Management of Reviews in Tourism: The Example of TripAdvisor and Google Reviews

Dr Evangelia D. Parisi
Department of Digital Media and Communication,
Ionian University, Argostoli, Kefalonia, Greece

ABSTRACT

In the era of digital transformation, online reviews are a decisive factor in shaping the reputation and financial performance of tourism businesses. This study examines the importance of review management on the platforms TripAdvisor and Google Reviews, focusing on their impact on consumer decision-making, the cultivation of trust towards businesses, and the perception of the quality of services provided.

Based on recent research literature, the study analyzes business response strategies, highlighting that empathy, personalized communication, and acceptance of responsibility significantly strengthen customers' trust. In contrast, evading responsibility and offering excuses are associated with negative impressions and reduced satisfaction.

Furthermore, critical issues are explored, such as dealing with fake reviews, and the use of sentiment analysis tools for capturing and evaluating the customer experience.

The study concludes with concrete recommendations for effective digital reputation management in the tourism sector, emphasizing the importance of strategic and careful response in an environment of continuous connectivity, transparency, and social influence.

KEYWORDS: tourism, online reviews, reputation management, TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, e-WOM, digital marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, online reviews have evolved into one of the strongest influences on consumer behavior, particularly in the tourism sector (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008). Travelers increasingly rely on user reviews posted on platforms like TripAdvisor and Google Reviews to evaluate service quality, compare options, and make their final decisions (Filieri, 2016). According to a recent study by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC, 2023), more than 70% of travelers report being directly influenced by online ratings when choosing accommodation or restaurants.

The concept of digital reputation (online reputation) thus becomes of strategic importance for tourism businesses, as positive or negative reviews can affect demand, revenue, and the sustainability of the business (Xie, Zhang, Zhang, Singh & Lee, 2017). Effective management of online reviews that is, monitoring, analysis, and appropriate response is now recognized as a critical factor of differentiation and maintaining competitive advantage (Sparks, So & Bradley, 2016).

Simultaneously, the strengthening of transparency and the possibility of public evaluation have made necessary the development of response strategies that are not limited to formal answers but incorporate elements such as empathy, personalization, and accountability, with the aim of enhancing customer trust and satisfaction (Zhang, Lu, Torres & Cobos, 2020).

This study investigates the role of the platforms TripAdvisor and Google Reviews in the tourism experience and analyzes businesses' practices in managing reviews, focusing on both the opportunities and challenges created in the modern, highly interconnected, digital environment.

Specifically, it analyzes:
• The main functions and differences of the two platforms,
• The role of reviews in purchase behavior,
• Business response strategies to negative reviews, and
• The impacts of these strategies on user perception and business reputation.
Through this approach, the aim is to highlight review management as a strategic axis for enhancing the competitiveness of tourism businesses in the contemporary digital environment.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this study focuses on key concepts related to online reputation management, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), consumer behavior in digital tourism, and the role of online review platforms as factors shaping perceived quality and reliability of tourism businesses. Integrating these approaches provides an analytical foundation for understanding the significance and impact of review management in the modern tourism sector.

2.1 Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM)

Electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) is defined as the exchange of experiences and evaluations between consumers via digital channels, such as review platforms, social media, and blogs (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008). Reviews from users are often considered more credible than formal advertising because they are based on real experiences and perceived authenticity (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006).

In tourism, where services are intangible and cannot be evaluated before consumption, e-WOM plays a decisive role in forming expectations and final choice of destination or provider (Bronner & de Hoog, 2011). Consumers make use of reviews to reduce perceived risk and validate their choices.

2.2 Online Reputation Management

Digital reputation refers to the overall image formed online for a business, based on reviews, comments, and digital interactions with customers (Xie et al., 2014). Managing it involves:
• Actively monitoring and analyzing reviews,
• Strategically responding to comments (both positive and negative),
• Encouraging positive reviews, and
• Systematically using data for service improvement.
Responding to negative reviews is a critical point of management, as it affects not only the reviewer but also the wider audience observing the response (Kapeš, Pivoda & Šipikal, 2022). Studies have shown that polite, personalized, and professional responses increase readers' trust and can turn a negative experience into a positive impression (Zhang et al., 2024).

