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Exploring the effectiveness of emotional and rational user-generated contents in digital tourism platforms

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Abstract
User-generated content (UGC) is one of the most important notions that influences tourists' decision-making. However, the nature of UGC is still underexplored in the literature. The present study aimed to examine the impact of two different forms of UGC (i.e., emotional and rational) on tourists' perceived values and their subsequent behavioural responses. Using the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model, the two forms of UGC were conceptualised as informational stimuli, while tourists' overall value assessment (i.e., perceived values, including emotional, functional, relational, and entitativity values) of the utility of tourism activities in the tourism platform were conceptualised as organisms. Tourists' behavioural responses were demonstrated by impulse buying and future purchase intention. Data from 538 respondents were collected using online survey and analysed using PLS-SEM. The results revealed that both emotional and rational UGC have a significant impact on tourists' perceived values, which in turn strengthen impulse buying and future purchase intention. This study not only contributes to the tourism marketing literature by empirically examining the impacts of two forms of UGC on tourists' organisms and responses, but also provides meaningful insights for tourism marketers to facilitate UGC to drive tourists' perceived values and their subsequent behaviour.

Keywords
Tourism platforms, emotional, emotional value, functional value, impulse buying, purchase intention, rational, relational value, user-generated content

Introduction

The advancement of digital technologies continues to change the way tourists search for travel information (Assaker et al., 2020; Marine-Roig and Clavé, 2015; Ukpabi and Karjaluoto, 2018). Evidently, they rely on user-generated content (UGC) available on digital platforms, such as tourist generated messages on Trip-Advisor, C-Trip, and Expedia, in their decision-making processes (Van der Zee and Bertocchi, 2018). It is

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reported that more than 3.8 billion active social media users are engaged in reading UGC to support their decision-making (Smart Insight, 2020). In the tourism context, it is estimated that more than 70% of tourists refer to UGC to inform their trip planning (TripAdvisor, 2018). Within the digital platforms, tourists are no longer passive receivers of travel information but are empowered to share opinions and collaborate with others (Ukpabi and Karjaluoto, 2018). For example, they are increasingly given ability to comment, modify, and share content, including descriptions, images, and videos of tourist destinations (Kim et al., 2012). The characteristics of openness, discussion, participation, and sharing amongst tourists have contributed to the perceived credibility of UGC and shaped tourists' behaviours.

With the increasing utilisation of UGC, tourism marketers have responded by allocating resources to facilitate two-way communication with different content characteristics (e.g., topic, component and length of UGC) in order to drive tourists' intention to share their views, opinions, and tourism experiences (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020; Marchiori and Cantoni, 2015; Schreiner et al., 2019). Tourists are thus exposed to UGC with different message appeal, including emotional description of tourism activities and functional description of information as well as features of events and hospitality services (Sotiriadis, 2017; Wang et al., 2017). The adoption of emotional and functional UGC in consumers' decision-making processes varies by product category and consumers' motives (Swani et al., 2017). While emotional UGC has been found to be more useful for hedonic products, functional UGC are more for utilitarian products (Lee and Hong, 2016; Lwin et al., 2014). In the similar vein, tourists often depend on both practical information and emotional sharing as the key ingredients in their trip-planning process (Wang et al., 2017). However, the roles of emotional and functional UGC in shaping tourists' positive emotions and responses continue to be a subject of interest that requires further investigations (Marine-Roig and Clavé, 2015).

Linked with UGC are tourists' perceived values, comprising of emotional, functional, relational, and entitativity values (Carlson et al., 2019a). Tourists' perceived value is conceptualised as tourists' overall value assessment of the utility of tourism platforms (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001), such as information obtained from social-media platforms (Kumar and Reinartz, 2016) and knowledge obtained from browsing and interaction with like-minded peers (Lin and Kuo, 2016). Although prior studies found that tourist decisions are generally based on emotional, functional, hedonic, social, relational, and entitativity values (Carlson et al., 2015, 2019a), they have been limited to the interactivity of social-media brand pages (Carlson et al., 2018), customer participation (Carlson et al., 2019a), social interaction (Zhang et al., 2017), and the content quality of UGCs (Mohammad et al., 2020). Arguably, tourists' perceived value is driven by information and experience obtained from various sources, including UGC available on digital tourism platforms (Heinonen et al., 2018) as well as two-way interaction via UGC on digital tourism platforms (Carlson et al., 2018). As such, there is a need to explore the interplays between the forms of UGC, perceived values and the subsequent behaviour, including immediate purchase and future purchase intention (Loureiro et al., 2019; Schreiner et al., 2019).

The study will make several contributions to the tourism literature. First, the study empirically tests a research framework that explores how rational and emotional UGC drives tourists' perceived value on digital tourism platforms, including emotional, functional, relational, and entitativity values. Second, the study examines the impact of perceived value on tourists' immediate behavioural response, as reflected by their impulse buying intention and their future purchase intention. Third, the study enhances the knowledge of consumer-brand interaction in a tourism and hospitality context by examining a comprehensive framework presenting how UGC contents serve as stimuli to drive tourists' perceived values as internal processing organism, and subsequent impact on behavioural responses. As such it extends the knowledge and application of the SOR model to understand the collective influences of rational and emotional UGC on tourists' perceived values and how they drive subsequent behavioural responses in digital tourism platforms.

Literature review

The stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model

The stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model posits that various aspects of stimulus influence

individual internal states, which in turn drive behavioural responses (Jacoby, 2002). Applied within tourism marketing research, SOR can be conceptualised as a structure that exerts an external stimulus on tourists (S), the internal processing organism reacting to that external stimulus (O), and the subsequent behavioural response (R). The external stimulus may include informational inputs that can affect tourists' cognitive understanding, such as online advertisement, images, and electronic word-of-mouth (EWOM) available on social-media platforms (Kamboj et al., 2018). The organism may include tourists' emotional states, as manifested by their perceptions and evaluations, such as pleasure, enjoyment, and satisfaction (Mohammad et al., 2020). Response may be conceptualised as the tourists' behavioural intention, as manifested by the intention to search, recommend, and the immediate or future purchase behaviour (Kim and Johnson, 2016). To date, tourism and hospitality research has demonstrated the applicability of the SOR model in examining how attributes of digital tourism platforms impact on tourists' emotions and the intention to visit and recommend (Bigne et al., 2020; Chang et al., 2019). The SOR model was employed because it provides the structural underpinning for the examination of the impact of UGC on tourism platforms as external stimulus, evoking the emotional state of tourists, and subsequently influencing tourists' behavioural responses.

