictures added, and text is disorderly mixed, then this review will have a low level of credibility. Finally, online reviews' credibility does not depend on one of the factors. Credibility and trust of reviews are created via the connection between several significant factors.

4.4. The Knowledge Level of Online Reviews

The third section of the questionnaire is focused on respondents' field knowledge before reviewing online reviews. The level of knowledge shapes customer attitude in advance. Customer, who has specific attitudes and previous experience in the field, differently react to the information source than the person with a low level of knowledge. When analyzing online reviews, the level of knowledge can affect reviews' credibility.

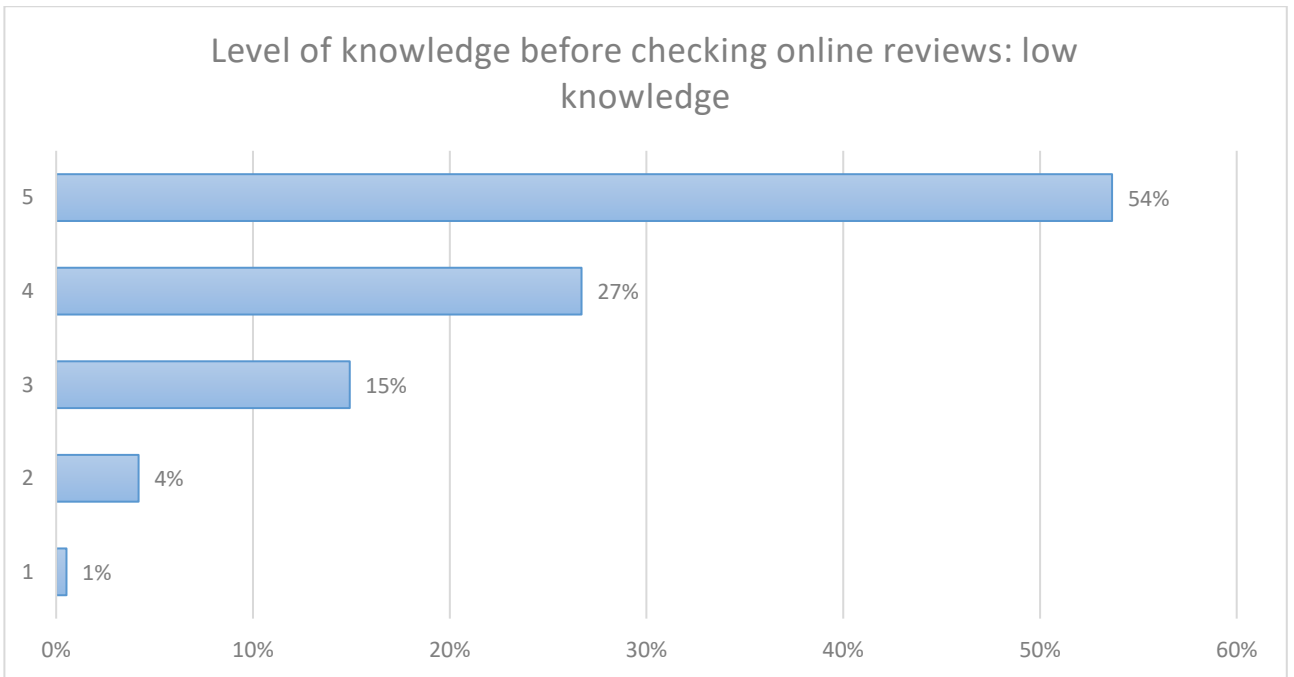


Fig. 22. Level of knowledge before checking online reviews.

With question number 13 (Figure 22), it was found out that 54 % of respondents are reviewing online reviews of the hotel only when they have low knowledge of it. This question logically connects with the following question (Figure 23), which proves that more than 60 % of respondents use online hotel reviews as an informational source. Online reviews can be used to compare several hotels, to share information and experience with others, and to promote a hotel. All these ways are information sharing, and in this way, other customers are reviewing online reviews to gain specific information about the hotel.

