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User-Generated Content (UGC) and Its Impact on Tourism Marketing: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to systematically examine the impact of user-generated content (UGC) on tourism marketing by synthesizing empirical evidence from scholarly publications over the last decade. Grounded in a descriptive quantitative approach, the research employs a systematic literature review methodology to identify, evaluate, and integrate findings from 30 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2010 and 2025. The review categorizes the influence of UGC across four core dimensions: destination image formation, tourist decision-making processes, emotional engagement, and strategic marketing implications. The results indicate that UGC significantly shapes both the cognitive and affective components of destination image, influences tourists' behavioral intentions through emotional resonance, and acts as a trusted informational and social source during the travel planning cycle. Furthermore, UGC enhances marketing effectiveness when integrated responsibly into official campaigns, yet raises ethical concerns related to consent, representation, and content authenticity. The study also identifies critical gaps in current literature, including limited inclusivity in UGC representation and the risks associated with algorithmically amplified or manipulated content. The findings underscore the necessity for tourism marketers and destination management organizations to not only leverage UGC as a strategic asset but also to adopt ethical and inclusive frameworks for its governance. Ultimately, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of UGC as both a communicative phenomenon and a transformative tool in the evolving landscape of digital tourism marketing.

Keywords: User-Generated Content, Tourism Marketing, Destination Image, Consumer Behavior, Digital Strategy.

I. Introduction

Tourism has emerged as a central pillar of global economic activity, contributing over 10% of global GDP and supporting millions of jobs before the COVID-19 pandemic (UNWTO, 2019). In recent



years, how tourism is marketed has undergone a radical shift with the advent of Web 2.0 technologies. These digital innovations have transformed tourists from passive recipients of promotional content into active content creators and disseminators. The resulting phenomenon—commonly referred to as User-Generated Content (UGC)—has become a powerful influence in shaping travel intentions, destination branding, and overall tourism experiences. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and TripAdvisor have become digital arenas where narratives about places are constructed, shared, and consumed globally. Consequently, tourism marketing has entered a new era in which the authentic voices of travelers themselves wield substantial influence over prospective visitors.

UGC, in the context of tourism, includes photos, videos, reviews, blogs, and social media posts created and shared by tourists, without the direct involvement or sponsorship of official tourism boards or companies (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The appeal of UGC lies in its authenticity and relatability, which are often perceived as more trustworthy than traditional advertising (Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013). This credibility becomes especially important in tourism, where consumers depend highly on intangible cues and social proof to inform their decisions. Research by Munar and Jacobsen (2014) highlighted that travelers are more likely to rely on peer-generated content to form impressions of a destination, rather than messages delivered through official tourism advertisements. The preference for experiential, first-person narratives over curated brand messages indicates a significant paradigm shift in consumer behavior and trust in the digital age.

From a marketing perspective, this shift has profound implications. According to recent studies, approximately 70% of travelers now consult social media during the early stages of travel planning (Xiang, Du, Ma, & Fan, 2017), and UGC significantly influences their selection of destinations, accommodations, and even travel companions (Mariani, Mura, & Di Felice, 2018). Furthermore, UGC plays a pivotal role in destination image formation, which in turn affects tourists' attitudes, perceived value, and behavioral intentions (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). Empirical evidence suggests that exposure to positive UGC enhances perceptions of destination attractiveness and increases the likelihood of visitation (Chung & Koo, 2015). For tourism marketers and destination management organizations (DMOs), leveraging UGC is not merely a tactic—it is becoming a necessity for maintaining relevance and competitiveness.

Despite the growing interest in UGC, there is a lack of consolidated knowledge that synthesizes its multidimensional impact on tourism marketing. While various studies have examined isolated aspects such as source credibility (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2018), emotional appeal (Choi, Kandampully, & Bilgihan, 2017), and visual aesthetics (Mariani et al., 2018), few have attempted to systematically map the field or identify overarching trends. Moreover, methodological diversity—ranging from qualitative case studies to quantitative surveys—further complicates comparing findings across contexts and cultures. The fragmentation of research creates a pressing need for systematic literature reviews that can offer a comprehensive and empirically grounded perspective.