As UGC on tourism platforms comprises of both emotional and informational content, the study posits that the two play considerable roles in driving tourists' perceptions of value and consequently drives tourist's behaviour such as impulse buying and future purchase intention.

UGC as external stimulus

UGC refers to any form of publicly available content created by internet users which is not controlled by marketers, such as texts, comments, ratings, pictures, and videos (Cox et al., 2009). In particular, UGC can be developed and shared by users or independent opinion leaders who are not sponsored by businesses, and hence is often seen as a credible and trustworthy source (Cheung et al., 2020a). Compared to traditional communication channels, UGC is deemed to be more useful in facilitating interactions between users in online communities, which in turn drives consumers' perceived value (Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2016). The two forms of UGC are discussed below.

Emotional UGC. Emotional appeal refers to feeling-based messages aroused by products and services which orientate consumers' perceptions (Wang et al., 2017; Wu and Wang, 2011). It is generally acknowledged that emotional message appeal is effective in facilitating consumers' emotional connection with products, especially for products which are highly experiential and hedonic in nature (Lwin et al., 2014). Applying the concept of emotional appeal in tourism, Wang et al. (2017) conceptualised emotional UGC as positive content with emotional expressions created by internet users that drives a positive atmosphere, feelings, and affections for, products and services. In tourism, emotional UGC includes the sharing of experiences, positive feelings about destinations, and the satisfaction level in hospitality services, and is manifested by the sharing of images, stories, and graphics (Marchiori and Cantoni, 2015; Melumad et al., 2019). Arguably, emotional UGC is entertaining and appealing, with attractive graphics, emojis, and videos (Shao, 2009), attracting tourists' attention, and ultimately driving positive behavioural intentions towards the services and/or destinations (Wang et al., 2017). Prior studies have posited the importance of emotional UGC in evoking positive affections for tourism and hospitality services (Wang et al., 2017) and affecting tourists' decision-making (Ayeh et al., 2013).

Rational UGC. In contrast to emotional UGC, rational appeal refers to functional information, including product and services attributes based on consumers' perceived benefits (Wu and Wang, 2011). Rational appeal plays a role in driving positive attitudes towards utilitarian products based on detailed and practical information (Lee and Hong, 2016; Swani et al., 2017). Wang et al. (2017) applied rational appeal to digital tourism platforms, conceptualising rational UGC as practical information created by internet users that share the functions, values, attributes, and specifications of products and services. Rational UGC focuses on the effectiveness of products and services, which is objective and concrete, based on information or application experiences (Wu and Wang, 2011). In tourism, rational UGC may include descriptions of tourism and hospitality services (Wang et al., 2017), such as opening

hours, capacity, and price. It may highlight theme parks and destinations festivals or events, in addition to services and special offers offered by hotels (Lu and Stepchenkova, 2015; Marine-Roig and Clavé, 2015).

Tourists' value perceived as an organism

Customer value theory posits that the consumers' shopping decision is based on multiple values that derived from their experience and interaction with a product and/or service (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). A set of consumption values contributes to the formation of consumer choice and each value is independent notion that makes differential contributions in any given choice situation (Sheth et al., 1991). Customer perceived value is widely used to explain why consumers choose one product or service over another. Evidently, the concept has been empirical tested in different contexts such as theme parks (Jin et al., 2015), food and beverages (Yeap et al., 2019), and social media brand page (Shi et al., 2016). Therefore, this study employs customer value theory to explain tourists' shopping intentions and defines tourists' perceived value as a set of relativistic preferences characterising tourists' experience of interacting with digital tourism platform (Bigne et al., 2020). In this sense, we argue that tourists make their travel decisions after considering multiple values that generated by the digital tourism platform. Integrating with S-O-R framework, tourists' perceived value is conceptualised as an organism formulated via interaction with the external stimulus and manifested by tourists' beliefs and perceptions (Kim et al., 2020; Lin and Kuo, 2016).

Scholars agree that perceived value is a multidimensional construct, consisting of emotional, functional, hedonic, social, and convenience (Carlson et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2012; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). In tourism, emotional, functional, relational, and entitativity value have been of interest (Carlson et al., 2019a; Moliner et al., 2007) and linked to information obtained from interaction amongst consumers via social-media platforms (Mohammad et al., 2020). Digital tourism platforms have provided opportunities for interactions among tourists. Subsequently, this enables tourists to enhance their knowledge of destinations and evoke positive emotions towards tourism and hospitality services through the effect of UGC (Kim and Johnson, 2016; Wang et al., 2017). Thus, tourist' perceived value, including emotional, functional, relational, and entitativity values are discussed in the following sections.

Functional value. Functional value refers to rational consideration made by consumers that indicates the quality of products and services (Carlson et al., 2015) and is manifested by the practical needs of consumers being satisfied (Zhang et al., 2017). Consumers' functional value can be strengthened by the quality improvement of products and services, such as convenience, availability of services, and information (Moliner et al., 2007). Tourism marketers attempt to create and manage digital tourism platforms, communicating useful information, such as price, details, and availability of hospitality services, aiming to provide information convenience (Mohammad et al., 2020). Digital platforms also serve as channels for tourists to interact with each other, helping tourists to share useful information and practical experience about destinations and hospitality services (Cheung et al., 2020c). Thus, this study conceptualises functional value as the utility obtained by tourists from the digital tourism platforms to gain practical and helpful information about destinations and hospitality services.

Emotional value. Emotional value relates to positive feelings, such as enjoyment, pleasure, and relaxation experienced when using products or services (Kim et al., 2012). Tourists' emotional value is embedded in consumption experience obtained from hospitality services, as well as the level of satisfaction within the information acquisition process (Kim et al., 2020; Lin and Kuo, 2016). Tourists' emotional value is positively associated with fun and enjoyment obtained from the search for information about destinations and hospitality services, along with interaction with like-minded peers on tourism topics (Carlson et al., 2015). This study conceptualises emotional value as the benefits and excitement gained by tourists from digital tourism platforms that evoke affection during the information searching process.