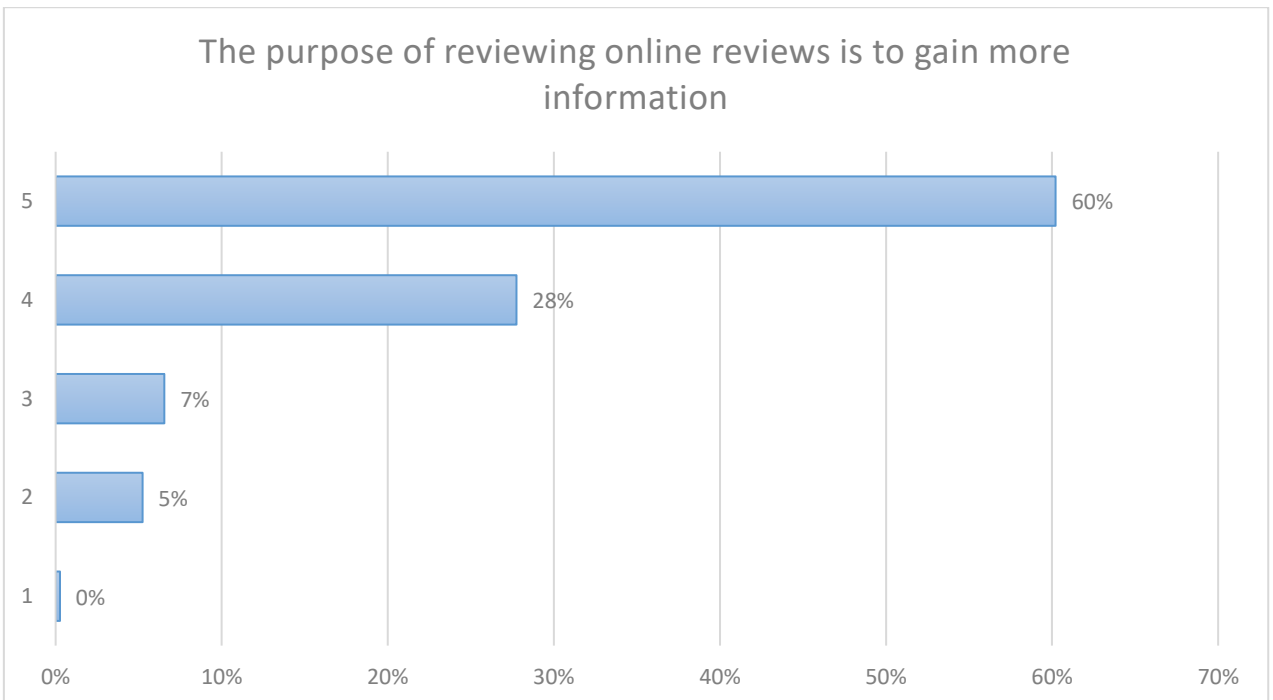


Fig. 23. The purpose of reviewing online reviews is to gain more information.

For most respondents, online reviews are the primary information source when choosing a hotel or apartment to book. These results show that online reviews are a key source of information in the tourism sector. Most reviewers have low knowledge of the field before reading online reviews, but there is no proven relationship between the purpose of reviewing reviews and knowledge level. Various users create and read an online review to gain more information about a specific hotel or apartment. On the other hand, only a minor group of people are booking a hotel without checking online reviews.

4.5. The Motivation of Online Reviews Creation Process

This section of the questionnaire is dedicated to the analysis of motivation behind the online review creation process. Various studies have analyzed consumer motivation on sharing product or service online reviews. In this case, the research focuses on hotel online review creation motivation.

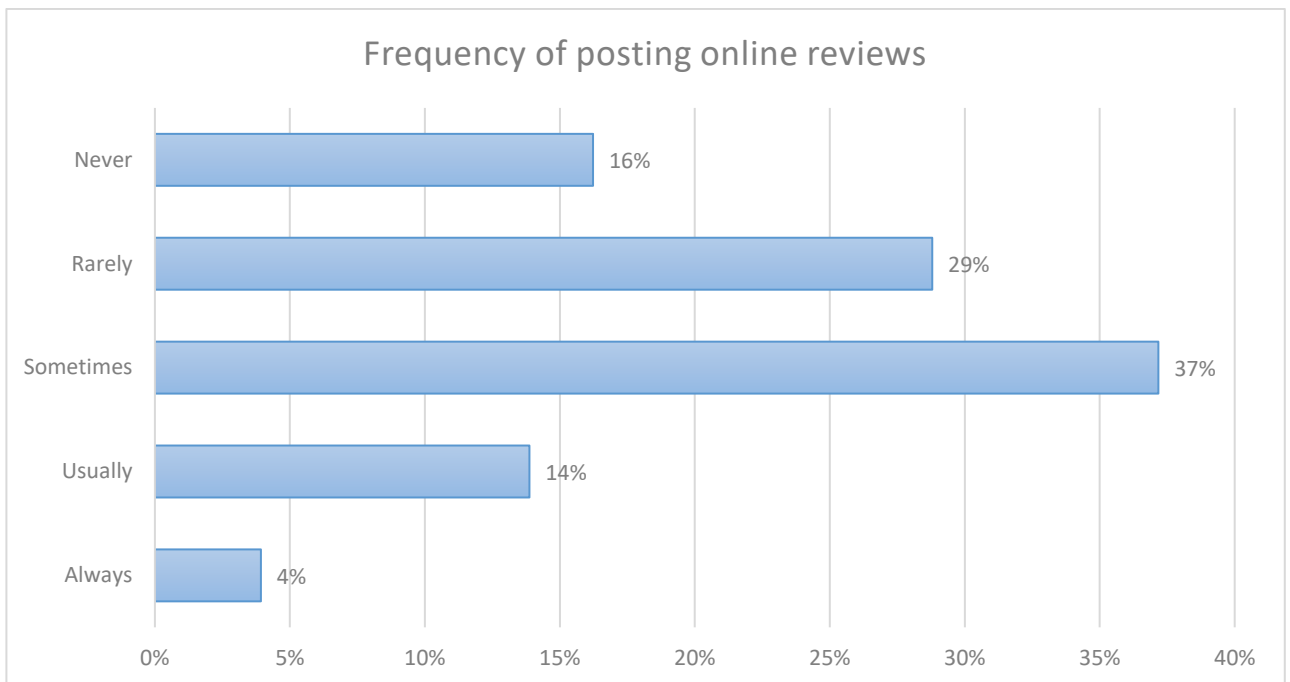


Fig. 24. Frequency of posting online reviews.

The first question of the sections asks respondents about their online reviews posting frequency (Figure 24). One hundred forty-two respondents answered that they sometimes post online reviews, 29 % - rarely, 16 % - never, 14 % - usually, and 4 % - always. This statistic is common; most customers share online reviews just sometimes and more often review content created by other users.