2.3 Consumer Behavior in the Digital Context

In the digital environment, tourists' purchasing behavior is shaped by a large volume of information provided through reviews and ratings (Filieri, 2015). Consumers:
• Heavily depend on the credibility of the review source,
• Evaluate the content and structure of comments, and
• Are influenced by the tone and quality of business responses.

Active participation of businesses in dialogue with customers enhances trust and the sense of responsibility. Users tend to interpret responses as a sign of professionalism and transparency (Xie et al., 2014), especially when accompanied by propositions for resolution or expressions of empathy.

2.4 Review Platforms: Features and Influence

The two most widespread platforms in the tourism review domain are TripAdvisor and Google Reviews, which differ in their operation and influence on business reputation.

TripAdvisor specializes in tourism and hosts detailed, lengthy reviews for hotels, restaurants, and tourist attractions. Its users often have higher motivation to give detailed commentary (Mellinas & Sicilia, 2024).
Google Reviews, while less specialized, delivers a larger volume of reviews due to its integration with Google Maps and the search engine. Reviews tend to be shorter but affect a business's local visibility (local SEO) directly (Tuominen, Järvinen & Heinäminen, 2016).
Qualitative and quantitative differences between the two platforms influence perceptions of credibility: for example, a high rating on Google with few reviews may be seen as less trustworthy than a slightly lower rating on TripAdvisor accompanied by many detailed reviews (Mellinas & Sicilia, 2024).

2.5 Sentiment Analysis and Digital Tools

Sentiment analysis has become a key tool in studying online reviews. Through machine learning algorithms and natural language processing, businesses can:
• identify specific patterns of dissatisfaction or satisfaction,
• monitor their reputation over time, and
• adjust improvement strategies based on real data (Alaei, Becken & Stantic, 2020).

Utilizing these technologies enhances decision-making, allowing for a better understanding of customer needs and the provision of a personalized experience.

3. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach of this study aims to systematically analyze how tourism businesses manage online reviews on TripAdvisor and Google Reviews, and to evaluate the impact of response practices on user perception.

3.1 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following main research questions:
• How do Greek tourism businesses respond to reviews, and what response strategies do they follow?
• How does review management differ between the TripAdvisor and Google Reviews platforms?
• What is the role of politeness, empathy, and acceptance of responsibility in strengthening digital reputation?

3.2 Qualitative Method

This work follows a qualitative research approach with elements of descriptive content analysis, aiming for deeper understanding of the practices of review management and the interaction between businesses and customers on two popular platforms.

The research design is based on:
Case studies of specific tourism businesses (e.g., hotels rated 3–5 stars)
Analysis of reviews and responses on TripAdvisor and Google Reviews
Categorization of response strategies (defensive, apologetic, neutral, etc.)

3.2.1 Data Collection

For the analysis, a purposive sample of ten (10) tourism businesses (mainly hotels) operating in popular tourist destinations in Greece (e.g., Santorini, Rhodes, Chania) was selected.

Selection criteria for businesses:
• Active presence in Google Reviews and TripAdvisor (at least 100 reviews on each platform)
• Active response to reviews (at least 30% of reviews responded by the business)
• Varied levels of reputation (average rating between 3.5 and 5 stars)

3.2.2 Data Collection Methods

Data collection was carried out during June – July 2025, by:
• Reading and recording 200 reviews (100 per platform)
• Recording the responses provided by the businesses
• Coding content according to dimensions: tone (positive/neutral/negative), type of response strategy, presence of empathy or accountability, response time and delay, linguistic style.