Relational value. Relational value is the connection and relationship derived by consumers from interactions with firms or like-minded peers (Taheri et al., 2017). Relational value involves interactions between consumers which facilitate ongoing and sustainable relationships, as manifested by relevant information, rapid responses, and real-time interactions (Carlson

et al., 2015; Dolan et al., 2019). Tourists' relational value is argued to be linked to interactions with digital tourism platforms and is strengthened when ongoing relationships are created. These relationships are enhanced by information sharing in real-time interactions with like-minded peers, such as the sharing of breaking news, updated information of festivals and dining experiences (Buhalis and Sinarta, 2019). Relational value is therefore conceptualised in this study as the benefits derived by tourists from interactions with like-minded peers on digital platforms that create ongoing and sustainable relational experiences.

Entitativity value. Entitativity value refers to an individual's belongingness to a digital platform and is measured by the perceptions of a group of individuals that can be described as a single entity (Vock et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2018). In general, the magnitude of entitativity value depends on the quality and frequency of interaction between members (Carlson et al., 2018). Entitativity value is strong when individuals with similar interests' bond together to achieve similar objectives on an ongoing basis (Lickel et al., 2000), and thus become bound by similar goals and behaviours (Wang et al., 2013). Within a digital tourism platform, entitativity value is driven by interactions between tourists with interrelated outcomes. (Davis et al., 2014). Examples include experience exchange related to destinations, tourism planning discussions, and problem solving. Thus, entitativity value is conceptualised as the degree of commonality between individuals and is manifested by common goals and similarity of interests (Carlson et al., 2018).

Tourists' behavioural responses

Tourists' behaviours are shaped by positive emotions and value, justifying the consideration of future purchase intention and impulse buying behaviour, as behavioural responses that are evoked by an emotional organism (Cheung et al., 2020d; Kim and Johnson, 2016).

Future purchase intention. Future purchase intention reflects a tourists' positive behavioural intention to purchase a product or service in the future (Sharifi, 2014). It represents a favourable action resulting from positive value and perception, such as pleasure, joy, and love (Kim and Johnson, 2016). Empirical research confirms that tourists' cognitive and emotional engagement with particular products and services have played a considerable role in shaping behavioural intentions (Bilro et al., 2018), creating a positive relationship between emotions and purchase intention (Kim and Lennon, 2013). Hence, when tourists are exposed to positive information, they may become engaged with hospitality services of interest and be motivated place priority on those services in their decision-making, resulting in a future purchase intention (Llopis-Amorós et al., 2019).

Impulse buying. Impulse buying refers to immediate purchasing behaviour based on sudden desires, with limited consideration of information and alternatives (Rook, 1987). Scholars have conceptualised impulse buying as an instinct purchase behaviour based on positive emotions, such as pleasure and excitement (Chan et al., 2017; Pornpitakpan et al., 2017; Rook and Gardner, 1993). The differences between purchase intention and impulse buying has been confirmed and represents either planned buying behaviour after consideration or unreflective buying behaviour with a short decision-making time (Chan et al., 2017).

Given impulse buying is aroused by uncontrolled, irresistible and immediate emotional needs, it is regarded as one of the most important outcomes of marketing activities. Empirical studies of the antecedents of impulse buying had been undertaken in retail (Lim et al. 2020), social-media marketing (Kim and Johnson, 2016), and tourism contexts (Rezaei et al., 2016). Scholars affirm that impulse buying can be attributed to pleasure and excitement driven by changes in perceived values (Chan et al., 2017; Wu and Lee, 2016), is associated with emotions resulting from environmental stimulus, such as service quality (Pornpitakpan and Han, 2013), sensory experiences (Park et al., 2012), and positive referrals (Kim and Johnson, 2016). Applied in tourism context, tourists' impulse buying behaviours are associated with their perceived value of tourism services and destinations (Li et al., 2015). Accordingly, impulse buying is regarded as a behavioural outcome of positive emotions being intricately linked with consumers' perceived value. Therefore, the study posits that tourists' impulse buying behaviour is linked with perceived value, which is driven by environment stimulus, such as UGC. As such, a nomological network is created and will be elaborated in the following discussion.

Hypotheses development

Emotional UGC and tourists' value

Emotional messages play considerable roles in driving tourists' value, as manifested by utilitarian benefits, enjoyment, relational experience, and entitativity value. Tourists may experience enjoyment when reading UGC messages with positive atmosphere, which drives positive emotions and feelings about the featured destinations and hospitality services (Kim and Fesenmaier, 2017; Sotiriadis and Van Zyl, 2013; Wood, 2019). UGC messages that share hedonic experiences, images and stories about destinations, is crucial for tourists to derive emotional value (Liu et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2017). As such, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: Emotional UGC is positively related to tourists' emotional value.

Emotional UGC may also provide useful experiences for tourists, which in turn may strengthen functional value. Tourists may obtain utilitarian value through reading emotional UGC messages with videos and stories (Liu et al., 2019; Sotiriadis, 2017; Wang and Alasuutari, 2017). Prior studies have revealed that emotional messages on digital platforms are useful for tourists to evaluate the quality of services before purchasing (Sotiriadis and Van Zyl, 2013; Wang et al., 2017). As such, the study posits the following hypothesis:

H2: Emotional UGC is positively related to tourists' functional value.

Emotional sharing is deemed to be influential in relationship building amongst individuals. During interactions on digital platforms, tourists obtain knowledge about destinations, gaining appurtenance value (e.g., special offers and useful guidance) from emotional UGC, which supports ongoing relationships (Dolan et al., 2019; Munar and Jacobsen, 2014). Prior studies have demonstrated the importance of emotional messages in strengthening tourists' relational experience. For example, Kim et al. (2012) found that visual UGC messages, such as pictures and GIFs, play a role in strengthening relationships between consumers and brands. Similarly, Carlson et al. (2019a) found that emotional sharing between consumers was influential in driving relational value. Cheung et al. (2020b) also found that entertaining messages with images and videos help to strengthen relationships between consumers and brands. Based on the literature, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: Emotional UGC is positively related to tourists' relational value.