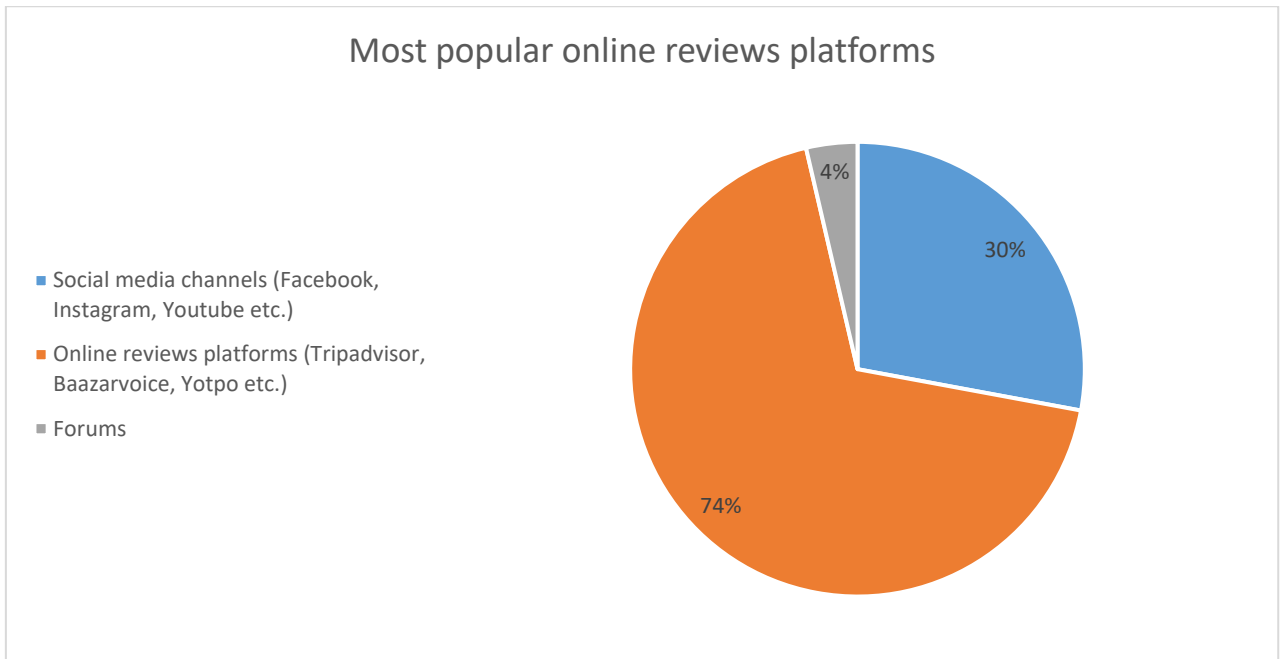


Fig. 25. Most popular online reviews platforms.

More than 74 % of respondents have indicated that usually, they are posting online reviews on specific online reviews platforms, 30 % - on social media channels, and only 4 % on forums. When analyzing online hotel reviews, it is natural that reviewing platforms are the most popular way to share an online review. There are a variety of well-developed platforms, which are working worldwide. Although specific platforms are made only for Asia or Indian markets, reviewing websites like Booking.com or TripAdvisor connects tourists and service providers worldwide. These platforms have a greatly developed user interface, internal rating systems, and many other advantages, which attract customers.

Table 7. Motivations to share an online review.

Motivation to share an online review	1	2	3	4	5
To help other costumers	5%	12%	33%	24%	26%
Share negative experience	11%	6%	24%	32%	26%
Share positive experience	10%	11%	26%	27%	26%
To help hotel improve its product/service	8%	17%	27%	27%	21%
To connect with other users	10%	10%	26%	29%	23%
To thank	16%	16%	11%	23%	34%

To better understand the main motivations behind the creation process of online reviews, question number 18 was set (Table 7). Different authors of online reviews have various reasons to share their studies, which strongly affects online reviews' credibility. Three hundred seventeen respondents valued first motivation – helping other costumers with 3, 4, and 5 points. More than half of the sample population indicates that they are sharing online reviews to help other customers. Two hundred twenty-four respondents have marked with 4 and 5 points that usually they post reviews to share their negative experience and 182 – a positive experience. Previous studies already researched that people tend to more share their negative experiences than positive ones. The same phenomenon exists with

information searching – people pay more attention to negative information. One hundred eighty-two respondents indicated with 4 and 5 points that their motivation for posting online reviews is to help the hotel improve its services. More than 200 respondents answered that one of the motivations is to connect with other users and to thank the service provider for a good experience.

4.6. The Credibility of Online Reviews: Practical Questions

To check previous studies and questionnaire results from the first four parts, practical questions were created at the end of the questionnaire. The practical questions part consists of six questions, divided into three sections, where respondents had to choose more credible online reviews, author, and hotel from given samples. The choice had to be based on their perception, and every choice question was followed by a table question, where respondents had to point factors, which have influenced their choice the most. All the given samples were taken from the online reviewing website TripAdvisor.com. To avoid pre-existing bias towards a specific website, the names of the authors were changed.

