



# Effectiveness Of Online Reputation Management In Moderating The Connection Between User-Created Content And The Online Reputation Of Destination Management Companies; With Special Reference To The Sri Lanka Tourism Industry

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between User Created Contents (UCC) and Online Reputation in Sri Lankan Destination Management Companies (DMCs). It assesses the direct impact of UCC and investigates the moderating role of Online Reputation Management (ORM). Data from 170 representatives of Sri Lanka's tourism industry DMCs, collected through structured email surveys and interviews, revealed significant insights. Online Reputation Management emerged as a crucial moderator, mitigating harm in negative UCC instances and amplifying positive influence in cases of positive UCC. The findings provide valuable insights for practitioners, guiding strategies for managing and enhancing online reputation amidst varying UCC sentiments. This research contributes a unique analysis of UCC and Online Reputation in Sri Lankan DMCs, introducing ORM as a pivotal moderator and offering fresh perspectives to tourism literature.

**Keywords:** User Created Contents (UCC), Online Reputation, Destination Management Companies (DMCs)

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's digital landscape, the evolution of the worldwide web has transformed it into not just a meeting place for people to interact but also an extensive online library. Consequently, online reputation has emerged as a crucial focal point within the tourism industry (Iglesias-Sánchez, Correia, Jambrino-Maldonado, & Heras-Pedrosa, 2020). The internet plays a pivotal role in enabling users to create content, provide recommendations,

share experiences, and offer destination insights, leveraging a vast pool of information to cultivate trust among potential tourists (Iglesias-Sánchez, Correia, & Jambrino-Maldonado, 2019).

The progression of the worldwide web from web1.0 to web4.0 has effectively transformed the internet from a "read-only web" into a realm of "intelligent connections," advancing at an unexpectedly rapid pace. This evolution has significantly boosted user engagement on the internet, giving rise to social media platforms and other community-based online hubs equipped with advanced features for content sharing. Today, a majority of travelers place their trust in user-generated content found on social media and various review sites. The travelers seek satisfied travelling experiences and match with their expectation and personality (Vuthisopon, Sampaio and Boonual, 2023). Consequently, establishing and maintaining a positive online reputation is imperative for Destination Management Companies (DMCs) to enhance their competitiveness in the online travel market (Rialti, Kvítková, & Makovník, 2023). Existing research consistently indicates a direct and linear relationship between user-created content and the online reputation of tourism organizations and their associated brands (Sirzad, 2022; Fotis et al., 2022; Vikas, Justin, & Deepa, 2021; Marchiori et al., 2011).

While the Destination Management Companies (DMCs) in Sri Lanka have shown positive strides in adopting new technologies in recent times (Bandara & D.A.C. Silva, 2016), many have struggled to harness the opportunities within the online travel market due to their subpar online reputations. The vast landscape of User Created Contents (UCC) on the internet concerning these DMCs in Sri Lanka presents a significant challenge to their online reputation. This challenge is exacerbated by the absence of effective online monitoring, limited social media analysis, inadequate content creation, deficient review management, and a lack of customer sentiment analysis. Moreover, the dearth of research findings in the realm of online tourism marketing compounds the challenges faced by these DMCs (Bandara & D.A.C. Silva, 2016). In light of these hurdles, safeguarding and enhancing their online reputation has become imperative for DMCs in Sri Lanka. The need to navigate the ever-growing online travel market is underscored by the proliferation of user-generated content. Prior research has indicated that Online Reputation Management (ORM) is a highly effective tool for managing a company's online presence and cultivating a positive reputation (Kvítková and Petrů, 2023; Shamma, El Masry & Dutot, 2023).

Hence, this study endeavors to assess the efficacy of ORM as a marketing tool in moderating the relationship between User Created Contents and the Online Reputation of DMCs operating in the Sri Lanka tourism industry.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 The Evaluation of Internet and its Impact on UCC

The evolution of the internet has undergone significant transformations, starting from its inception as the read-only web, powered by web1.0 technology, and gradually progressing to web4.0 (Nath & Iswary, 2015). Each phase of this evolution brought about distinct changes in the way users interacted with the digital realm. Web1.0, characterized as the information web, was an era where users primarily consumed information rather than actively participating. Webpages were created by a limited number of developers but accessed by a vast user base. Unfortunately, web1.0 was often plagued by sluggish browsing speeds and connectivity issues due to the high volume of internet searches (Nath & Iswary, 2015).

Web2.0, the second stage of internet evolution, marked a significant shift. Often referred to as the read-write web or people connections, this phase empowered users to interact more freely and create and modify content. It ushered in an era of user-generated content and increased collaboration (Sharma, 2023; Kujur & Chhetri, 2015; Aghaei, 2012).