Emotional sharing is deemed to be beneficial for community members, especially when these interactions are linked with common goals or interests (Carlson et al., 2018). The sharing of tourism stories on digital platforms, such as perceptions of hospitality services, experiences at theme parks, and post-visit evaluations of events, is useful for tourist planning and may strengthen community attachment to the digital platform (Munar and Jacobsen, 2014). Prior studies have established the importance of emotional sharing in driving consumers' belongingness to the social media communities. For example, Davis et al. (2014) found that experience exchange on social media communities was useful in driving consumers' intention to interact with each other regularly, and hence strengthening their sense of belonging to the social media community. Zhang et al. (2015) also found that affection-related messages helped to drive consumer knowledge and strengthened a sense of belonging within the community. Carlson et al. (2019a) have argued that customer participation within a social media community drives customer engagement. Thus, emotional sharing plays a role in engaging discussion on tourism topics on digital platforms and forms bonds between participants (Dolan et al., 2019; Sotiriadis, 2017). Based on the literature, the study hypothesises the following:

H4: Emotional UGC is positively related to tourists' entitativity value.

Rational UGC and tourists' value

Rational content related to hospitality services can help tourists to evaluate the quality of the featured services and may play a role in driving tourists' emotional value (Loureiro et al., 2019). Kim et al. (2012) argued that useful UGC, comprising of new, refreshing, or popular information, may drive consumers' emotional value and may strengthen arousal and pleasure (Kim and Johnson, 2016). Informational UGC messages help consumers to learn more about the featured products, driving positive emotions and are

demonstrated by 'likes' on social-media pages (Piehler et al., 2019; Swani et al., 2017). Thus, the following was hypothesised:

H5: Rational UGC is positively related to tourists' emotional value.

Rational messages on digital platforms are useful to build tourists' positive rational evaluations (Kim and Johnson, 2016; Kim et al., 2012). For example, practical information about destinations, such as location maps, opening hours, and availability of featured spots may enhance tourists' knowledge and satisfy informational needs (Loureiro et al., 2019). The sharing of limited offers on digital tourism platforms may attract tourists to engage in real-time interaction in order to enjoy the limited offers and strengthen utilitarian value (Carlson et al., 2019b). Rational UGC that compares price and service levels may help with pre-purchase evaluations and increase products satisfaction (Moliner et al., 2007). As such, the study posits the following hypothesis:

H6: Rational UGC is positively related to tourists' functional value.

Rational UGC on digital tourism platforms provides a reference base for tourists, which increases the motivation to interact and share valuable information, and subsequently drive sustainable relationships (Loureiro et al., 2019). Links between rational UGC and relationship building were discussed by Dolan et al. (2018) who argued that current and practical information are the motivators for social-media platforms use and drives customer engagement. Cheung et al. (2020c) found that trendiness information and the interactive experience sharing available on social-media also strengthened consumer-brand relationships. Thus, the following was hypothesised:

H7: Rational UGC is positively related to tourists' relational value.

Entitativity value is conceptualised as the sense of belonging to a digital platform and is linked to quality of information (Carlson et al., 2018). Kim et al. (2012) and Geurin and Burch (2017) found that UGC with functional and practical messages is influential in driving consumers' belongingness to the social media communities. In the same vein, Kitirattarkarn et al. (2019) found the importance of informative UGC in driving consumers' engagement with UGC and the social-media communities, thereby it strengthens their intention to engage with like-minded peers in an ongoing basis. Based on prior literature, the following was hypothesised:

H8: Rational UGC is positively related to tourists' entitativity value.

Tourists' value and impulse buying

Scholars have long discussed the role of consumers' emotional reactions as drivers of impulse buying (Chan et al., 2017; Kim and Johnson, 2016; Swani et al., 2017). Impulse buying is driven by consumers' needs based on a sudden urge with limited consideration, interlinked with consumers' perceived value. Scholars suggested that impulse buying was driven by environmental stimuli, such as advertisements, referrals, and endorsement messages provided by influencers on social-media platforms (Chan et al., 2017). Recent studies have posited that impulse buying is driven by consumers' perceived value that are evoked from environmental stimulus, thus conceptualising impulse buying as outcome of consumers' emotional reactions, such as satisfaction, enjoyment, pleasure, and commitment (Kim and Johnson, 2016). Impulse buying has been conceptualised as consumers' responses in the SOR model, being strengthened by consumers' perceived value created by environmental stimulus.

Previous studies have shown the importance of perceived value in driving tourists' impulse buying. For example, Kim and Johnson (2016) found that consumers' positive emotions, manifested by pleasure and arousal, play considerable roles in driving their impulse buying behaviour on social commerce platforms. Rezaei et al. (2016) found the importance of utilitarian value in driving online impulse buying on digital tourism platforms. Chen et al. (2016) found a positive relationship between the number of likes and impulse buying, arguing that consumers' impulse buying behaviour was driven by the positive referrals within social media communities where there was a sense of belonging. Chen et al. (2019) found the importance of relationship building on social commerce platforms was useful in building affective trust, which was a driver for impulse buying in social commerce contexts. Hence, the study posits that impulse buying is driven by emotional value (i.e., pleasure and enjoyment), functional value, relational value, and entitativity value, as expressed by sense of belonging towards the digital platforms. As such, the following were hypothesised:

H9: Emotional value is positively related to tourists' impulse buying.

H10: Functional value is positively related to tourists' impulse buying.

H11: Relational value is positively related to tourists' impulse buying.

H12: Entitativity value is positively related to tourists' impulse buying.

Tourists' value and future purchase intention

Within the SOR model, future purchase intention is conceptualised as latent behavioural responses (Kim and Johnson, 2016). Future purchase intention is positively associated with consumers' positive emotions and manifested by their perceived value (Kim and Johnson, 2016). Calson et al. (2019b) found functional value obtained from social media communities was important in driving future purchase intention. Mayrhofer et al. (2020) also suggested that consumers' affective reaction in response to social media brand posts were also drivers of purchase intention, which was confirmed by Kang et al. (2020) demonstrating a positive relationship between positive emotions and purchase intention. Hsieh and Tseng (2018) found that consumers' sense of community in social commerce was positively related to purchase intention, demonstrating the importance of a sense of belonging as a driver of purchase intention. Cheung et al. (2020c) established there was a positive relationship between consumer-brand relationship and purchase intention. As such, the following is hypothesised:

H13: Emotional value is positively related to tourists' future purchase intention.

