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## KEY FACTORS IN THE INTENTION TO BOOK TOURIST DESTINATIONS ONLINE

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### ABSTRACT

*Tourism has significantly progressed through websites, enabling the connection between proprietors and potential users. This study evaluated the importance of reviews, ratings, scarcity, and website popularity, and their impact on primary effects and interactions related to four outcome variables: attention, information, interest, and likelihood of booking. In a 2<sup>4</sup> factorial design (2Reviews x 2Ratings x 2Scarcity x 2Popularity) mediated by the covariate susceptibility, it was determined that an increased number of reviews, superior ratings, elevated scarcity, and heightened popularity correlate with greater interest, increased intention to seek information, and a higher likelihood of booking. However, site attention is not just dictated by the volume of reviews or external ratings; rather, the interaction between notable scarcity and popularity does have an impact.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Attention, Scarcity, Popularity, Probability, Reviews, Susceptibility.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Travel recommendation systems have emerged as widely utilised tools for organising and planning tourism excursions. Tourist destinations exemplify intricate relationships suitable for social network analysis (Ledesma González et al., 2021). Casanueva et al. (2016) assert that social network studies provide tourism research many methodologies and instruments that enhance comprehension of the patterns and structures inherent in these interactions. Yuan et al. (2022) illustrate in their research that social networks significantly propel economic growth inside the tourism sector.

Social media posts that elicit substantial participation improve organisational performance by increasing sales (Yost et al., 2021). Interaction with material on social networks increases brand loyalty and promotes the inclination to make reservations. Posts that emphasise location have more favourable results than those that focus on visitors and atmosphere (Gómez & Veloso, 2022).

Di Pietro et al. (2012), Van der Zed and Bertocchi (2018), and Vassakis et al. (2019) concur that social networks have emerged as the principal instrument for acquiring prompt and comprehensive information for selecting tourist destinations, and their extensive utilisation has augmented the accessibility of data regarding traveler behaviour. The studies conducted by Walker and Jean (2001), Xiang and Gretzel (2010), and Agag and El-Masry (2016) demonstrated that electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is a prevalent source of information for individuals planning trips and significantly influences their desire to reserve hotels online.

Bartschat et al. (2022) identify varying functions of word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendation categories throughout the stages of customers' travel searches. Face-to-face encounters and online reviews are typically referenced first, but social networks serve predominantly as information sources after the conclusion of the process. Conversely, the research by Rosario et al. (2016) demonstrates that, on average, the impact of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) correlates favourably with sales (.091), with its efficacy differing based on the platform, product, and metric employed.

Online platforms have developed to enable users to become content creators, facilitating collaborative information seeking through searching, organising, sharing, and contributing, so transforming individuals into genuine "information mediators" (Parra et al., 2011). Users' visual depictions of destinations on social networks provide travellers the chance to enhance their existing knowledge about

these locations, so impacting their travel choices (Pan et al., 2021). Sirakaya and Woodside (2005) determined that a greater presence of a tourist attraction on social media correlates with an increased number of tourists. Lee et al. (2019) emphasise the necessity of providing varied tourism information, both locally and culturally, via online platforms.

In accordance with Thurau et al. (2004), Lee and Song (2010), and Cheung and Thadani (2012), the internet has expanded customers' options to gather knowledge about products and services, with online reviews acting as a crucial source of insight. The hotel industry is one of the sectors most affected by online reviews. This is particularly applicable to the hotel and tourism industries, where services are defined by their intangibility and perishability (Jeacle & Carter, 2011; Godovskykh & Tasci, 2020). Understanding the profiles of travellers and the characteristics of tourism regions is crucial for formulating destination recommendations for users (Dietz et al., 2020). Dickinson et al. (2017) established a causal link between tourist areas and social networks for geographical, distance, and temporal location factors.

The hazards associated with visitors making poor judgements are mitigated when fellow travellers express their opinions online. Vieira et al. (2023) observe that a substantial proportion, 66.5%, of respondents utilised social media to inform or determine their travel destination. Katsoni (2020) posits that virtual communities, alongside social networking sites, significantly influence tourist engagement and assist tourism organisations in refining their marketing strategies through enhanced insights into customer satisfaction and behavioural patterns.