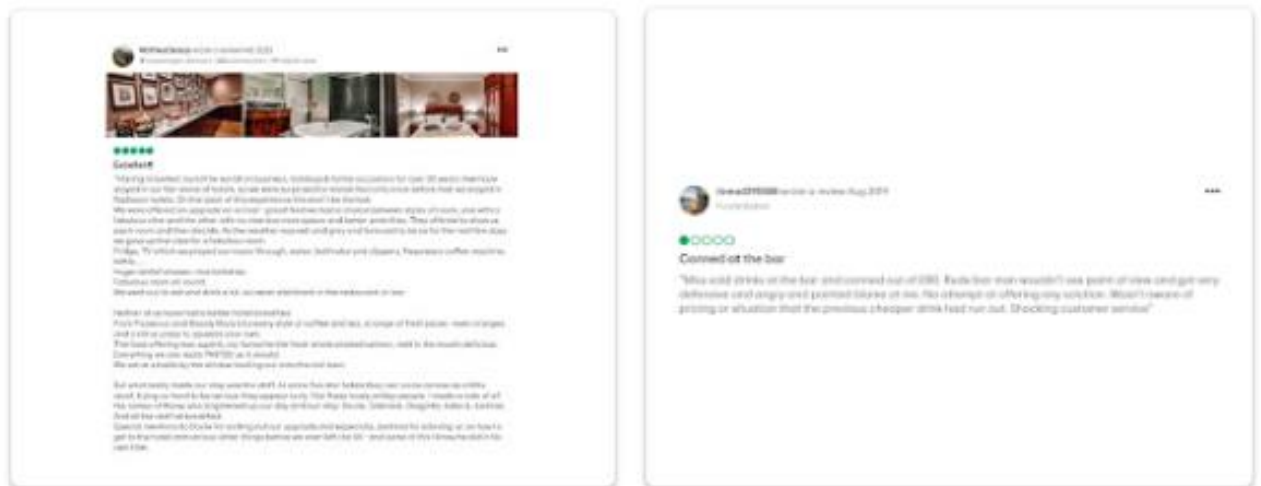


Fig. 26. Two options of online reviews.

In the first question of this section, respondents had to choose between two different online reviews (Figure 26) and respond which of online reviews seemed more credible for them. Differences between online reviews were evident. The first online review option had more information, better rating, structured text added pictures of the hotel. 94 % of respondents were able to identify it and responded that a more credible review is option number one.

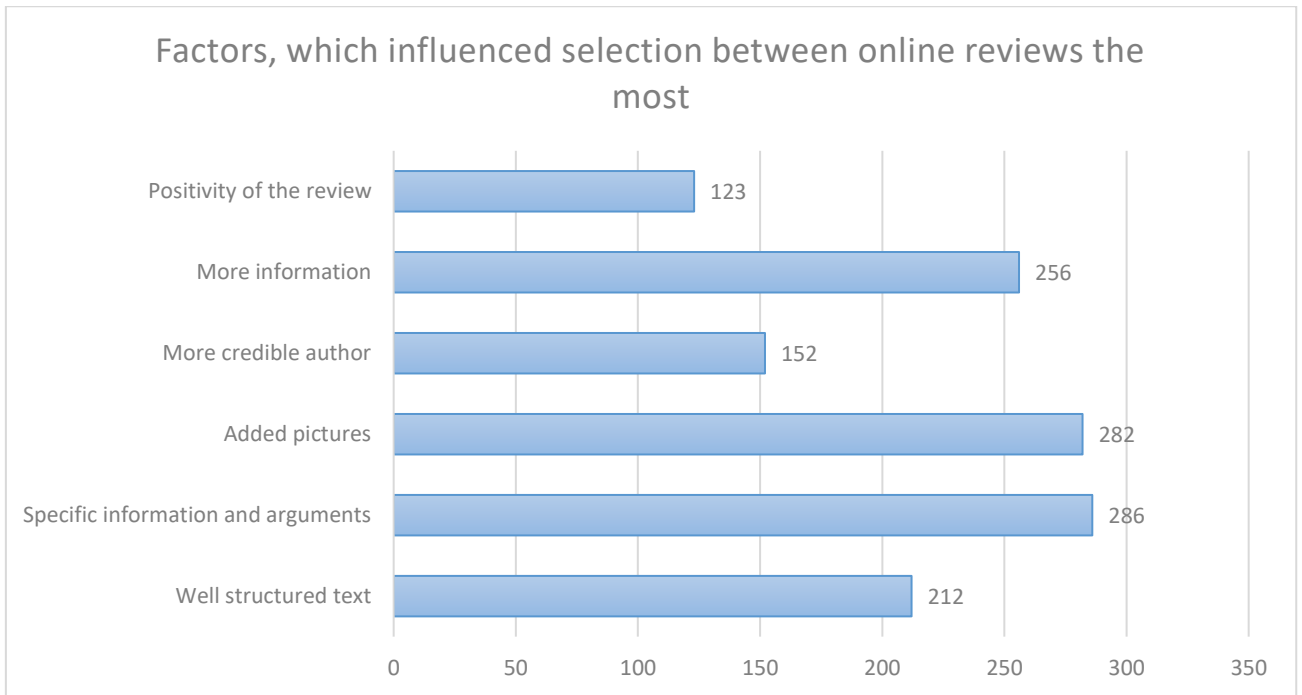


Fig. 27. Factors, which influenced selection between online reviews the most.

From the data gathered from question No. 20 (Figure 27), there have been confirmed that the most influential factors for credible online review are: specific information and arguments – chosen by 75 % of respondents, added pictures to the review – selected by 74 % of respondents and added more information – chosen by 67 % of respondents.



Fig. 28. Two options of online reviews authors.

In question No. 21 (Figure 28), respondents could choose more credible online reviews authors from two options. Given samples of two authors have apparent differences, which can be identified easily. The source on the left side has a real identity and picture, higher contributions, and followers. 95 % of respondents have identified these factors and have marked the first option as a more credible source of online review. In the following question, respondents had to mark factors, which influenced their choice the most (Figure 29).