H14: Functional value is positively related to tourists' future purchase intention.

H15: Relational value is positively related to tourists' future purchase intention.

H16: Entitativity value is positively related to tourists' future purchase intention.

Methodology

Sampling procedure and characteristics

Using an online survey approach to collect primary data, the targeted population of this study were mainland Chinese tourists discussing tourism and hospitality topics (e.g., destinations, festivals, hotels, food and beverages) on digital tourism platforms, such as Tripadvisor, MaFengWo, Expedia, C-Trip and Klook forums. Additionally, using a purposive sampling approach, the self-administered online surveys were hosted on Qualtrics during the data collection period, while the questionnaire links and QR codes were sent to respondents by E-mail, WeChat, and Weibo. Respondents who had no experience in visiting digital tourism platforms or without travelling experiences were excluded from the study. The meaning of emotional and rational UGC was specified at the start of the survey, along with screenshots of emotional and rational UGC as visual stimuli to allow familiarisation with the survey (See Appendix 1).

Measurement items

The hypotheses of the research model were tested by measurement items adopted from prior studies (see Table 2) and measured by a seven-point Likert scale to indicate the level of agreement. Emotional and rational UGC used measurement items adapted from Kim and Johnson (2016), while tourists' emotional, rational, relational, and entitativity values used measurement items adapted from Carlson et al. (2019a). Lastly, impulse buying and future purchase intention, used measurement items adapted from Adelaar et al. (2003) and Dodds et al. (1991). Nevertheless, this study also included a control variable of digital tourism platforms choice (i.e., Tripadvisor, MaFengWo, Expedia, C-Trip and Klook). The reason is that tourists might have difference expectations and perceptions on the user-friendliness of a particular digital tourist platforms, thus it may influence their response towards the outcome of the study (Schreiner et al., 2019).

Data analysis

Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) using Smart-PLS v.3.3.3 (Ringle et al., 2015) was adopted to test the research model. The study used PLS-SEM instead of covariance-based SEM because of the unique advantages of PLS-SEM. First, PLS-SEM is suitable for studies with goals in evaluating complex research models with many constructs and paths without strict assumptions in the data distribution, which is the case in this study (Cheah et al., 2019). Second, it is preferred when

the objective of the study aims to predict key target constructs in a research model (Chin et al. 2020). Third, it is well suited to exploratory research with a combination of explanatory and prediction and has been applied to other tourism marketing studies (e.g. Cheung et al., 2020d; Harrigan et al., 2018; Ting et al., 2019) to perform data analysis.

Results

Respondent profile

In this study, 845 users of digital tourism platforms were invited to participate in the survey, and of that number, 602 respondents agreed to participate, with 64 incomplete questionnaires being discarded. The final data (n = 538) resulted in a 63.7% response rate for data analysis. The sample comprised of males (37.7%) and females (62.3%), aged from 18 to 65. The majority of respondents were aged between 18 and 35 (76.4%), and more than 77% were tertiary educated. All respondents were experienced users of digital tourism platforms like Tripadvisor, MaFengWo, Expedia, C-Trip and Klook accounts. Overall, the sample profile was deemed to be representative of Chinese digital tourism platform users and were appropriate for the purpose of this research.

Common method bias (CMB)

Common method bias (CMB) is a concern when the self-reported data were collected from a similar source, resulting possible artificial inflation of the strength of the relationship between the variables (Kock and Lynn, 2012). We assessed CMB by undertaking a full collinearity assessment as suggested by Kock and Lynn (2012). As presented in Table 1, multicollinearity was assessed by checking the variance inflation factor (VIF), and the results revealed that VIF values of all constructs were less than 3.3 when a dummy variable was regressed against all the variables in the model (Kock and Lynn, 2012). Thus, the result confirmed that CMB does not appear to be an issue within the study.

Measurement model

The measurement model was evaluated by examining its reliability and validity.

Composite reliability (CR) was used to check the level of reliability of the measurement items. The results revealed that the values of CR of all of the constructs exceeded the cut-off value of 0.70 suggested by Hair et al. (2017), while the outer loadings of all measurement items exceeded 0.699 and being significant, the measurement items were deemed to be reliable (see Table 2). Convergent validity was assessed by examining the average variance extracted (AVE), as presented in Table 2. The values of the AVE of each construct exceeded the threshold of 0.50, supporting the convergent validity of the research model.

Table 1. Full collinearity assessment.

Construct	Random dummy variable
EMV	1.438
ENV	1.007
EUGC	1.099
FPI	1.049
FV	1.441
IB	1.368
RUGC	1.194
RV	1.471

Note: EMV = emotional value, ENV = entitativity value, EUGC = emotional user-generated contents, FPI = future purchase intention, FV = functional value, IB = impulse buying, RUGC = rational user-generated value, RV = relational value.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Henseler et al., 2015). As presented in Table 3, the HTMT ratios were smaller than the threshold value of 0.90, confirming the discriminant validity of this study.

Structural model

Prior to the examination of the structural model, multicollinearity was also examined by checking the variance inflation factor (VIF) values for all exogenous constructs. All VIF values in the research model fall below the common 5.0 threshold (Hair et al., 2017), suggesting that multicollinearity was not a concern.

The structural model was tested by analysing the significance of paths between constructs in the research model, using the 5,000 bootstrapping re-sample approach (Hair et al., 2017). Using a one-tailed test, a hypothesis was accepted when the *t*-value was larger than critical value (i.e. $t \geq 1.96$, $p \leq .05$). As presented in Table 4, the control variable of tourism platform choice was found to influence the two endogenous constructs of future purchase intention and impulse buying differently. Particularly, the result shows that it affected future purchase

Table 2. Measurement model result based on loading, reliability, and validity.