This research aims to ascertain the influence of reviews, ratings, popularity, and scarcity, along with their interaction effects, on the booking intentions of prospective travellers to tourist destinations. The intention to book will be influenced by the covariate of receptivity to information from third sources.

The specific objectives are as follows:

- Identify the main effects of ratings, number of reviews, popularity, and scarcity on attention, informational content, interest, and the likelihood of booking that a tourism offer can generate.
- Identify the interaction effects of these variables (ratings, reviews, popularity, and scarcity) on the dependent variables (attention, informational content, interest, and likelihood of booking).
- Determine the extent of the impact of the

personality trait covariate "susceptibility" on booking intention outcomes.

### 1.1. Contextual and Theoretical Framework

Tourism experienced significant growth and diversification till 2019, despite facing intermittent challenges, so affirming its position as one of the most vital and swiftly evolving sectors of the global economy (World Tourism Organisation, 2023). The Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI), outlined in the World Economic Forum Report (2022), assesses several elements and policies that foster sustainable and resilient growth in the tourism sector. Tourism substantially enhances a nation's economic development. In 2021, Colombia ranked 58th among 117 evaluated countries in this index.

Concurrently, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism reported that, by 2023, the lodging occupancy rate reached 52.2%, indicating an increase of 3.4 percentage points compared to the 2019 figures, and contributing 2.1% to the national added value from the tourism sector. Accommodation and food services are the ninth most substantial contributor to national added value (Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism, 2023).

### 1.2. Relevance of Independent Variables

#### 1.2.1. Number of Reviews Ratings

Numerous studies in the tourism business have examined characteristics including third-party evaluations and ratings. Notwithstanding the plethora of internet reviews, their significance and content have not been comprehensively examined. Research has concentrated on examining reviews and ratings, frequently neglecting critical factors like as intent, clarity of information, and likelihood of booking, among others. Anderson and Han (2016) discovered that hotels that promote visitor feedback and engage with it achieved higher ratings than their competitors. Moreover, management's engagement with reviews correlated with enhancements in sales and revenue (Kim et al., 2015; Theocharidis et al., 2020; Guerreiro and Rita, 2020).

Mousavizadeh et al. (2022) established that the diversity of evaluations augments the value of reviews, with its influence fluctuating based on the sentiment of each review; the beneficial impact of various evaluations is particularly significant in the realm of negative reviews. Third-party rating variables exert an influence on hotel purchase and booking decisions (Ladhari & Michaud, 2015; Liu et al., 2023). Customers exposed to a higher volume of product suggestions within a particular category tend to enhance their search activity in that category,

suggesting a complementarity between recommendations and searches (Mariani et al., 2023; Yuan et al., 2024). Thus, it can be deduced that customers' interactions with social media platforms shape their perceptions of these platforms, which in turn influences their attitudes towards the hotel brand, ultimately affecting their intentions to book a stay and share their experiences via electronic word-of-mouth (Li et al., 2024).

Shin et al. (2023) assert that hotel organisations ought to emphasise their strengths by leveraging exceptionally great ratings as a review-centric strategy. The management of online reviews is associated with an enhancement in digital reputation. Farias et al. (2022) assert that openly expressing thankfulness and explicitly acknowledging positive online evaluations are helpful strategies that contribute to an overall enhancement of a hotel's online rating.

In contrast, adverse attitudes elicit immediate bad reviews, whereas favourable sentiments forecast a good review within the content, emerging as a predictive determinant of hotel performance, succeeded by reactions to negative feedback (Sparks & Browning, 2011b; Allard et al., 2020).

Hotel performance enhances when overall reviews grow increasingly favourable, and the hotel addresses criticism more adeptly (Veloso et al., 2024). A direct reply from the manager to unfavourable and inconsistent reviews greatly impacts consumers' perceived utility (Jin et al., 2023). Trust in a high rating is contingent upon the quantity of reviews, but, for a poor rating, the amount of reviews does not affect trust (Gavilan et al., 2018).