Web3.0, known as the semantic web or knowledge connections, introduced a new level of intelligence to the internet. It facilitated easier searching through structured data and provided users with personalized assistance, offering solutions and readily accessible knowledge. Key technologies behind web3.0 included natural language search, machine learning, data mining, microformats, and artificial intelligence (Maurya, 2019). This phase represented a paradigm shift in web interactions (Kannan, 2022).

Web4.0, the fourth and current generation of the internet, is characterized as intelligent connections. It acts as an intelligent mirror to users, offering virtual assistance (Nath & Iswary, 2015). Web4.0 possesses the capability to understand natural spoken language, resembling a human assistant that provides accurate answers and precise information (Lian, 2023; Aghaei, 2012). This evolution has fundamentally transformed how users engage with the internet, enhancing its role as a valuable resource and tool. In the era of rapid expansion in the Internet of Things, mobile internet, and cloud computing, a substantial volume of data is generated daily by users and smart devices, marking the advent of the Big Data era (Shinde, Patil and Tripathi, 2023).

### 2.2 The Tourism4.0 and UCC

The evolution of the internet into web4.0 has catalyzed the development of specialized software designed to seamlessly facilitate virtual interactions between users and machines. This software empowers users to effortlessly create, access, and share real-time User Created Contents (UCC) (Rani et al., 2022). Notably, these advancements have fostered a close connection between web4.0 and tourism4.0 (Pencarelli, 2020). Tourism4.0, a cutting-edge technology, leverages key elements such as the Internet of Things (IoT), big data,

blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) (Peceny et al., 2019). The primary objective of tourism4.0 is to make tourism accessible to everyone at any time, fostering a collaborative model to enhance the overall tourist experience (Urbančić et al., 2020).

The integration of AI and big data within tourism4.0 promises hyper-personalized experiences for users. Meanwhile, VR and AR technologies are driving the creation of a new generation of networks enriched with User Created Contents (Smartdestination, 2022). IoT, in particular, enables the real-time generation of user-created media directly on smartphones. These emerging trends underscore the significance of User Created Contents and highlight their pivotal role in shaping the future of the tourism industry.

### **2.3 User Created Contents and Online Reputation**

The advent of web2.0 technology ushered in an era of User Created Contents (UCC) on the internet, and subsequently, web3.0 introduced transparent, robust, and synergistic systems that facilitated the creation, retrieval, and sharing of content by users (Ivanov, 2019). With the emergence of web4.0 technology, virtual assistants capable of comprehending natural spoken language were introduced, further enhancing the user experience (PandoraFMS, 2019). User Created Contents, often likened to "eWOM" or "word of mouse," play a pivotal role in allowing individuals to express their opinions, beliefs, and experiences about products or services in the online domain (Johnston, Kelly, & Kvilhaug, 2023). While distinct concepts, both UCC and eWOM serve as valuable tools for sharing user-generated content and experiences. In the context of the tourism industry, UCC holds particular relevance as it enables the communication and sharing of travel experiences, connecting like-minded individuals (Fotis et al., 2022). Consequently, UCC becomes an essential element to incorporate into the content marketing mix (Lemaić, 2019).

Within the tourism industry, several types of User-Created Contents have been identified, exerting influence over the online reputation of Destination Management Companies. Notably, online reviews and ratings, social media content, and travel blogs emerge as the primary categories of UCC in this context.

#### **2.3.1 Online Reviews & Ratings**

Online reviews and ratings wield significant influence over consumers' purchasing intentions and are instrumental in empowering informed decisions. An impressive 93% of online buyers within the travel market diligently peruse these reviews, and a striking 97% admit that these reviews and ratings profoundly impact their ultimate buying choices (Harrison-Walker & Jiang, 2023). In the realm of the tourism industry, it's a common practice for tourists to meticulously examine reviews before patronizing a business, with a staggering 90% giving careful consideration to these assessments. Furthermore, an overwhelming 88% place trust in online reviews, and 86% are inclined to alter their purchasing decisions when confronted with negative feedback (Saleh, 2018).

Online reviews and ratings hold immense significance in shaping a company's online reputation. Remarkably, they demand minimal effort but deliver substantial value to SEO efforts (Somal, 2020). Neglecting these reviews and ratings can prove detrimental to a business, potentially tarnishing its online reputation (Kaemingk, 2020). Websites that facilitate online reviews have evolved into pivotal hubs for prospective travelers in the tourism industry, mirroring the adage that "Rumor has circled the world before the truth has put on its boots" in the digital age—online reviews can sway potential travelers before a Destination Management Company even becomes aware of their posting (Eddy, 2015). These reviews and ratings serve as social proofs of a product's worthiness, offering valuable insights into its desirability (Gordon, 2018). Remarkably, a business boasting at least a four-star rating stands to convert an impressive 92% of users into potential buyers (Saleh, 2018). Given the escalating concern regarding fake reviews on certain platforms, a growing number of online buyers now seek out verified reviews and ratings. These assessments serve as clear indicators of customer satisfaction and have become ubiquitous within the tourism sector (Gayetree, 2017).