Construct	λ	*t*-value	*CR*	AVE
Rational user-generated content			**0.822**	**0.605**
The posts that appear on the digital tourism platform describe functions of tourism and hospitality services	0.777	31.869		
The posts that appear on the digital tourism platform describe values of tourism and hospitality services	0.773	29.802		
The posts that appear on the digital tourism platform describe benefits of tourism and hospitality services	0.784	35.495		
Emotional user-generated content			**0.838**	**0.633**
The posts that appear on the digital tourism platform create a positive atmosphere about the tourism and hospitality services	0.778	27.391		
The posts that appear on the digital tourism platform create positive emotions about the tourism and hospitality services	0.818	38.063		
The posts that appear on the digital tourism platform create positive feelings about the tourism and hospitality services	0.791	34.085		
Functional value			**0.851**	**0.656**
This digital tourism platform is helpful for me	0.822	47.352		
This digital tourism platform is useful for me	0.810	35.276		
This digital tourism platform is functional for me	0.797	36.701		
Emotional value			**0.862**	**0.757**
This digital tourism platform is fun	0.884	80.046		
This digital tourism platform is exciting	0.856	50.509		
Relational value			**0.840**	**0.636**
My participation helps me build a better relationship with the digital tourism platform	0.805	40.492		
My participation enables me to build a greater connection with the digital tourism platform	0.814	40.824		
My participation helps me maintain a long-term relationship with the digital tourism platform	0.773	34.149		
Entitativity Value			**0.837**	**0.719**
I feel a bond with the digital tourism platform	0.865	56.570		
I believe that members of the digital tourism platform have many common goals	0.831	41.284		
Impulse buying			**0.856**	**0.748**
I will purchase tourism and hospitality services that appear on this digital tourism platform right away	0.876	60.866		
I intend to purchase tourism and hospitality services on this digital tourism platform immediately	0.854	47.137		
Future purchase intention			**0.851**	**0.533**
The likelihood of purchasing tourism and hospitality services on this digital tourism platform is high	0.724	29.891		
I would consider buying tourism and hospitality services on this digital tourism platform	0.758	32.628		
The probability that I would consider buying tourism and hospitality services on this digital tourism platform is high	0.739	32.322		
My willingness to buy tourism and hospitality services on this digital tourism platform is high	0.729	22.421		

Note: λ = Loading; CR = Composite Reliability.

intention but did not affect impulse buying. With the control variables, the results fully supported all of the 16 hypotheses with least changes in the path coefficients result (See Figure 1 and Table 4). Specifically, the impact of emotional UGC on emotional value ($\beta = .251$, $p = .000$), functional value ($\beta = .221$, $p = .000$), relational value ($\beta = .282$, $p = .000$), and entitativity value ($\beta = .198$, $p = .000$) was positive and significant, supporting H1, H2, H3, and H4. Likewise, the impact of rational UGC on emotional value ($\beta = .285$, $p = .000$), functional value ($\beta = .387$, $p = .000$), relational value ($\beta = .302$, $p = .000$), and entitativity value ($\beta = .258$, $p = .000$) was positive and significant, supporting H5, H6, H7, and H8. Regarding the relationship between tourists' perceived value dimensions and impulse buying, the impact of relational value was the strongest

Table 3. Discriminant validity of measurement model – based on the HTMT ratio.

	EMV	ENV	EUGC	FPI	FV	IB	RUGC	RV
EMV								
ENV	0.808							
EUGC	0.614	0.543						
FPI	0.752	0.769	0.638					
FV	0.771	0.598	0.635	0.802				
IB	0.717	0.773	0.493	0.791	0.611			
RUGC	0.647	0.586	0.895	0.593	0.735	0.466		
RV	0.872	0.892	0.657	0.878	0.799	0.796	0.681	

Note: EMV = emotional value, ENV = entitativity value, EUGC = emotional user-generated contents, FPI = future purchase intention, FV = functional value, IB = impulse buying, RUGC = rational user-generated value, RV = relational value.

Table 4. PLS-SEM analysis.

Relationship	VIF	β	*t*-value	*p*-value	f^2	R^2	Q^2
Functional value							
EUGC → FV	1.627	0.221	4.430	0.000	0.043	0.304	0.194
RUGC → FV	1.627	0.387	8.434	0.000	0.132		
Emotional value							
EUGC → EMV	1.627	0.251	5.015	0.000	0.050	0.233	0.171
RUGC → EMV	1.627	0.285	5.853	0.000	0.065		
Relational value							
EUGC → RV	1.627	0.282	5.396	0.000	0.067	0.276	0.167
RUGC → RV	1.627	0.302	5.743	0.000	0.077		
Entitativity value							
EUGC → ENV	1.627	0.198	3.365	0.000	0.029	0.169	0.111
RUGC → ENV	1.627	0.258	4.556	0.000	0.049		
Future purchase intention							
FV → FPI	1.667	0.283	5.927	0.000	0.106	0.554	0.288
EMV → FPI	1.853	0.114	2.461	0.007	0.016		
RV → FPI	2.137	0.322	6.994	0.000	0.109		
ENV → FPI	1.639	0.162	3.895	0.000	0.036		
Impulse buying							
FV → IB	1.667	0.106	1.859	0.032	0.011	0.372	0.267
EMV → IB	1.853	0.143	2.674	0.004	0.018		
RV → IB	2.137	0.275	4.485	0.000	0.056		
ENV → IB	1.639	0.215	4.273	0.000	0.045		
Control variables							
Platform → FPI	–	0.111	3.850	0.000	–	–	–
Platform → IB	–	−0.013	0.389	0.349	–	–	–

Note: EMV = emotional value, ENV = entitativity value, EUGC = emotional user-generated contents, FPI = future purchase intention, FV = functional value, IB = impulse buying, RUGC = rational user-generated value, RV = relational value, Platform = tourism platform choice.

($\beta = .275, p = .000$), followed by entitativity value ($\beta = .215$, $p = .000$), emotional value ($\beta = .143$, $p = .003$), and functional value ($\beta = .106$, $p = .035$). Thus, H9, H10, H11 and H12 were supported. Lastly, the results also revealed that tourists' perceived value dimensions were significant predictors of tourists' future purchase intentions. In particular, the impact of relational value ($\beta = .322, p = .000$) was the strongest, followed by functional value ($\beta = .283$, $p = .000$), entitativity value ($\beta = .162$, $p = .000$), and emotional value ($\beta = .114$, $p = .007$). Thus, H13, H14, H15 and H16 were supported.