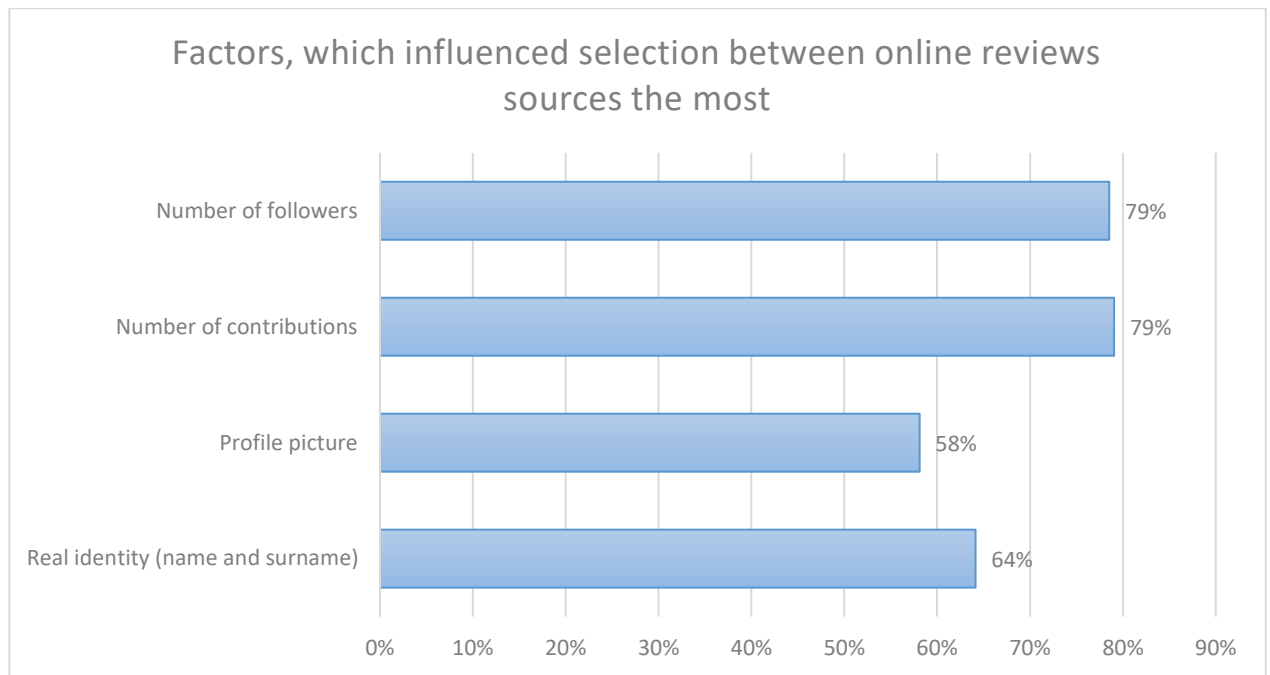


Fig. 29. Factors, which influenced selection between online reviews sources the most.

Most of the respondents – 79 % have marked two factors as the most significant – number of followers and number of contributions, 64 % have chosen real identity, and 58 % – profile picture validity. As mentioned previously, online review source is one of the most important factors when analyzing credibility aspect. From the questionnaire results, it can be seen that not all of the elements for reviewers are important. Still, they pay attention mainly to the activities, which the author had previously. People trust the most source of information, which has earlier contributions and other people have already followed him. Past contribution mostly means that the user has valued experience in the field, while followers show that he is trusted by other people, which makes him more credible.

Meanwhile, pictures and real identity are not necessary aspects and make the online review more credible, only partially. Finishing it is important to mention that all four factors got a rating of more than 55 %, which shows that it is essential to value its characteristics all at once, but not separately when analyzing review source credibility. If the author has only one factor well-developed, he will still be less credible. The credibility of the author depends on all factors developed together.

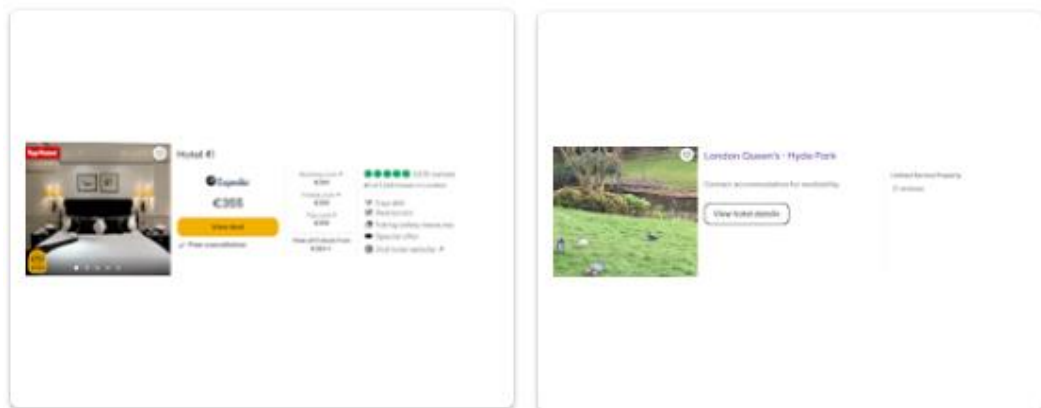


Fig. 30. Two options of hotel descriptions.

As the last question of the research, there were two options of hotel reviews given to compare for respondents. The question was created with the same basis as others, one of the hotels had a fully developed description, and the other option had less information and an inaccurate picture. 96 % of respondents were able to recognize that the first option had a more credible description.