#### 1.2.2. Popularity

The ability to learn by observing the decisions of others and their outcomes, referred to as social learning, is essential to human evolutionary advancement and cultural accomplishments. A product labelled as popular affects consumers' views of its quality, creating a cognitive link between high demand and greater product quality (Primasewi et al., 2021). Additionally, buyers utilise a product's ratings as a benchmark for quality when making judgements (Ali et al., 2022).

Research in consumer behaviour (Magnini et al., 2013) robustly supports the claim that a brand's statement of popularity markedly increases purchase intentions among consumers with unfavourable attitudes towards a certain purchasing action. In certain circumstances, individuals tend to prefer a product with a greater number of evaluations over one with less (Powell et al., 2017). Consequently, using a recommendation system centred on information distribution and social network

popularity enhances system efficiency (Yazdi et al., 2019). Combining a high rating with substantial popularity amplifies the efficacy of the resultant reviews in comparison to a high rating alone (Saia et al., n.d.). The similarity-attraction theory posits that favourable evaluations are positively connected with consumers' intentions to reserve a hotel (Chan et al., 2017; Wen et al., 2020a).

Consumer preferences generally increase with the quantity of reviews, irrespective of the average rating being high or low (Viglia et al., 2014). Critical determinants affecting prospective clients encompass hotel pricing, promotional incentives, aggregate ratings, review quantity, and booking patterns, although discrepancies in rates across various websites exert negligible influence on their decision-making process. (Hu & Yang, 2020).

### 1.2.3. Scarcity

The approach of employing product scarcity to improve market performance is a well-documented phenomena that has attracted growing interest from both academics and industry experts (Shi et al., 2020). In the environment of scarcity, consumer perceptions of quality and economic sacrifice display differing behaviours driven by price levels and the consumers' incentive to digest information (Suri et al., 2007). Scarcity of limited quantities primarily influences perceived social status, hence increasing desirability (T. Y. Chen et al., 2021). Prior research has demonstrated that scarcity messages prompt consumers to see products as more exclusive, unique, and valuable, hence enhancing their evaluations of those things (Jang et al., 2015; Aggarwal et al., 2011). In the tourism sector, models that integrate variables such as perceptions, images, attitudes, emotions, cultural conditioning, and learning have markedly improved our comprehension of tourist behaviour; however, the influence of scarcity as a motivational factor is pivotal in elucidating various facets of consumer behaviour in tourism (Gnoth, 1997; Sirakaya & Woodside, 2005). Li et al. (2021) posited that the interplay between time scarcity and travel experience markedly affects visitors' impulsive purchasing behaviour. A motivated individual acts in response to psychological or physiological cues, ultimately seeking to fulfil a perceived need or achieve a desired

objective (Dunn Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991; Fodness, 1994). In contrast, Trinh Anh (2014) determined that, within a high-search-ease scenario in the e-commerce sector, scarcity had no substantial impact. In a scenario of minimal search ease, only the scarcity message phrased as a stringent time constraint linked to a price promotion substantially influences consumer purchase intentions.

### 1.3. Mediation of Susceptibility in the Decision-Making Process

The preferences of other consumers often significantly influence individual selections. The propensity of an individual to emulate others is ascribed to the bandwagon effect or herd behaviour (C. W. Park & Lessig, 1977). An individual's reaction is influenced by the behaviour of others. The legitimacy of influencers markedly improves consumers' perceptions of a brand's products, consequently elevating their purchase intentions and demonstrating herd behaviour (Su et al., 2023). Consumers frequently conform to the majority instead of proactively seeking information to reach a conclusive judgement. It is presumed that the purchasing decision is accurate and secure through imitation (Ha et al., 2016). Chen (2008) shown that individuals utilise product evaluations and the decisions of others as indicators while selecting books in an online bookshop. This phenomenon is also evident in the hotel business. The references in earlier sections indicate that reviews, ratings, scarcity, and popularity are mechanisms that enhance a site's ranking. Nonetheless, the mechanism underlying this phenomenon remains unexamined, as does the extent of the impact of independent variables on hotel lodging choices. It is essential to account for susceptibility to prevent potential biases in statistical outcomes.

## 2. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The framework delineating the methodology employed in the research comprises multiple phases: identifying variables for the experimental design, developing scenarios and performing corresponding exploratory testing, specifying factors, and analysing research outcomes. FIGURE 1 substantiates the methodological design implemented.