Several recent studies offer valuable insights into this evolving discourse. For example, Aboalghanam, AlFraihat, and Tarabieh (2025) conducted a structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, which found that UGC significantly influences tourists' intentions to visit a destination, mediated by perceptions of destination image. Similarly, Nguyen and Tong (2022) demonstrated that passive exposure to UGC evokes emotional envy, triggering stronger travel intention. In their study, image authenticity and narrative realism were key predictors of perceived trustworthiness. Meanwhile, Chemin, Silva, and Vikou (2025) conducted a PRISMA-based systematic review of 158 articles and identified eight dominant themes—including experience, satisfaction, perception, and branding—illustrating the

breadth of UGC's impact. These findings collectively affirm that UGC not only acts as a communication tool but also serves as a co-creative agent in constructing tourism meaning and value.

The transformative role of UGC is also evident in the context of crisis recovery and reputation management. Madaniah, Situmorang, and Sembiring (2024) showed that during periods of tourism downturn—such as the COVID-19 pandemic—peer-to-peer content helped destinations regain trust and rebuild positive imagery. They argue that UGC can provide real-time updates and emotional reassurance that institutional campaigns often fail to deliver. In this sense, UGC serves both functional and emotional purposes: it informs, engages, and humanizes tourism marketing in ways that conventional channels cannot replicate. Nevertheless, certain challenges and gaps persist. Many studies focus on behavioral intention but rarely verify whether those intentions translate into actual visitation. The scarcity of longitudinal studies and real-time analytics limits the understanding of how UGC impacts long-term brand equity and repeat visitation. Additionally, cross-platform variability—such as the ephemeral nature of Instagram Stories versus the algorithmic visibility of TikTok videos—is not adequately addressed in the literature. Cultural context also remains an underexplored moderator; for instance, the reception of UGC may vary significantly between collectivist and individualist societies. These limitations underscore the need for a systematic review that not only aggregates previous findings but also evaluates their methodological rigor and thematic relevance.

Given these considerations, this study aims to conduct a systematic literature review of UGC in tourism marketing using a descriptive quantitative approach. The objectives of this research are fourfold. First, it seeks to map the conceptual landscape of UGC by identifying key themes, theories, and constructs that have emerged in the past decade (2015–2025). Second, it examines methodological patterns—such as research design, sampling technique, and analytical tools—to assess the robustness of existing studies. Third, it explores the geographic and platform-based distribution of research to highlight areas of concentration and neglect. Fourth, it proposes a refined conceptual framework that integrates the impact of UGC across various stages of the tourism marketing funnel: from awareness and interest to decision, experience, and loyalty.

This research will contribute theoretically by synthesizing fragmented findings into a coherent knowledge base and identifying avenues for future inquiry. Practically, it will assist tourism marketers, content strategists, and policy makers in crafting UGC-informed strategies that resonate with contemporary travelers. By foregrounding UGC as a locus of authenticity, trust, and engagement, this review aspires to reframe tourism marketing not as a unidirectional message but as an evolving dialogue between destinations and their digitally-empowered publics. The integration of UGC into tourism marketing represents not just a tactical innovation, but a fundamental transformation in how destinations communicate with, learn from, and serve travelers. It reshapes trust paradigms, co-creates narratives, and democratizes brand storytelling. As such, a systematic and descriptive investigation into the literature on UGC is timely and essential for both academic enrichment and strategic application.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Conceptual Foundations of User-Generated Content in Tourism

User-generated content (UGC) has emerged as a cornerstone in the evolution of digital marketing strategies, especially within the tourism industry. Defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) as various forms of publicly accessible media content produced by end-users—ranging from blogs and

videos to photographs and online reviews—UGC has revolutionized how travel-related information is created and consumed. In the tourism context, these user-created narratives often encapsulate personal and real-time experiences, providing a depth of perceived authenticity that is difficult to replicate through traditional, professionally curated marketing materials (Ayeh, Au, & Law, 2013). This sense of authenticity plays a critical role in enhancing consumer trust and decision-making, especially as travelers seek to minimize perceived risks associated with unfamiliar destinations (Xiang, Du, Ma, & Fan, 2017). As tourism is fundamentally an experience-based industry, the subjective yet relatable nature of UGC makes it an indispensable tool in influencing how potential tourists visualize and evaluate prospective destinations.