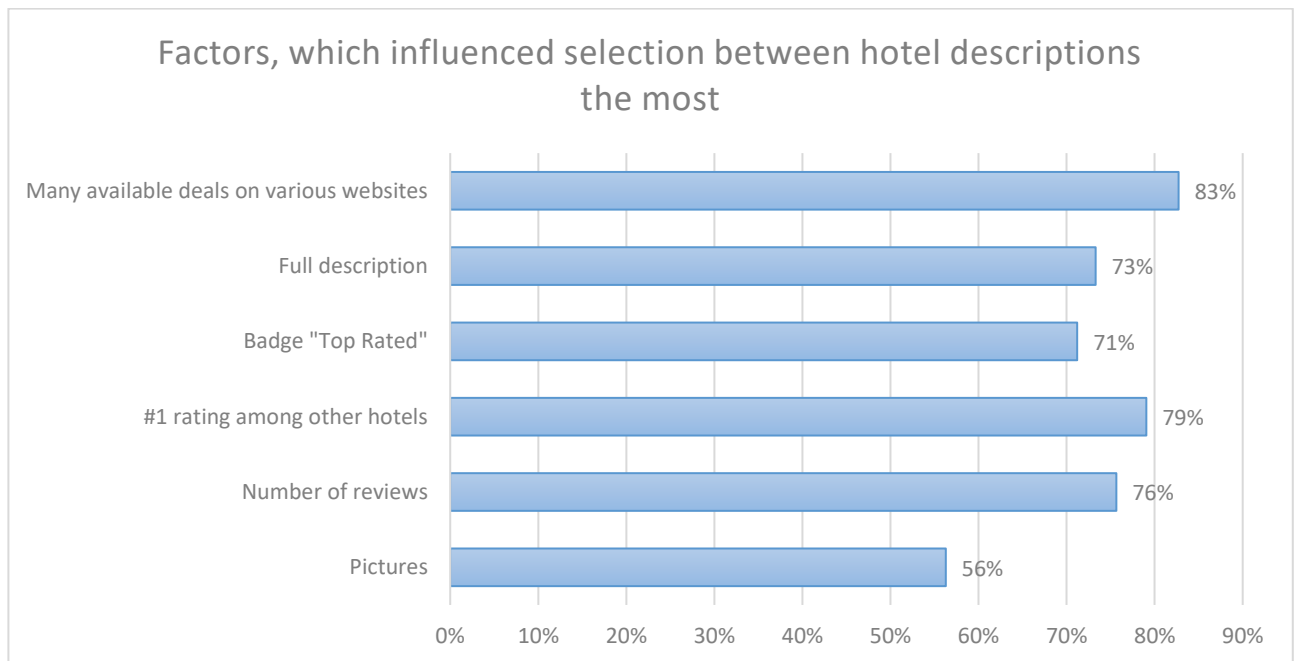


Fig. 31. Factors, which influenced selection between hotel descriptions the most.

In question No. 24 (Figure 31), respondents had to choose between six factors and mark them, which seemed the most important. Most of the respondents (83 %) have indicated that hotel number one looked more credible because it had links to many booking websites. 79 % of the respondents have suggested that one of the significant factors is that hotel has a number one rating among other offers. 76 % marked a number of reviews, 73 % - that hotel had a well-developed description, 71 % - that hotel had attached badge „Top-Rated” and 56 % - marked pictures as one of the most significant factors for reasonable hotel offer.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. During the research, there were many problematic fields found, which affect online reviews. All these fields relate to the main three components of online reviews: review content, platform-based effects, and source credibility. A first problematic field is a high number of online reviews. At first glance, it looks that a high number of information can be useful, but information tends to get less advantageous with higher amounts of it. The more information we can find online, the more there is a chance to find misleading online reviews. The second field is influencer marketing. Influencer marketing strongly affects the quality of information, especially online reviews, as an influencer is a person working with the company. This kind of online review usually is not a genuine opinion, but rather an advertisement. The third field is online review creators' limited experience and knowledge in the field, which is a very usual issue. On the internet, there are very low barriers for users to share information and that leads to many inexperienced creators, who are posting their online reviews, which usually consist of their thoughts, but not the facts. It is strongly connected to the next problematic field, which is facts merged with opinions, feelings, and attitudes. Every person creating an online review experiences a certain mood, life events, and emotions which can significantly affect the quality of the review. The next problematic field often found on online reviewing websites; is users' anonymity. A big part of online community users tend to keep their identity anonymous for various reasons and this matter also affects the quality of user-generated content. Finally, all the previously mentioned factors can be combined into one problematic field – the credibility of online reviews.

2. Electronic-word-of-mouth communication method was a result of evolving internet and developing Web 2.0. technologies, which are nowadays are widely used. New way of communication brought society more efficient ways to contact each other without any time or geographical limits, create a new type of media, share content via new channels, etc. These new opportunities allowed internet users to connect via four kinds of eWOM: one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one, and many-to-many. People started to use these new methods for businesses, advertising campaigns, new forms of e-commerce. One of the results that eWOM brought to the internet was online reviews of various products and services. Online review, by its nature, is a source of information shared by other internet users, social media influencers, companies' representatives, or anonymous sources. Growing numbers of online reviews started opening online reviewing platforms, forums, and other websites, where people could share their experiences and thoughts about specific products or services. As an informational source, online reviews have many advantages, which help customers find information faster and easier, but it also has questionable fields, like credibility and trust. When analyzing online reviews, it is vital to understand the main concepts of consumer behavior and purchasing decision-making. Online reviews are on the factors which can significantly affect the consumer decision-making process, which consists of eight steps: perception of the market, transforming the market into goods description, evaluation of alternatives, the decision regarding purchasing circumstances, purchase, consumption of goods or services, evaluation of the purchase and return of the product. Online reviews mainly affect the first four steps, when the customer is gathering information, analyzing alternatives for a specific product or service. Online reviews are critical when examining the tourism service sector, specifically the hotel booking process. Studies agree that most customers are checking online reviews before booking an apartment.