#### **2.3.2. Social Media and Travel Blogs**

User-created content serves as a compelling form of social proof that captures and retains the attention of customers, offering them genuine insights into real experiences shared by fellow individuals (Lemaić, 2019). Within the realm of social media, which is facilitated by user-generated content, a digital form of electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) emerges as a potent contributor to shaping a brand's online reputation (Farzin & Fattahi, 2018). The dynamic array of content—comprising videos, photos, reviews, and more—shared by users on social media platforms becomes a powerful tool in assessing a brand's authenticity and legitimacy (Naeem & Okafor, 2019). The influence of social media in disseminating brand information is substantial, as many customers first learn about brands through the content shared by other users (Patel, 2019). Remarkably, 97% of millennials actively contribute content on social media while traveling, underlining its pivotal role (Jonca, 2023).

In parallel, travel blogs constitute another form of user-generated shared media that empowers customers to gain insights into brands through the eyes of fellow travelers. The popularity of travel blogs has surged, with WordPress users generating over 70 million blog posts and garnering 77 million new comments from readers each month (Ouellette, 2022). These blogs consistently provide valuable information about products, brands, and companies, serving as a valuable resource for prospective travelers (Banyai, 2016). Intriguingly, these blog posts often encompass details about customer expectations, satisfaction levels with the services offered, and

personal recommendations, offering readers a comprehensive view of the travel experience (Hayley & Elitza, 2017).

#### **2.4. User Created Contents and Online Reputation of DMCs**

In the travel industry, where travelers often grapple with a lack of information about destinations, safety concerns, and financial risks, access to reviews and recommendations becomes paramount in facilitating informed decisions (Ajanovic & Çizel, 2015). Among the diverse array of user-generated content, online reviews and social media postings emerge as the most influential components shaping the online reputation of travel companies (Burno et al., 2019). Managing the online reputation of a destination management company involves two critical aspects: firstly, preventing customers from forming misconceptions about the company based on online ratings or reviews, and secondly, actively utilizing customer feedback and reviews to enhance the quality of customer service (Eddy, 2015). In this context, TripAdvisor stands out as one of the largest platforms for user-generated content, boasting a repository of 320 million online reviews that significantly influence travelers' purchasing decisions (Carreirão, 2019). However, it is worth noting that TripAdvisor has faced criticism from users, with allegations of false and biased reviews, which has led to questions about its credibility. In contrast, platforms like Booking.com and Expedia.com have garnered trust by featuring only verified reviews (Sauciuc, 2020).

With travelers increasingly posting their own content within the tourism industry, unforeseen reputation challenges can arise, often catching destination management companies off guard (Wang, Wei-Jue, & Liu-Lastres, 2022). The tourism sector proves to be especially sensitive to negative reviews, service complaints, and health-related concerns (Zimmatore, 2018). Traditional advertising now holds sway with only 14% of travelers, whereas a staggering 92% place their trust in customer review content available on third-party sites like TripAdvisor (Gonzalo, 2017). To succeed at the destination level, destination management companies must adopt a systematic approach, incorporating an effective Online Reputation Management (ORM) strategy to resonate with the discerning smart tourist segment (Gajdošík, 2019).

#### **2.5 Online Reputation Management (ORM)**

Online reputation, akin to a personal recommendation from a friend, has gained immense significance in the digital age (Martin-Rios, 2018). The evolution of the internet has amplified the customer's voice to a degree that cannot be disregarded (Dan, 2019). It represents the perceived image of products, brands, or companies, shaped by what customers discover when they search online. Online Reputation Management (ORM) plays a proactive role in influencing what customers encounter during these searches (Somal, 2018). ORM operates both reactively and proactively. Reactively, it involves burying negative user-generated content and amplifying positive user-created content to avert PR crises and safeguard and nurture online reputation (Kelly, 2021). Notably, the first-page search results for a brand significantly influence its overall reputation (Somal, 2020). ORM serves as an effective tool for monitoring reputation and removing detrimental content that could harm a brand's image (Mersad, 2021).

This strategic approach maintains a company's positive brand image across various online platforms, including Google searches, social media sites, microblogs, reviews, video platforms, and question-and-answer forums (Banerjee, 2020). Due to the enduring nature of online user-generated content, which is not easily removed from search engines and third-party websites, managing online reputation demands continuous monitoring and ORM practices (Sickler, 2020). For travel companies, ORM stands out as one of the most critical strategies (Ploumidou, 2018). Additionally, ORM functions as a communication strategy for tourism firms, capable of influencing their image, sales, and financial performance (Dinçer & Alrawadieh, 2017). The comprehensive realm of Online Reputation Management encompasses both proactive and reactive tools, with their coexistence complementing each other to build and sustain a favorable reputation.