The proliferation of social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and TripAdvisor has significantly amplified the reach and impact of UGC. These platforms have become participatory spaces where travelers share visual and textual content about their journeys, thus collectively constructing a digital representation of destinations (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Rather than merely serving as repositories for content, these platforms foster interactive communities in which narratives are shaped, challenged, and redefined by a multitude of voices. In this context, ordinary users become active participants in shaping the tourism discourse, fundamentally altering the traditional top-down flow of promotional information (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). The democratization of content creation has effectively blurred the line between content producers and consumers, creating a hybrid environment where the authority of influence is no longer monopolized by official tourism boards or professional marketers. This shift reflects a broader cultural movement towards decentralization and collective authorship in digital communication.

Aligned with this transformation is a notable shift in consumer behavior: modern travelers increasingly prioritize peer recommendations over corporate messaging. This behavioral change is supported by empirical evidence indicating that word-of-mouth and social proof—core attributes of UGC—exert greater persuasive power than traditional advertisements (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). The persuasive capacity of UGC lies not only in its informational value but also in its ability to evoke emotional connections. Visual storytelling, personal anecdotes, and unfiltered expressions of joy, awe, or even disappointment resonate on an emotional level with prospective tourists, fostering a form of affective engagement that is more compelling than generic advertising slogans (Choi, Kandampully, & Bilgihan, 2017). This emotional engagement enhances the perceived relatability and relevance of content, further motivating users to trust and act upon the shared experiences of others.

Furthermore, the dynamic and interactive characteristics of UGC distinguish it from conventional marketing materials. Unlike static brochures or broadcast ads, UGC is continuously updated, commented upon, and shared across digital ecosystems. This real-time feedback mechanism fosters a dialogic relationship between content creators and viewers, facilitating a sense of communal exploration and validation (Leung, Law, Van Hoof, & Buhalis, 2013). Travelers not only passively absorb content but also engage with it—asking questions, offering recommendations, and contributing their own perspectives. This ongoing interactivity transforms UGC into a living archive of travel experiences, one that is perpetually evolving and adapting to the collective contributions of users. In doing so, it provides an ever-fresh and multi-faceted representation of destinations that reflects real-world nuances more accurately than any standardized marketing campaign.

Finally, UGC has become instrumental in shaping destination image and strengthening brand equity within tourism markets. Through repeated exposure to authentic and diverse narratives, users develop composite mental images of destinations that are informed by the experiences of others rather

than official portrayals (Mariani, Mura, & Di Felice, 2018). These mental constructs influence not only initial interest but also long-term loyalty and advocacy. As UGC continues to evolve with technological advancements and changing user behaviors, its role in tourism marketing is likely to expand even further. The convergence of authenticity, emotional engagement, and participatory culture has rendered UGC not merely an accessory to marketing strategies, but a central pillar in constructing and sustaining the reputational landscape of destinations in the digital era. Thus, understanding the dynamics of UGC is critical for stakeholders aiming to thrive in the increasingly complex and user-driven tourism environment.

2.2. The Role of UGC in Destination Image Formation

The formation of destination image remains a cornerstone of tourism research, primarily because of its demonstrable influence on tourists' attitudes, preferences, and behavioral intentions (Pike, 2002). Destination image, broadly conceived, encompasses both cognitive and affective elements: the former pertains to beliefs and perceptions about a place's attributes, while the latter concerns emotional responses such as excitement, relaxation, or nostalgia (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). In this context, user-generated content (UGC) has emerged as a powerful catalyst in shaping both dimensions. Unlike top-down promotional campaigns, UGC offers nuanced, spontaneous, and often emotionally rich narratives about destinations, thereby influencing how potential travelers construct mental representations of a place. Aboalghanam, AlFraihat, and Tarabieh (2025) demonstrate that exposure to authentic UGC fosters more favorable destination image profiles by enhancing both knowledge and emotional resonance, increasing the likelihood that users will proceed from intention to actual visitation. Their findings underscore that UGC is not simply a supplementary information source, but a primary driver in the image formation and intention development process.