3. A quantitative analysis was carried to research the credibility of online reviews. The questionnaire has been delivered to 382 people living in Lithuania, who have used online reviews at least once. The data collection process was done using the Google forms platform, which gives a convenient way of creating and sharing online questionnaires. Due to the current pandemic situation in the country, a virtual version of the study was chosen, which allowed gathering the data without having unnecessary physical contact with respondents. The questionnaire consisted of thirty questions divided into several different parts: online reviews usage frequency, critical aspects of online reviews credibility and attribution, knowledge questions, practical part, and demographic information. The focus of the study was to analyze key elements of online reviews' credibility in the hotel booking process and test four hypotheses. By analyzing data collected from respondents, many of the previously studied factors and literature connections were confirmed. The first hypothesis, telling that there is a positive relationship between the value of online reviews and reviewing intentions was partly accepted. From the questionnaire result, it can be seen that most of the respondents' online review is a vital information source, while minority can use other sources and do not need reviews. The second hypothesis, stating that the most popular type of online reviews among customers is other customer reviews posted on the hotel reviewing website, was supported. In the hotel booking process, online reviewing websites are the most popular platform, which gathers most of the hotels and customers. The third hypothesis, telling that customers trust online reviews the most, which are posted by a well-known author, was also supported. Most of the respondents have identified online reviews source as one of the most important factors for the credibility of the review. The last hypothesis, stating that factors making online reviews more credible are positively connected and increases credibility only when they are enabled all together, was partly supported. There were not found strong connections between different factors of online reviews' credibility, but most of the respondents have indicated two and more factors at the time. Moreover, it was proven that online reviews and their credibility are significant factors that strongly influence customer decision-making while booking a hotel or apartment. Some groups of people are not willing to book a hotel, which does not have previous reviews. Respondents mainly were using other customer online reviews, which they found on review websites. By the research, it was confirmed that customers tend to trust more negative reviews than positive ones. When analyzing factors, which have the highest influence on online reviews' credibility, it was found out that the most significant ones are – authors' identity, well-structured ideas and text, specific arguments, and added additional pictures of the hotel. Finally, after analyzing the results of the practical questions, it was found out that it is vital for online reviews to have more than one credibility factor in increasing their level of trustfulness.

Further studies could take into consideration marketers and online advertising companies, who are working with online reviews. It would be useful to analyze what kind of strategies do they use and how other consumers perceive them. In this case, a qualitative method of analysis would be advantageous. Research, focused on the business side, could bring more insights into companies that are working to create campaigns via online reviews. Different types of online reviews could be analyzed.

With the growing numbers of online reviewing platform users and growing numbers of user-generated content, we can see the tendency, which will probably continue in the future. Online review creators should focus more on different types of reviews, not only textual format. With current technology potential various types of media can be created (vlogs, virtual reality videos, live translations, etc.).

For users to have abilities to generate more innovative and useful content it is important to provide well-developed platforms. As the results of the study have shown, online reviewing platforms are the most popular among users. These platforms could be developed more by bringing different types of media, possibilities to create communities, share your experiences externally, make live comparisons of hotels, etc. All these improvements could be achieved via collaborating with other websites and platforms. Also, online reviewing platforms need to introduce rank systems, which could help to deal with information overload and misleading review problems. Although some of the websites have already implemented these systems, like Amazon (Dong et al., 2013), there are still many which are not using it or have only basic versions, which do not solve the problem.

There is a big number of negative online reviews, which are usually do not include specific arguments or facts. In this case, online reviewing websites could make a system that would not allow registration for users who did not include their contact information in their profile. Every service provide would have access to an internal system, where they could find users' contact information. After receiving the negative online review, the hotel manager could contact the user and talk about the customer's experience after the hotel reservation. This process could provide several improvements: fewer users would share negative reviews without any specific arguments, service providers would have a possibility to hear their customer's opinion directly and discuss it. After this process, a further decision could be made for future reforms.

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Annexes

The following online questionnaire was sent out for recipients, whose answers were the data of quantitative analysis.

*Agreement to participate in the questionnaire: Clicking on the "agree" button you agree that: You voluntarily agree to participate. You are at least 18 years of age. **

Agree

*Have you ever reviewed an online review of a hotel or apartment before traveling? **

Yes

*1. How valuable is a hotel review to you before booking? **

1 2 3 4 5

Not valuable at all Very valuable

*2. If a hotel does not have a previous review, would you still book it? **

Yes

No

Maybe

*3. Which forms of online reviews do you use the most? **

Videos

Blogs

Forums

Original product/service website

Reviewing web sites

*4. Which types of online reviews do you use the most? **

Other customer reviews

Service provider reviews

Influencers reviews

Anonymous reviews

Credibility of online reviews

5. *Online reviews that I have read in the past are generally trustworthy.* *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

6. *I was satisfied with the hotels booked based on online reviews.* *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

7. *I need to know the author/source of the review.* *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

8. *I pay more attention to negative online reviews than positive ones.* *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