##### **2.5.1 Proactive Online Reputation Management**

Proactive Online Reputation Management (ORM) takes the initiative to control the narrative, determining what is said, when it's said, and how it's presented. Companies can wield their own content to shape user-generated content through proactive ORM strategies (Wright, 2021). This proactive approach encompasses various valuable tools, including content marketing, blogging, SEO optimization, microsite creation, and active engagement on social media platforms (Ellison, 2022). It's commonly recognized that managing reputation in a positive light is far more manageable than combatting negative information already circulating online (Jones, 2021). Organizations today commonly employ two proactive ORM practices: appointing an online reputation manager or seeking assistance from online reputation management companies (Lee, 2022). Companies that neglect proactive ORM open themselves to potential PR crises and revenue losses (Smith, 2020).

Key steps in a proactive ORM strategy involve vigilant monitoring of online reputation and presence, implementing a well-defined online review strategy, collaborating with influential figures known for their positive online reputation, consistently delivering on promises, and closely tracking competitors' online reputation and strategies (Chan, 2017). These proactive measures are essential for building and preserving a favorable online image.



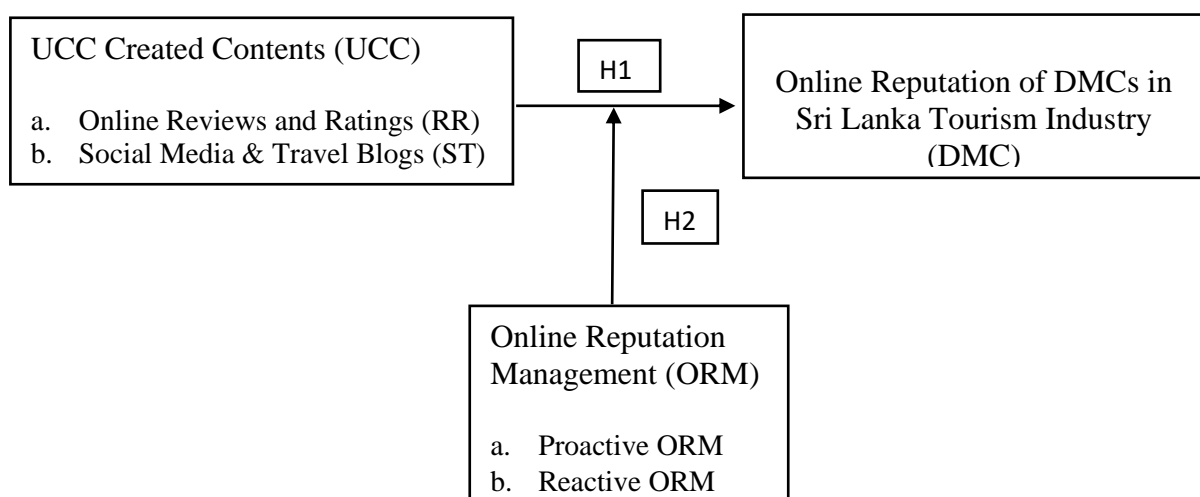
**2.5.2 Reactive Online Reputation Management**

Reactive Online Reputation Management (ORM) is an approach focused on responding to customer feedback and comments, serving as a preventive measure for safeguarding online reputation (Lee, 2022). While reactive measures are not typically considered the primary approach in business, they are employed in ORM as an effective damage control mechanism (Toribio, 2023). Key components of reactive ORM include monitoring online content, addressing both positive and negative feedback, and elevating customer service standards (Brandconn, 2018). It's crucial to respond to both positive and negative reviews, as potential customers often read these responses (Toribio, 2023). Reactive ORM complements proactive ORM strategies, making it essential to employ both approaches for building and maintaining a company's online reputation (Campbell, 2023).

**3. METHODOLOGY**

The last five years have seen extensive research in the tourism industry, particularly in the areas of User Created Contents (UCC) and Online Reputation Management (ORM). However, as technology and the internet continue to evolve, new knowledge is emerging, and certain research gaps persist. While prior studies have identified a relationship between UCC and Online Reputation (OR), there is limited literature exploring the moderating influence of Online Reputation Management (ORM) on the connection between UCC and OR. In the context of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka, research in these domains is notably scarce, with an even wider gap when it comes to Destination Management and Marketing. This study seeks to reevaluate the relationship between UCC and Online Reputation while examining the moderating role of ORM, specifically concerning Destination Management Companies (DMCs) in Sri Lanka. Consequently, this study revolves around three key variables: User Created Contents (UCC) as the independent variable, the Online Reputation of DMCs in the Sri Lankan tourism industry as the dependent variable, and ORM as the moderating variable.