A critical aspect that determines the efficacy of UGC in shaping destination image is its perceived credibility. Research suggests that credibility and source expertise function as moderating variables in the relationship between UGC exposure and its influence on consumer perception (Casaló, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2018). When the content originates from experienced travelers, travel bloggers, or influencers who demonstrate familiarity with the destination, it tends to be perceived as more reliable and informative. These perceptions, in turn, enhance the weight of the information conveyed. Maruyama, Weber, and Pang (2021) argue that visual cues—such as scenic photography, well-edited travel videos, and immersive storytelling—can further bolster source credibility, especially when they align with aspirational or idealized images held by the target audience. Nguyen and Tong (2022) extend this logic through the lens of emotional contagion, showing that UGC which expresses joy, awe, or inspiration can elicit parallel emotions in viewers, thereby enhancing perceived destination desirability. This process leads to a stronger affective evaluation and ultimately contributes to more positive behavioral intentions toward the destination.

The role of visual UGC—particularly photographs and videos—is especially salient in shaping the aesthetic and experiential dimensions of a destination's image. Unlike professional promotional materials that often present sanitized or curated versions of a locale, visual UGC tends to highlight spontaneous, off-the-beaten-path, or serendipitous experiences (Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides, 2012). These authentic portrayals often resonate more deeply with viewers because they provide a multifaceted and unfiltered view of the destination, capturing aspects that formal marketing overlooks. Tussyadiah (2014) argues that this type of content stimulates a sense of discovery, which is closely tied to modern travel

motivations that prioritize unique, immersive, and locally grounded experiences. Furthermore, the participatory nature of UGC allows potential tourists to visualize themselves in those places, fostering identification and emotional investment. In effect, these visual materials do not just depict locations—they co-construct meaning around what it feels like to be there, thereby facilitating both cognitive learning and emotional alignment.

Beyond individual impressions, the cumulative impact of UGC across platforms and content types contributes to the development of robust destination brand identities. Repeated exposure to common themes within UGC—such as friendliness of locals, culinary appeal, or breathtaking landscapes—results in the reinforcement of specific associations within the audience’s memory. Chemin, Silva, and Vikou (2025) note that this repetition builds associative strength and enhances brand recall. Moreover, the convergence of similar messages across independent user accounts lends perceived consensus, which increases the persuasive impact due to the heuristic of social proof. This is particularly important in the tourism context, where the intangibility of the product (i.e., the travel experience) means that consumer decisions rely heavily on external cues. Thus, UGC serves a dual role: it both informs the initial perception and reinforces it through ongoing exposure, culminating in a more stable and favorable image of the destination.

The synergistic nature of UGC in shaping destination image reflects a broader paradigm shift in tourism marketing from monologic to dialogic communication. Instead of presenting a single, controlled narrative, destinations are now co-constructed by a multiplicity of voices that collectively influence how they are perceived. This multiplicity increases the inclusivity and relatability of the destination’s image, as potential travelers are more likely to find narratives that align with their interests, identities, or aspirations. The richness and variability embedded in UGC ensure that destination image formation is no longer a static or linear process but an evolving one, shaped by ongoing interactions between content producers, consumers, and the digital platforms that host these exchanges. Ultimately, the influence of UGC on destination image is not just substantial but structurally embedded in how contemporary travelers gather information, form impressions, and make decisions. As such, it demands both theoretical attention and strategic incorporation in tourism marketing practices.

2.3. UGC and Tourist Decision-Making

Tourist decision-making is a complex and multidimensional process shaped by an interplay of informational, emotional, and social factors. In recent years, user-generated content (UGC) has emerged as a central influence across these domains, redefining how potential travelers gather, process, and act upon travel-related information. On the informational dimension, UGC serves as a vast, decentralized repository of experiential knowledge. Travelers increasingly rely on firsthand accounts, ratings, and peer reviews to inform their choices, a practice that significantly reduces information asymmetry between tourism providers and consumers (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). Compared to traditional marketing materials, UGC offers a broader range of perspectives, including those from niche demographics or off-the-beaten-path destinations. This richness enhances the quality of travel decisions, allowing individuals to match destinations more precisely to their personal interests, budget, and travel expectations. Moreover, the timeliness and contextual specificity of UGC content—ranging from weather conditions to crowd levels—provide real-time utility that static brochures or guidebooks often lack.