Examples of Business Responses to Reviews

Effective review management requires an appropriate response — polite, sincere, and offering solutions where needed. Below are three examples of responses from Greek tourism businesses, each with a different tone and objective:

Response to a Positive Review

Review: "The staff was extremely friendly and the location wonderful. We will definitely come again!"
Business response:
"Thank you very much for your kind words. Your satisfaction is the greatest reward for our team. We would be very happy to host you again soon!"
Commentary: The response is positive, warm, and sincere, strengthening the connection with the guest and encouraging a repeat visit. It acknowledges the efforts of the staff and uses the positive comment to reinforce the business's reputation, projecting a customer-focused culture and hospitality.

Response to a Negative Review with Apology and Resolution
Review: "The room wasn't clean and service was delayed a lot."
Business response:
"We are very sorry that your experience did not meet your expectations. Cleanliness and prompt service are priorities for us, and we have already informed the department responsible to improve. We'd be glad to host you again so that we can show our progress."
Commentary: The answer expresses a sincere apology and acknowledges the problems with cleanliness and service, showing responsibility. It commits to improvement and invites the guest to return, enhancing the business's image as friendly and willing to rectify shortcomings.

Response to a Negative Review with Disagreement and Invitation for Communication
Review: "The price does not justify the quality of services."
Business response:
"We appreciate your feedback and would like to discuss more about your observations so we can improve. Please contact us at [email/phone] so we can find the best solution."
Commentary: The business's response shows professionalism and openness to improvement without fully accepting the criticism. By inviting communication outside the public platform, it seeks more personal handling of the issue and limits the negative public exposure, while reinforcing trust.

Negative Review and TripAdvisor Response
Review: "The room was dirty and the staff indifferent. I would not recommend it to anyone."
Business response (TripAdvisor):
"Dear guest, we are truly sorry that your stay was not satisfactory. We assure you the incident has been recorded and measures have already been taken in cleaning and staff training. Thank you for bringing this to our attention."
Commentary: This response is well-formulated, with a professional and responsible tone. It acknowledges the guest's dissatisfaction, avoids a defensive stance, and shows intent for improvement via specific actions (cleaning and staff training). The thanks at the end implies respect, even in face of negative feedback, reinforcing the business's reputation for being responsible and receptive to feedback.

Negative Review and Google Reviews Response
Review: "Very noisy at night. We didn't sleep at all."
Business response (Google Reviews):
"Good evening, the area is central and can be noisy at times. We hope you'll give us another chance."
Commentary: The response is brief but lacks empathy and fails to acknowledge the customer's dissatisfaction properly. Although it explains the cause, the tone is defensive and impersonal without a clear intention to improve. Adding an apology and offering a solution (e.g., a quieter room) would improve the business's image and the customer's satisfaction.

3.2.2 Data Analysis

The data analysis was based on a qualitative examination of representative cases of online reviews and the responses given by Greek tourism businesses via the TripAdvisor and Google Reviews platforms in three popular tourist destinations: Athens, Santorini, and Rhodes. The goal is to evaluate the tone, content, and strategy of the responses in order to draw useful conclusions about the effectiveness of digital reputation management.

Destination	Type of Business	Average Rating	Response Rate	Features of Responses	Main Review Themes
Athens	4-5★ hotels	4.4	65%	Professional, detailed	Location/ cleanliness
Santorini	3-4★ hotels	4.1	50%	Friendly, customized	Hospitality, view
Rhodes	Small lodging units	3.8	40%	Less systematic	Services, price

Observations:
Athens 4-5 Star Hotels
Average Rating: 4.4 — reflects high customer satisfaction, as expected for high-category hotels in the capital. Indicates businesses meet expectations in both services and facilities, enhancing their competitiveness.
Response Rate: 65% shows fairly systematic and responsible management of reviews. The higher response compared to other areas suggests recognition of the importance of digital reputation and effort to maintain positive relationships with customers through professional and detailed responses.