9. *I trust the most online reviews made by:* *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Another customer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Service provider	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Influencer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Traveler (person with high experience)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anonymous author	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. *Main factors for credible online review is:* *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
High authors rating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Well-known authors identity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Well structured ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specific arguments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fully developed review (with pictures, video)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expressed feelings and attitudes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Main factors that make online review less credible: *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Low authors rating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anonymity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No arguments just expressed personal attitudes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Review without any pictures or video content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Influencing/sponsored advertisement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of clearness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Online reviews credibility is the most important component of their quality and trustfulness. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Knowledge of online reviews

13. I am usually checking online hotel reviews when I have low knowledge about them. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

14. I am usually checking online hotel reviews when I have high knowledge about them. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

15. I am always checking online reviews to choose a hotel or gain more information about it. *

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Online reviews creation

16. How often do you post online reviews? *

- Always
- Usually
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

17. Where do you usually post online reviews? *

- Social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, etc.)
- Online reviews platforms (Tripadvisor, Bazaarvoice, Yotpo, etc.)
- Forums
- Other: _____

18. My motivation to post online review is usually: *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
To help other costumers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Share negative experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Share positive experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To help the hotel improve its product/service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To connect with other users	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To thank	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Practical questions

19. Please choose which online review looks more credible to you: *

Option 1



Option 2

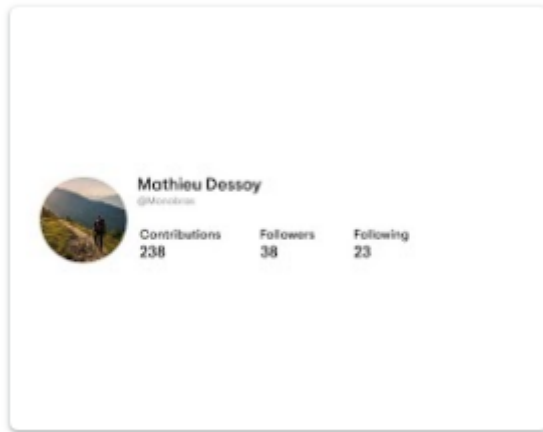


20. Which factors influenced your choice the most? *

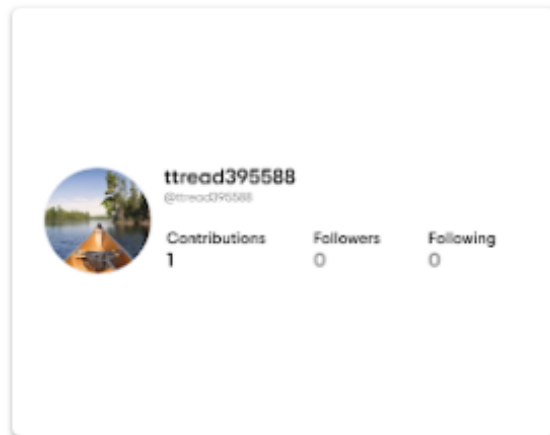
- Well structured text
- Specific information and arguments
- Added pictures
- More credible author
- More information
- Positivity of the review

21. Please choose which online review author looks more credible to you: *

Option 1



Option 2

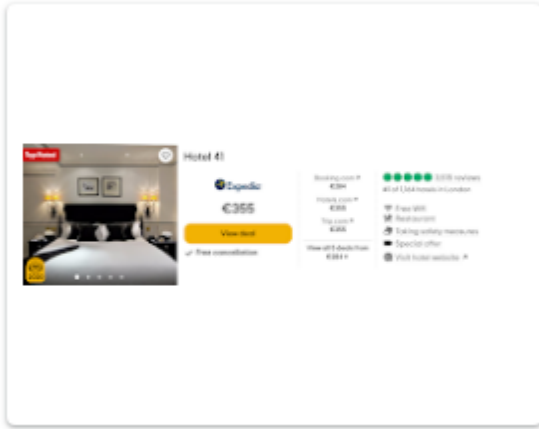


22. Which factors influenced your choice the most? *

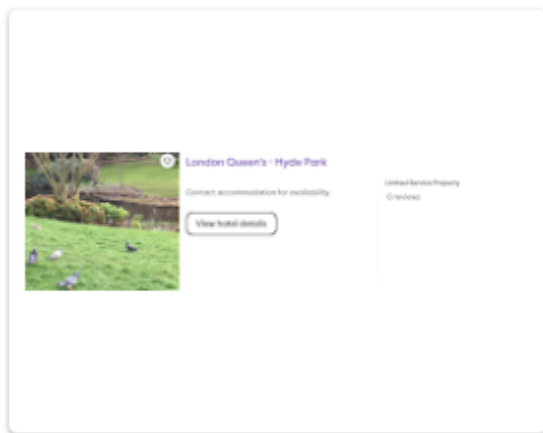
- Real identity (name and surname)
- Profile picture
- Number of contributions
- Number of followers

23. Please choose which hotel looks more credible to you: *

- Option 1



Option 2



24. Which factors influenced your choice the most? *

- Pictures
- Number of reviews
- #1 rating among other hotels
- Badge "Top-Rated"
- Full description
- Many available deals on various websites
- Other: _____

Demographic questions

25. Your Gender: *

- Female
- Male
- I prefer not to say

Other: _____

26. *Your Age:* *

18-28

28-38

38-48

48-58

58-68

69 or more

27. *Your average monthly income* *

Less than 500 €

From 500 € to 1000 €

From 1000 € to 3000 €

More than 3000€

28. *How often do you travel and book a hotel/apartment? (not taking into account quarantine situation)* *

Once a week

Once a month

Once every half a year

Once a year

29. *Your usual purpose of travel:* *

Work or business trips

Vacation

Change of living place

Other: _____

30. *Place where you live:* *

Big city

Small city

Countryside