Emotional engagement is another critical dimension in which UGC exerts its influence. Beyond conveying factual information, UGC taps into deeper psychological and affective mechanisms that

significantly shape travel intentions. Choe, Kim, and Fesenmaier (2021) found that emotionally evocative travel content—especially those that elicit feelings of awe, envy, or nostalgia—triggers stronger psychological attachment to the portrayed destination. This emotional resonance contributes to increased behavioral intent, as individuals feel more connected to the location even before visiting. Such findings align with the theory of parasocial interaction, wherein viewers develop one-sided, imagined relationships with UGC creators (Mariani et al., 2018). As content creators share personal narratives, viewers form perceived bonds with them, leading to a greater willingness to emulate their experiences. These parasocial dynamics help explain the growing influence of travel influencers, whose content not only informs but also inspires, encouraging viewers to replicate similar journeys and share their own versions, thus fueling the UGC cycle further.

The social dimension of decision-making is perhaps where UGC exerts its most immediate and visible impact. Digital engagement metrics such as likes, comments, and shares function as heuristic indicators of credibility and popularity. Ladhari and Michaud (2015) suggest that these social signals serve as shortcuts for users making rapid decisions, especially when confronted with a large volume of similar content. The visibility and engagement surrounding a piece of UGC can act as a persuasive nudge, increasing its influence regardless of the actual informational quality. Furthermore, algorithmic content amplification by platforms like Instagram and TikTok can magnify these effects by creating digital echo chambers, where certain destinations receive disproportionate attention and visibility (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). This results in a feedback loop in which popular destinations become even more prominent, while lesser-known locations struggle to gain traction. As a result, travelers' destination choices are shaped not only by the intrinsic appeal of the location but also by the social traction of the content associated with it.

The influence of UGC is particularly prominent during the pre-trip and post-trip phases of the travel cycle. In the pre-trip phase, UGC operates as both an inspiration engine and a decision-support tool. Users browse travel content to form initial destination preferences, assess itinerary options, and imagine potential experiences. The variety and authenticity of content help reduce uncertainty and narrow down choices in a way that aligns with the individual's lifestyle and values. This preparatory role of UGC is now deeply embedded in digital tourism behavior. Conversely, during the post-trip phase, travelers transition into content creators themselves, sharing their experiences via photos, videos, or written reflections. This act of sharing not only reinforces the traveler's own memory and satisfaction but also contributes to the body of knowledge that future tourists will consult (Munar, 2011). Thus, UGC creates a self-reinforcing cycle where consumption leads to production, and vice versa, making every tourist a potential marketer within a shared digital ecosystem.

Ultimately, the cyclical and participatory nature of UGC underscores its centrality in the contemporary travel decision-making ecosystem. Unlike traditional media, which operates in a unidirectional and time-bound manner, UGC thrives on continuous interaction, feedback, and evolution. Former tourists do not simply fade into the background once their trips end; they become active contributors to the collective imagery and knowledge pool surrounding a destination. This ongoing flow of content ensures that destination narratives remain current, multifaceted, and aligned with real-world visitor experiences. It also challenges marketers to relinquish control over messaging and instead embrace a more collaborative and adaptive model of branding. As tourists rely more heavily on socially validated, emotionally resonant, and context-rich UGC, its role is no longer supplementary—it is foundational to how destinations are perceived, chosen, and experienced. Therefore, understanding the

full spectrum of UGC's influence is imperative for both scholars and practitioners aiming to navigate and shape tourism behavior in the digital age.

2.4. Strategic Implications and Ethical Considerations

For tourism marketers, recognizing and leveraging the strategic value of user-generated content (UGC) has become indispensable in an era where digital interactions heavily shape consumer perceptions. Unlike traditional advertising, UGC is perceived as more authentic, trustworthy, and emotionally engaging, making it a potent tool in shaping destination image and influencing travel decisions. As Hudson and Thal (2013) argue, the integration of UGC into official marketing campaigns significantly enhances message resonance and consumer engagement. Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) have increasingly embraced this approach by curating traveler-generated photos, captions, and testimonials to enrich their branding initiatives. These consumer-sourced narratives provide a more organic and relatable dimension to marketing content, bridging the psychological gap between institutional messaging and individual traveler expectations. As a result, DMOs can benefit from the credibility and relatability of peer endorsements while extending their promotional reach through user networks.