The conceptual framework for this study can be illustrated as follows:



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework  
**Source:** Authors (2023)

**3.1 Sampling**

For this research, the population consisted of 300 Destination Management Companies (Travel Agencies) that had obtained Safe & Secure certification from the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority as of April 22, 2022. To ensure a statistically valid sample, the following parameters were considered: a 95% confidence level, a standard deviation of 0.5, and a confidence interval of +/- 5%. Based on these considerations, a sample size of 169 DMCs was determined. To provide an equal opportunity for each company within the population to be included in the sample, the research employed a simple random sampling technique.

**3.2 Instrument Development Process**

Given the absence of a similar instrument in existing literature, this study developed a questionnaire based on empirical findings to collect numerical data, aiming to generate comprehensive results within its scope. The questionnaire incorporated structured five-point Likert scale questions for each dimension and construct outlined in the study's conceptual framework. To ensure the questionnaire's reliability and validity, a thorough testing process was undertaken. Initially, a pre-test was conducted through expert reviews. The questionnaire was shared with five experts, and feedback from three of them was considered in refining the questionnaire. Subsequently, a pilot study was conducted, which included 37 questions divided into four sections. The first section focused on collecting demographic information, while the remaining questions were designed to assess

each dimension of the variables outlined in the conceptual framework. The questionnaire was distributed online to 45 randomly selected respondents from the sample, resulting in 30 responses and a commendable 68% response rate. The results of the pilot study demonstrated an overall reliability score, as measured by Cronbach's Alpha, of .925. This high score confirmed the questionnaire's validity for use in this study.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

Following the successful pilot study, which yielded a 68% response rate, the online questionnaire was then distributed via email to 248 Destination Management Companies (DMCs). These companies had been selected using the simple random sampling method. As a result of this survey effort, a total of 174 responses were received, achieving a response rate of 70%. Out of these responses, three were excluded as they were received from entities outside of the selected sample. Additionally, one response was eliminated due to a missing value. Therefore, the final number of respondents included in this study was recorded as 170.3.2

### **Measures**

The questionnaire employed a Likert scale format with five response points ranging from 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree," including a neutral option represented by 3.

In total, the questionnaire consisted of 29 Likert scale questions that pertained to the research area. These questions were adapted from existing literature sources, drawing from studies by Kim (2014), Shandrow (2013), Rabinowitz (2019), and Nyein (2019). Within this set of questions, 10 Likert scale items were utilized to assess User Created Contents, while 5 items were dedicated to evaluating the online reputation of Destination Management Companies within the Sri Lanka tourism industry. To investigate the moderating impact of Online Reputation Management (ORM), 14 items were included in the questionnaire for this study.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **4.1 Key Findings of the Demographic Analysis**

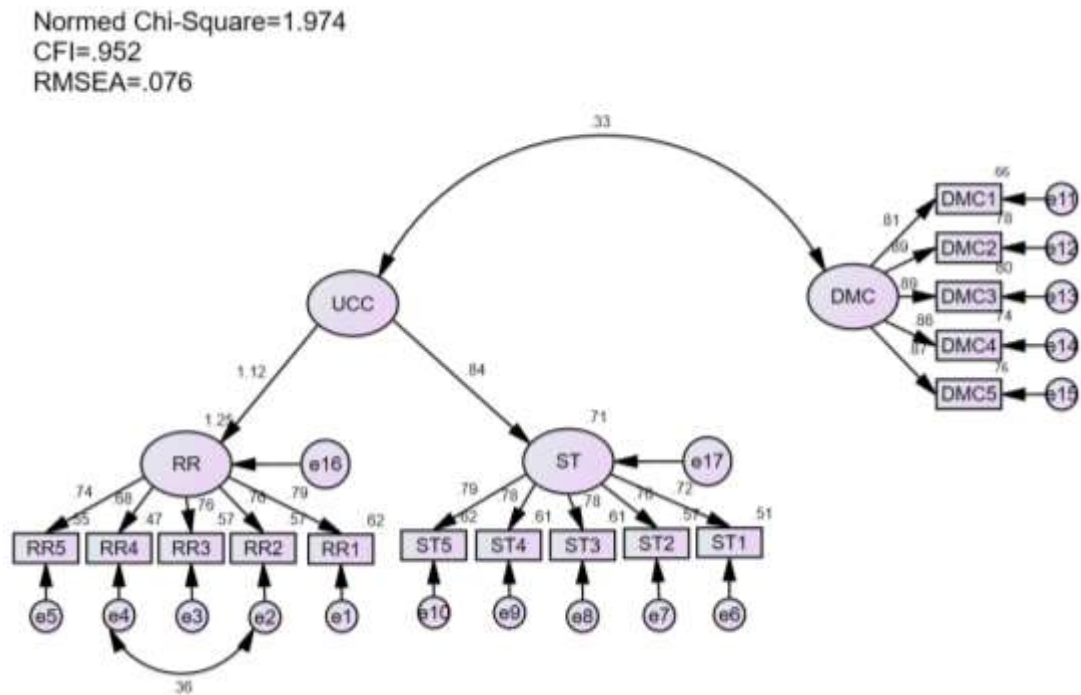
This research considered six demographic factors for analysis: Gender, Age, Education, Position, Salary, and Company Size. Notably, the study observed a remarkable 44.7% representation of females within the Sri Lankan travel industry, which is historically male-dominated. Among the 170 respondents, the majority, comprising 88.23%, fell within the age group of 25-44. Furthermore, the study found that 57.6% of respondents held Bachelor's degrees. Regarding positions within companies, the highest percentage, at 52.4%, was recorded for Junior Managers. In terms of monthly salary, the category of LKR 101,000 – 200,000 emerged as the highest, with 44.1% of respondents falling into this range. Among the respondents, 60% represented Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with fewer than 50 employees in the company. These findings suggest several trends in the Sri Lankan tourism industry, including a significant presence of young, educated junior managers and an improved representation of females in decision-making roles. However, it is important to note that many companies in Sri Lanka are SMEs that are still in their early stages of development, offering average managerial salaries in the range of LKR 101,000 – 200,000.