The explanatory power of the research model was evaluated by the coefficient of determination, R^2 values (see Table 4). The R^2 values for emotional value ($R^2 = .233$), functional value ($R^2 = .304$), relational value ($R^2 = .276$), entitativity value ($R^2 = .169$), impulse buying ($R^2 = .372$), and future purchase intention ($R^2 = .554$) were greater than the recommended criterion benchmark of .10 (Chin, 1998). Thus,

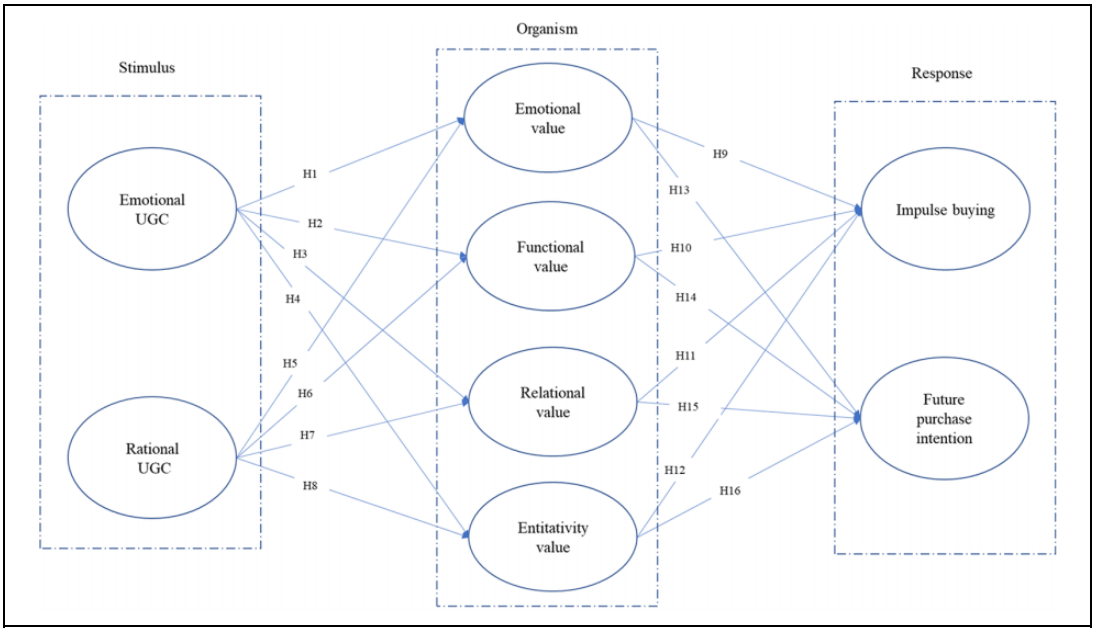

Figure 1. Research model. *Note:* UGC = User-generated content.

the results indicated that the endogenous constructs were accurately explained by the exogenous constructs in the research model.

Additionally, Cohen's effect sizes (f^2) of the paths (see Table 4) were checked to assess the explanatory power of exogenous constructs (Cohen, 1988). Specifically, effect size is considered large if $f^2 \geq .35$, medium if $f^2 \geq .15$, and small if $f^2 \geq .05$, while the cut-off value is .02 (Cohen, 1988). The results revealed that effect sizes of rational UGC in explaining functional value ($f^2 = .132$) was medium but the effect size explaining the relational value ($f^2 = .077$) and emotional value ($f^2 = .065$) was small. The effect size of emotional UGC in explaining relational value ($f^2 = .067$) and emotional value ($f^2 = .050$) was small. The effect sizes of relational value ($f^2 = .109$) and functional value ($f^2 = .106$) in explaining future purchase intention was medium, while the effect size of relational value ($f^2 = .056$) in explaining impulse buying was small.

Lastly, the predictive power of the research model was assessed using PLS-predict (Shmueli et al., 2019) to establish the prediction error statistics, as reflected by the root mean square error (RMSE) for all indicators (see Table 5). The RMSE results revealed that the value of the majority of the indicators of emotional value, functional value, relational value, entitativity value, and future purchase intention in the linear regression model were smaller than PLS model, suggesting that the predictive power of emotional value, functional value, relational value, entitativity value, and future purchase intention was high, while the predictive power of impulse buying was moderate. As such, it can be concluded that the predictive power of the overall research model was high.

Discussion

The present study provides several key findings. First, this study shows that both emotional and rational UGC play a role in driving tourists' emotional, functional, relational, and entitativity values. Although both emotional and rational UGC is influential in driving tourists' emotional, functional, relational and entitativity values, the results revealed that rational UGC is relatively more important than emotional UGC in driving these values. One possible reason is that tourists increasingly rely on digital media platforms when searching for information during their trips, and thus practical information is preferred rather than emotional sharing. Tourists are highly involved in searching for practical information about destinations and hospitality services. Further, practical information is found to be useful for journey planning, which in turn strengthens the utilitarian value, emotional satisfaction, sense of belonging, and relationships with like-minded peers within the digital tourism platforms.

Table 5. PLS-predict assessment.

Items	PLS		LM		PLS-LM		Decision of Predictive Relevance
	RMSE	Q^2_predict	RMSE	Q^2_predict	RMSE	Q^2_predict	
EMV1	1.479	0.195	1.488	0.185	−0.009	0.010	Strong
EMV2	1.517	0.143	1.528	0.131	−0.011	0.012	
ENV1	1.539	0.130	1.545	0.123	−0.006	0.007	Strong
ENV2	1.540	0.096	1.552	0.082	−0.012	0.014	
FPI1	1.589	0.144	1.600	0.133	−0.011	0.011	Strong
FPI2	1.567	0.161	1.563	0.165	0.004	−0.004	
FPI3	1.626	0.113	1.637	0.101	−0.011	0.012	
FPI4	1.595	0.105	1.612	0.087	−0.017	0.018	
FV1	1.525	0.220	1.522	0.223	0.003	−0.003	Strong
FV2	1.625	0.143	1.631	0.136	−0.006	0.007	
FV3	1.502	0.216	1.512	0.206	−0.010	0.010	
IB1	1.537	0.087	1.554	0.067	−0.017	0.020	Moderate
IB2	1.620	0.101	1.619	0.102	0.001	−0.001	
RV1	1.572	0.140	1.576	0.135	−0.004	0.005	Strong
RV2	1.554	0.161	1.568	0.147	−0.014	0.014	
RV3	1.424	0.204	1.431	0.196	−0.007	0.008	

Note: EMV = emotional value, ENV = entitativity value, FPI = future purchase intention, FV = functional value, IB = impulse buying, RV = relational value.