However, this integration of UGC into marketing campaigns raises important ethical and legal considerations. One of the most pressing concerns involves copyright and consent. While marketers may find UGC readily available on public platforms, the legal right to reuse such content without explicit permission remains ambiguous in many jurisdictions. Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Formica, and O'Leary (2006) note that many DMOs employ traveler content without fully securing informed consent, assuming that public visibility equates to usage rights. This assumption not only jeopardizes legal compliance but also raises moral questions regarding the appropriation of personal narratives for commercial gain. Sigala (2016) emphasizes that tourists may be unaware that their shared content is being appropriated, edited, and disseminated by third parties, potentially violating their expectations of privacy and authorship. In response, ethical content governance protocols—such as attribution standards, opt-in agreements, and clear usage disclosures—must be embedded into digital marketing strategies to ensure respect for creator rights and maintain consumer trust.

Beyond the issue of consent, UGC also bears the risk of reinforcing problematic narratives, such as cultural stereotypes or over-tourism in ecologically sensitive areas. As UGC tends to highlight popular attractions, trending photo spots, or curated luxury experiences, it can unintentionally promote overcrowding, degrade heritage sites, and marginalize less visible cultural assets. Goodwin (2017) warns that the viral nature of UGC can exacerbate unsustainable tourism patterns, especially when content emphasizes consumption over conservation or exoticism over cultural respect. The allure of visually striking yet vulnerable destinations—such as coral reefs, historic temples, or mountainous villages—can quickly overwhelm local infrastructures when amplified by algorithmic visibility and influencer reach. Consequently, responsible digital tourism marketing must move beyond the aesthetics of engagement to consider the ecological and sociocultural implications of the content it promotes. Guidelines for ethical content amplification should prioritize sustainable practices, diversity, and long-term community well-being.

Authenticity, a key advantage of UGC, can also present a paradox. While genuine traveler accounts can engender trust and relatability, the line between authentic and manipulated content is increasingly blurred. Zhang and Yang (2022) highlight the growing prevalence of fake reviews, paid

influencer content, and deceptive promotional tactics that masquerade as organic UGC. Such practices not only distort consumer perceptions but also undermine the credibility of UGC as a whole. When audiences discover that content they believed to be impartial was actually sponsored or staged, trust in the platform and brand erodes significantly. Moreover, algorithmic prioritization of engagement-driven content over accuracy or inclusivity can further distort representational balance, favoring dramatized or idealized portrayals over nuanced or critical ones. To mitigate these risks, tourism marketers must implement transparent policies regarding sponsorship disclosure, algorithmic ethics, and authenticity verification. Doing so not only safeguards brand integrity but also aligns marketing practices with the evolving expectations of digitally literate consumers.

Another critical challenge facing UGC in tourism marketing is the lack of inclusive representation. A growing body of research has noted that dominant visual narratives often feature able-bodied, affluent, and predominantly Western tourists, while excluding diverse voices related to ethnicity, ability, gender identity, age, and socioeconomic status (Bianchi & Stephenson, 2014). This skewed representation reinforces hegemonic travel ideals and narrows the aspirational horizon for underrepresented groups. In effect, the global travel discourse becomes homogenized, marginalizing cultural nuances and alternative travel experiences. Promoting a more equitable and pluralistic digital tourism landscape requires intentional efforts to diversify not only who is visible in travel content but also who is empowered to create it. This includes supporting content creation from local communities, minority travelers, and non-Western perspectives. Inclusive digital storytelling not only enriches the global tourism narrative but also enables destinations to appeal to broader audiences in ways that are respectful, accurate, and reflective of real-world diversity. Ultimately, the ethical curation and governance of UGC represent both a challenge and an opportunity: when handled responsibly, UGC can democratize travel marketing and foster more sustainable and inclusive tourism ecosystems.

Based on the synthesis of the literature, several hypotheses can be proposed to empirically test the relationship between UGC and tourism marketing outcomes in a descriptive quantitative framework:

- H1: User-generated content positively influences the formation of destination image.
- H2: The perceived authenticity of UGC significantly affects tourists' behavioral intention to visit a destination.
- H3: Emotional engagement with UGC mediates the relationship between UGC exposure and destination loyalty.
- H4: The perceived credibility of UGC moderates the effect of content on tourist decision-making.
- H5: The integration of UGC in official tourism marketing strategies enhances overall brand equity.

These hypotheses can guide future quantitative studies aiming to model the influence of UGC on various stages of the tourism decision-making process, allowing both scholars and practitioners to better harness the potential of digital co-creation in travel marketing.

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