### **4.2 SEM Analysis**

Following the demographic analysis, the research proceeded with data analysis employing structural equation modeling. This involved comprehensive assessments of validity and reliability, including calculations of path coefficients, to ensure the data's integrity and mitigate issues like multicollinearity and other data-related biases.

#### **4.2.1 Assessment of the Measurement Model**

The test was conducted based on both the independent variable and the dependent variable. As such, the two constructs central to this study were subjected to scrutiny to determine the goodness of fit. After confirming the significance of the factors through a significance test, a measurement model was constructed to examine the relationships between the latent variables and their respective measures. In this assessment, UCC and the online Reputation of DMC were the variables under consideration, with ORM being excluded from the model as it functions as a moderating variable.



**Figure 2.** Measurement Model  
**Source:** Prepared by Authors using AMOS 24 (2023)

After drawing the measurement model, the analysis was performed to get the results that are indicated in the table 1.

**Table 1:** Summary of the Model fit of Measurement Model

Fit Indices	Accepted Value	Results
Chi – Square / df	Less than 5.0	1.974
CFI	Greater than 0.9	0.952
REMSEA	Less than 0.08	0.076

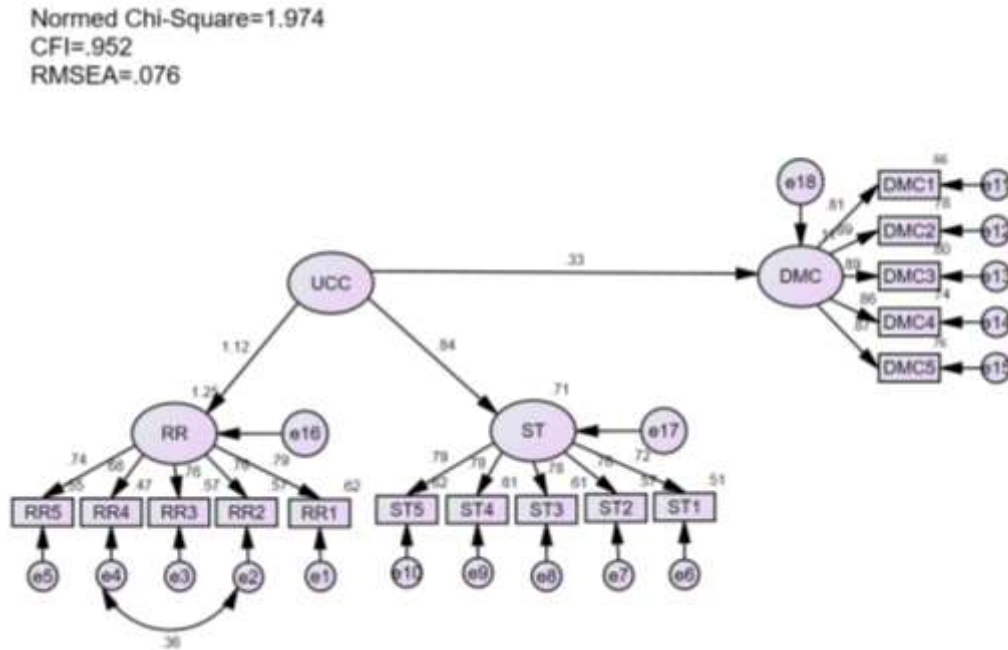
**Source:** Prepared by Authors using AMOS 24 (2023)