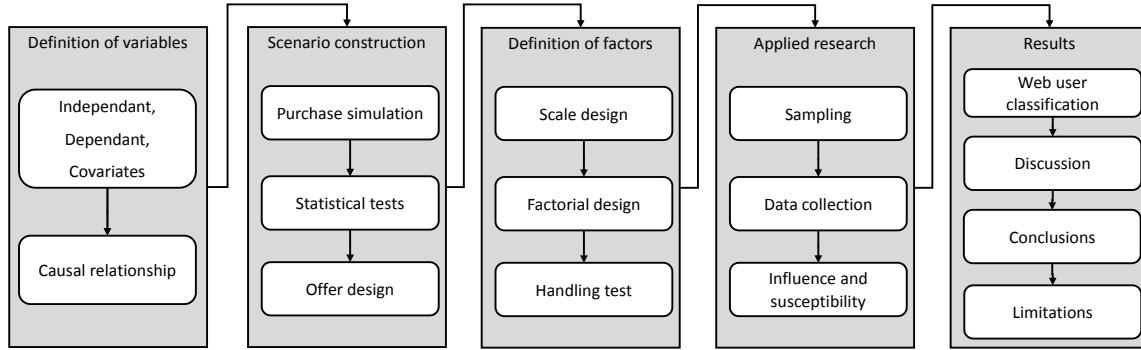


Figure 1: Methodological Research Design.

## 2.1. Initial Simulation

Before delineating the variables for the experimental design, an exploratory inquiry was essential to accurately identify and comprehend the variables, as well as to define and validate their respective levels (many vs. few reviews, high vs. low rating, popularity, scarcity). A survey was constructed utilising a 5-point Likert scale, encompassing enquiries about acquaintance with lodging websites, engagement in previous reviews and ratings, and the evaluation of popularity and scarcity factors. The survey was administered in person to 75 tourists and formed the foundation for delineating several scenarios or lodging offer designs. A preliminary average price of \$350,000 COP for a 4-star hotel was determined by examining multiple hotel websites, lodging platforms, and pricing specialists. This price corresponds with the respondents' budget for enquiries concerning scarcity and popularity. Eighty percent of respondents deemed the design of the site or hotel offers comparable to those available online, awarding a score of 4.0 out of 5.0 for both the design's

likeness and the quality of the information provided.

**The results of this exploratory phase suggest the following categorizations**

- "Many" reviews: 80 or more.
- "Few" reviews: 11 or fewer.
- On a 1-to-10 scale, a high rating corresponds to values above 8.7, while a low rating corresponds to values below 4.
- High popularity for a tourist site corresponds to 50 reservations in the last 24 hours, while low popularity corresponds to 1 reservation in the last 24 hours.
- High scarcity refers to 3 or fewer rooms available at the listed rate, whereas low scarcity corresponds to 30 or more rooms available.

## 2.2. Scenario Design

**A total of 16 scenarios were designed, resulting from the combination of the following factors**

2 Levels of Reviews  $\times$  2 Levels of Ratings  $\times$  2 Levels of Popularity  $\times$  2 Levels of Scarcity. The combinations are presented in TABLE 1.

Table 1: Proposed Scenarios for Experimental Design.

Offer	Number of reviews	Independent variable		
		Rating	Popularity	Scarcity
Offer 1	Low	Low	Low	Low
Offer 2	High	Low	Low	Low
Offer 3	Low	High	Low	Low
Offer 4	High	High	Low	Low
Offer 5	Low	Low	High	Low
Offer 6	High	Low	High	Low
Offer 7	Low	High	High	Low
Offer 8	High	High	High	Low
Offer 9	Low	Low	Low	High
Offer 10	High	Low	Low	High
Offer 11	Low	High	Low	High
Offer 12	High	High	Low	High
Offer 13	Low	Low	High	High
Offer 14	High	Low	High	High
Offer 15	Low	High	High	High
Offer 16	High	High	High	High

The experimental design model served as a fundamental instrument for identifying phenomena of variable correlation (Montgomery, 2005; Borror et

al., 2018). A questionnaire was created for each scenario, integrating its corresponding combinations. The design and visuals of the offer were generated

using Leonardo AI, based on a prompt detailing a hotel characterised by understated elegance and mid-

tier luxury. The aforementioned is depicted in FIGURE 2



Figure 2: Design of a Tourist Offer (Offer 7).