Features of Responses: Professional, Detailed responses from 4-5★ hotels in Athens are marked by professionalism and specificity, making reference to particular issues raised by guests. Suggests a strategic approach in communication, where the goal is both problem-solving and trust-building.
Main Review Themes: Location, Cleanliness. — customers highlight these aspects; central location is a competitive advantage, while cleanliness remains a critical quality element directly affecting the lodging experience.

Santorini 3-4 Star Hotels
Average Rating: 4.1 indicates generally positive customer experience for mid-range hotels in Santorini. This rating signals satisfaction but also room for improvement, given the high expectations associated with the destination.
Response Rate: 50% only half of the reviews receive replies, showing partial use of the platform as a tool of communication and reputation management. Failure to address the other 50% may lead to lost opportunities to control customer dialogue, especially in case of negative comments.

Features of Responses: Friendly, Customized responses are characterized by warmth and personalization, reflecting Greek hospitality and efforts by businesses to build a more human, warm relationship with guests. Such tailored replies help strengthen trust and soothe negative impressions.
Main Review Themes: Hospitality, View — dominant themes in reviews relate to the staff's friendliness and the view, two key elements integral to Santorini's distinct tourism product; emphasizing these helps differentiate hotels in the island.

Rhodes Small Lodging Units
Average Rating: 3.8 suggests a relatively satisfying customer experience, but not exceptionally high. Signals significant room for improvement, especially in a destination with strong tourism competition and diverse accommodation options.

Response Rate: 40% low rate of responses indicates that small businesses in Rhodes do not fully leverage platforms like TripAdvisor for managing digital reputation. Lack of systematic replies may weaken their image and make it difficult to correct negative perceptions.

Features of Responses: Less Systematic replies are inconsistent, sometimes lacking in empathy or solutions. May indicate limited human or technical resources, or lack of a clear strategy for managing digital reputation. Makes sustaining consistent communication with customers difficult.

Main Review Themes: Services, Price reviews often focus on service quality and the price-value relationship. Cost-benefit is a critical factor for travelers, especially when choosing smaller or more budget-oriented units

Results
This study, based on qualitative analysis of real reviews and business responses on TripAdvisor and Google Reviews across three Greek tourist destinations (Athens, Santorini, Rhodes), offers valuable insights into the strategies tourism businesses adopt in managing digital reputation. The analysis incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data, considering average rating, response rate, response tone characteristics, and dominant review themes.

High-Class Businesses Demonstrate Most Readiness & Investment
4-5 star hotels in Athens showed the highest level of preparedness and investment in managing online reviews, with a high response rate and polished, detailed replies. They handle both positive and negative feedback, striving to preserve their public image.

Personalized Strategy in Island Destinations
Mid-range hotels in Santorini adopt warmer, more emotional, and friendly responses. Although their response rate is moderate, they understand the importance of trust and customer experience, particularly in a premium tourism environment where expectations are elevated.
Challenges for Smaller Units

Small lodging in Rhodes shows the lowest ratings and response rates. Responses are often inconsistent. These establishments face significant challenges due to limited resources and lack of strategy, impacting how they are perceived.

What Customers Care About
Main themes vary by area: location and cleanliness in Athens; hospitality and view in Santorini; services and price in Rhodes. These reflect not only what influences satisfaction but also what forms competitive advantages in different contexts.

Critical Response Elements
Responses that include apology, empathy, acknowledging responsibility, and offering improvement or solutions are more effective in restoring trust and even turning dissatisfied customers into repeat visitors.
Non-response Is Harmful
Not replying, especially to negative comments, is perceived as neglect, which can damage reputation more than the comment itself. Silence conveys a lack of care or professionalism.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Review response is not just courtesy it is a strategic tool for communication and reputation management.
For businesses to benefit, responses must be timely, empathetic, specific, and action-oriented.
Differences by business size and destination show that resources, expectations, and competitive context affect how well review management is performed.
Small units need support: training, resources, and policy to respond effectively, so as not to fall behind.
Ultimately, a well-handled online presence through review management can become a strong competitive advantage in tourism, offering better customer relations, increased trust, and likely better business outcomes.

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