Table 1 displays the model fit indices, with a normed chi-square value of 1.974, which is comfortably below the threshold of 5. This indicates a good fit for the model. Subsequently, other indices were examined to assess the absolute fit of the model. The CFI, with an accepted threshold above 0.9, recorded a value of 0.952, well within the acceptable range. Another crucial index, RMSEA, was observed, and it registered at 0.076, also well below the accepted threshold of less than 0.08. Therefore, it can be concluded that the overall model fit for the measurement model in this study falls within the acceptable range. To ensure the accuracy of the findings, reliability and validity of the instrument were assessed. Convergent validity, construct validity, and discriminant validity were tested, following established methodologies (Hair et al., 2010). All constructs exhibited factor loadings greater than 0.5, surpassing the minimum threshold value. Additionally, the Average Variance Expected (AVE) for each construct exceeded 0.5, confirming convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 1 further indicates that the chi-square value, CFI, and RMSEA values all meet their respective threshold criteria, affirming the construct validity of this research (Awang, 2012). The calculated correlation coefficient for this study stands at 0.325, signifying a moderate positive correlation between User Created Contents (UCC) and the online reputation of Destination Management Companies in the Sri Lanka tourism industry (DMC). This confirms that the correlation coefficient value is well within the accepted threshold to validate the discriminant validity of the overall measurement model (Awang, 2012).

**4.2.2 Assessment of the Structural Model**

The structural model analysis is conducted to assess the relationships between the different constructs, following the methodology outlined by Henseler (2017). In this study, a structural model is formulated, incorporating the two primary constructs, and it is utilized to evaluate the overall goodness of fit, as depicted in Figure 2.



**Figure 3.** Structural Model  
**Source:** Prepared by Authors using AMOS 24 (2023)

This model was constructed using the dataset gathered from the 170 respondents in the sample. The model establishes the regression structure among the latent variables and posits the causal direction of these latent constructs. The findings derived from this analysis are presented in Table 3.

**Table 2:** Summary of the Model fit Structural Model

Fit Indices	Accepted Value	Results
Chi – Square / df	Less than 5.0	1.974
CFI	Greater than 0.9	0.952
REMSEA	Less than 0.08	0.076

**Source:** Prepared by Authors using AMOS 24 (2023)

The table above displays statistics that are consistent with the results obtained from the measurement model. The Normed Chi-Square from the measurement model stands at 1.974, falling within the acceptable threshold (less than 5). The CFI is calculated as 0.952, surpassing the minimum threshold value of 0.9 for this index. The RMSEA for this study is 0.076, which is below the threshold of 0.08. The maximum likelihood table in this study produced the following results.

**Table 3:** Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
DMC <--- UCC	.516	.154	3.346	***

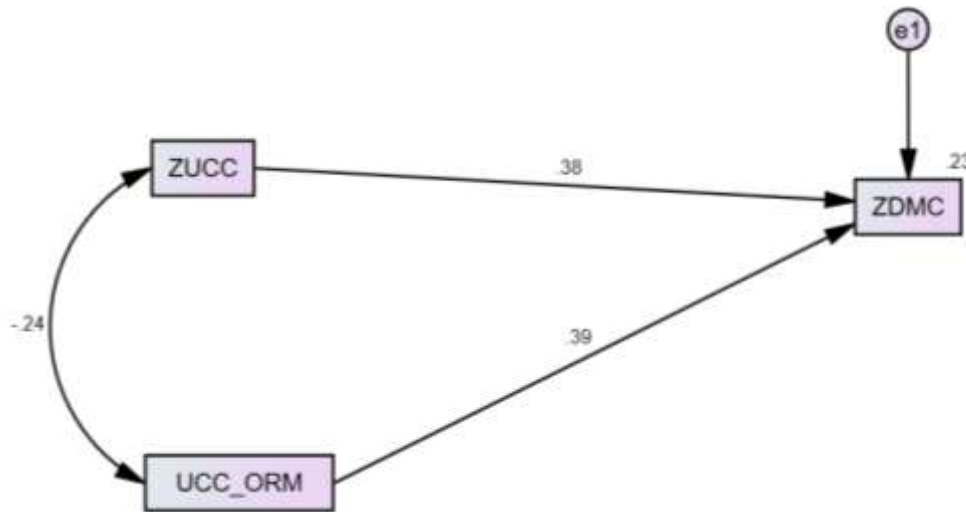
**Source:** Prepared by Authors using AMOS 24 (2023)

The table above shows a P-value within the acceptable threshold of less than 0.05. The C.R value, which signifies the correlation between the two constructs, stands at 3.346, indicating a positive linear correlation between User Created Contents and the Online Reputation of Destination Management Companies in the Sri Lankan tourism industry. These results, as presented in Table 3, are highly significant, confirming an overall good fit for the model.

