

Understanding the Effect of Electronic Word-of-Mouth on Hotel Booking Intentions: Evidence from Domestic Tourism in Sri Lanka

R.M.P.K. Dharani¹ and D.P.D. Dayananda^{2,*}

*Department of Information Systems, Faculty of Management Studies,
Rajarata University of Sri Lanka, Mihintale, Sri Lanka ^{1,2}*

*Corresponding author: piyumidinushini@gmail.com

Abstract

Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has become an important determinant of hotel booking intentions for tourists as online platforms are expanding at a rapid pace. There is, however, a dearth of research on the responsiveness of tourists in Sri Lanka, which is a country with a fast-growing domestic tourism industry, in the context of how these attributes relate to eWOM. The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of electronic word of mouth (eWOM) on domestic tourists' intention to book hotels in Sri Lanka. To achieve this, the study specifically investigates the influence of four key eWOM attributes including volume, credibility, timeliness, and usefulness on domestic tourists' booking decisions. A cross-sectional survey was conducted between May 30th and June 20th, using a quantitative, explanatory research approach. A standardised questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale was employed to gather primary data from 384 respondents. Snowball sampling was chosen because of the unknown number of people. The analysis of data was done using SPSS software through multiple regression, correlation, reliability and validity testing, and descriptive statistics. The findings suggest that all four eWOM characteristics influence the booking intentions of the tourists in a significant and positive way. Among them, usefulness of reviews exerted the strongest influence, followed by volume, timeliness, and credibility. Such results demonstrate the importance of timely, reliable and informative reviews in influencing consumer decision making. The research adds to the body of knowledge by offering an empirical investigation on the domestic tourism context of Sri Lanka and offers practical suggestions to hotel marketers and online tourism sites to serve the nature of reviews and their reliability in order to boost the booking rates.

Keywords: domestic tourism, electronic word of mouth, hotel booking intention, Sri Lanka, usefulness