Second, tourists' emotional, functional, relational, and entitativity values significantly influence future purchase intention. The results revealed that relational value is the most influential factor driving tourists' future purchase intention, followed by functional, entitativity, and emotional values. The results also revealed that emotional, functional, relational, and entitativity values have a significant impact on impulse buying. Specifically, relational value is the most influential driver, followed by entitativity, emotional, and functional values. Thus, relational value can be seen as the key determinant of both future purchase intention and impulse buying as tourists are more willing to trust the recommendations of like-minded peers when making quick decisions.

Fourth, the effects of tourists' emotional, functional, relational, and entitativity values on future purchase intention are greater than its impact on impulse buying. This may be because tourists are engaged in discussing tourism-related topics on an ongoing basis, and plan their journeys based on information obtained and experiences shared from the digital tourism platforms. However, tourists' impulse buying is mostly driven by sudden or instant needs, and thus less likely to be influenced by ongoing discussion on digital tourism platforms.

This study empirically confirms that both emotional and rational UGC are key predictors of tourists' emotional, functional, relational, and entitativity values, which in turn drive impulse buying and future purchase intention within a digital tourism platform context. The study suggests that tourism marketers should allocate resources to encourage tourists to share practical, useful, and informative content about destinations and hospitality services, which may in turn drive tourists' perceived value. The theoretical and managerial implications are discussed in the following sections.

Theoretical implications

The present study confirms the importance of emotional and rational UGC as drivers of tourists' perceived value within digital tourism platforms. As such it complements the extant marketing literature by responding to recent calls for research related to the importance of the two forms of UGC in relation to tourists' perceived value (Wang et al., 2017). Using the SOR model as the theoretical foundation, this study is one of the first empirical studies to propose the effect of two different forms of UGC on tourists' emotional, functional, relational, and entitativity values, as well as the subsequent effect on tourists' behavioural intention. This study thus contributes to marketing literature, such as that of decision-making process, by elucidating the concept of emotional and rational appeal in a tourism context, positing that both forms of UGC messages can be substantial and meaningful informational stimuli in tourism marketing research.

Additionally, this study advances prior research in the area of perceived value by applying the SOR model to examine the impact of tourists' perceived value as an internal organism that leads to tourists' behavioural responses, such as impulse buying and future purchase intention. By decomposing perceived value, the empirical study revealed that tourists' emotional, functional, relational, and entitativity values significantly contribute to both impulse buying and future purchase intention. As such, this study articulates the role of the decomposed perceived value as an internal evaluation to strengthen both short-term (impulse buying) and long-term behaviours (future purchase intention) with greater insights. Although the findings are largely in line with past studies, the renewed understanding of the role of UGS in digital tourism platform and its relationship with perceived value and behavioural intention is pivotal to the furtherance of tourism marketing in scholarship.

Managerial implications

Given the ubiquitous use of digital platforms and the change of social patterns, the present study enhances the understanding of the effects of UGC on digital tourism platforms. The findings suggest that both emotional and rational UGC are inextricably linked to tourists' perceived value, such as emotional, functional, relational, and entitativity values. Therefore, tourism marketers are recommended to continue improving the interactions and sharing activities on digital tourism platforms. These includes making purposeful posts on digital tourism platforms consistently, covering topics of interest with catchy titles or images (e.g., knowledge and experiences about festivals, food fairs, and exhibitions) and allowing tourists to share knowledge and experience instantaneously with added features (Kumar and Kaushik, 2020). Moreover, the findings revealed that rational UGC is more useful than emotional UGC in driving tourists' emotional, functional, relational, and entitativity values. As such, tourism marketers are recommended to allocate resources (e.g., offer monetary incentives, electronic coupons, and other rewards via loyalty programmes) to encouraging tourists to share informational contents, such as practical information about price, opening hours, routes, and site maps of events, along with price comparisons of airlines on digital tourism platforms. Furthermore, tourism marketers can facilitate knowledge sharing by recognising those who contribute regularly to the platforms. This will not only empower their engagement but also increase their perceived value of both the contents and activities. Notably, they will also be benefited by monitoring what is being said on the platforms, especially posts relating to service and experience quality. Constructive feedback and instantaneous response with good information will usually attract tourists to interact and be more engaged.

The findings of this study also suggest that relational value has the highest effect on tourists' impulse buying behaviour and future repurchase intention. This implies that tourism marketers should prioritise and reinforce relationships amongst tourists using a platform business model. As such, the interconnectivity of tourists via UGC by encouraging them to stay and use the available features on digital tourism platforms (i.e., usage of hashtags and mentions) to share trendiness travel information and service offerings is essential. As people are getting more and more connected via the Internet, the interaction and interconnectivity of tourists on a platform, rather than just using an application or tool, will likely result in favourable behavioural intention. While travel activities begin to resume due to the administrating of vaccines and the measures taken by countries and governments to recover tourism, such as travel bubble plans, effective UGC which provides tourists with more control over their activities on the digital platforms and facilitates better networking and connectivity with others will have a major impact on impulse buying behaviour as well as future repurchase intention.

Limitations and directions for future research

Despite the meaningful findings of this study, there are several limitations that may be addressed in the future research. First, this study was conducted in China, thus limiting its generalisability. Due to the rise of UGC on the digital platforms, future research could replicate the proposed model in other countries with diverse cultures, such as countries in Europe, Latin America, and Africa, to explore the effectiveness of emotional and rational UGC in driving tourist' perceived value and behavioural intention. Second, the study focused on positive emotional and rational UGC, but not the implications of negative UGC. Given UGC can be positive and negative in terms of its valence, future research may be extended by incorporating negative UGC as an additional variable in the model in order to

provide greater insights to the phenomenon. Lastly, the study relied on data collected via survey to test a single theoretical model, which may result in less comprehensive understanding of the importance of the two forms of UGC and the implications of the decomposed perceived value. As such, future research could use a more advanced techniques and algorithm, such as multiple mediation, Weighted PLS, model selection criteria and Cross-validated Predictive Ability Test (CVPAT) (Cheah et al. 2020; Chin et al., 2020) or advanced research design (i.e., experiment; see Viglia and Dolnicar, 2020) to explore the relationships between the variables of interest to generate more insights about the tourists' behaviour on the digital platforms.

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Appendix 1