**4.2.3 Moderation Analysis**

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the moderating influence of Online Reputation Management (ORM) on the relationship between User Created Contents (UCC) and the online reputation of Destination Management Companies (DMCs) within the Sri Lankan tourism industry. As demonstrated in the structural model depicted in Figure 3, a statistically significant linear association exists between UCC and the Online Reputation of DMCs in the Sri Lankan tourism industry. The subsequent phase of this analysis entails assessing the efficacy of ORM as a moderating tool in influencing this relationship, a task facilitated through the use of AMOS. Figure 4 provides an illustration of the model created for conducting the moderator analysis.





**Figure 4:** Moderation Effect

**Source:** Prepared by Authors using AMOS 24 (2023)

After conducting the analysis in AMOS, the regression weights for this model are generated and can be found under the "estimates" section. These indices play a crucial role in determining the significance of the moderating effect. Table 4 displays the regression weights obtained from the test conducted to discern the moderating impact of ORM on the relationship between UCC and DMC.

**Table 4:** Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
ZDMC <--- ZUCC	.378	.070	5.422	***
ZDMC <--- UCC_ORM	.438	.078	5.619	***

**Source:** Prepared by Authors using AMOS 24 (2023)

Table 4 presents the results of two key relationships examined in this study. The first row in the table pertains to the linear relationship between User Created Contents (UCC) and the Online Reputation of DMCs in the Sri Lanka tourism industry. The C.R. value of 5.422 for this relationship signifies a strongly positive linear association between these two variables. The corresponding P-value also reflects high statistical significance, affirming the significance of the relationship between User Created Contents (UCC) and the Online Reputation of DMCs in the Sri Lanka tourism industry.

Moving on to the second row of Table 4, it addresses the moderating impact of ORM on the relationship between User Created Contents (UCC) and the Online Reputation of DMCs in the Sri Lanka tourism industry. The C.R. value for this test is reported as 5.619, indicating a highly positive moderating effect. Additionally, the P-value for this test demonstrates high statistical significance, conclusively establishing the moderating impact of ORM on the relationship between User Created Contents (UCC) and the Online Reputation of DMCs in the Sri Lanka tourism industry.

### 5 CONCLUSION

This study focuses on assessing the effectiveness of Online Reputation Management (ORM) as a strategic tool in moderating the relationship between User Created Contents (UCC) and the Online Reputation of Destination Management Companies (DMCs) in Sri Lanka's tourism industry. In the highly competitive online travel market, maintaining a positive online reputation has become crucial for DMCs (Musanovic & Dorcic, 2016). DMCs often face challenges dealing with false accusations and negative online attacks, highlighting the significance of effective ORM strategies (White, 2020).

Managing user-generated content (UCC) across various online platforms is a challenging task due to the permanence of such content. UCC also plays a vital role in content marketing, connecting like-minded individuals and serving as a potent tool when integrated into marketing mix strategies (Lemaić, 2019). Therefore, examining ORM as a marketing tool to moderate the impact of UCC on the online reputation of DMCs within the Sri Lanka tourism industry is both relevant and timely.

The results presented in Table 4 demonstrate a substantial regression coefficient (beta value) of 0.378 for the relationship between UCC and the online reputation of DMCs in the Sri Lanka tourism industry. This indicates that a 1-unit increase in UCC leads to a positive change of 0.378 in the Online Reputation of DMCs. The standard error (S.E) at a 95% confidence level is calculated as 0.070, falling within the accepted range of +1.96 to -1.96. The Critical Ratio (C.R.) value for this test is 5.422, significantly exceeding the accepted threshold, and the P value is recorded as 0.00. These outcomes strongly support the hypothesis, confirming a robust

positive linear relationship between UCC and the Online Reputation of DMCs in the Sri Lanka Tourism Industry.

The critical analysis in this study focuses on the moderating effect of ORM on the identified linear relationship between UCC and the online reputation of DMCs. The second row of Table 4 reveals a regression coefficient value of 0.438, indicating a positive influence of ORM on the UCC-online reputation relationship. The standard error (S.E.) value is 0.078, within the accepted range for standard error at the 95% confidence level. The Critical Ratio (C.R.) is calculated as 5.619, highly significant, and the P value is recorded as 0.00. These outcomes provide strong evidence confirming the substantial moderation effect of ORM on the relationship between UCC and the online reputation of DMCs in the Sri Lanka Tourism Industry.

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