### 2.3. Sampling

A total of 640 questionnaires were administered in person via a non-probabilistic sampling method to travellers from the region. Each respondent was randomly assigned to one of the 16 scenarios, which were developed based on a mix of parameters, resulting in 40 surveys per offer design. A vacation trip scenario to a tourist destination was initially presented. The study sought to assess the impact of the Number of Reviews, Ratings, Scarcity, and Popularity on travellers' attention, intention, information processing, and chance of booking. This was influenced by the susceptibility factor. At the onset of the survey, participants were engaged in a vacation scenario. The hotel website design was utilised for the room booking requirement, with a budget of \$350,000 COP per night. Upon examining the site information, responders saw that the hotel

received a rating of 9.8, accumulated 1,478 reviews, had been booked 50 times, and just one room remained available at that price. Participants were thereafter directed: "Kindly review the information provided by the hotel and respond to the questions in the questionnaire."

### 2.4. Model Variables

Three types of variables were defined for use in the context of a tourist site, following an experimental design approach

- **Independent Variables:** Number of Reviews, Ratings, Popularity, and Scarcity
- **Dependent Variables:** Attention, Information, Intention, and Booking Likelihood
- **Covariate:** Susceptibility

The details of the variables and scales are presented in TABLE 2.

Table 2: Scales Used in the Instrument.

Variable	Sub variable	Scale type
Attention	Attracts attention	Likert 5 From totally disagree to totally agree
	View more details	
	Focus on reviews	
	Focus on evaluation	
	Focus on scarcity	
	Focus on popularity	
Information	Useful for decision-making	
	Enough information	
	Organization	
	Reliability	
Intention	Interest in the offer	
	Viable alternative for the offer	
	Selection intention	
Probability	Probability of booking the hotel online	Numerical scale from 0 (low probability) to 10 (high probability)
Susceptibility	Consults with others	Likert 7 From totally disagree to totally agree
	Reference to others	
	Relies on others' opinions	
	Impression on others	
	Compares products like others do	
	Approval from others	
	Identification with others	
	Purchases based on others' preferences	
	Sense of belonging	

The Bearden scale was utilised to assess consumer susceptibility to interpersonal impact about the covariate susceptibility. This technique for sensitivity analysis assesses the relative significance that consumers assign to various product or service attributes during their purchasing decisions (Bearden et al., 1989). This measurement scale employs a 7-point Likert system, extending from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. Manipulation Test

This phase is necessary because it allows for identifying whether tourists perceive the differences in the levels of the independent factors or variables as expected. Tourists were asked to evaluate the offer or tourism site after observing it, considering elements such as the number of reviews, ratings, popularity, scarcity, and other factors specific to the research.

For the variable number of reviews, the question posed was: "I perceive that there are few reviews for this hotel."

For the variable rating, the question was: "I perceive that this hotel has a low rating."

For the variable popularity, the question stated: "I observe that numerous individuals have booked hotel rooms within the last 24 hours."

For the variable scarcity, the question was: "I perceive that there are many rooms available in the hotel."

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted, as recommended by Sparks and Browning (2011), Ladhari and Michaud (2015), and Kim and Jang (2014). The results indicated statistically significant differences between the categories of "many" and "few" reviews, "high" and "low" ratings, popularity, and scarcity, as presented in TABLE 3. These findings demonstrate that tourists' perceptions align with the objectives set for the manipulation phase.

Table 3: Independent Sample T Test Results.

Variable	Level	N	Mean	Standard Error	t-value
Reviews	Few	320	3,7	0,072	14,706*
	Many	320	2,1	0,072	
Ratings	Low	320	3,9	0,067	19,563*
	High	320	2,0	0,065	
Popularity	Low	320	1,8	0,044	-37,537*
	High	320	4,1	0,045	
Scarcity	Low	320	4,2	0,042	43,627*
	High	320	1,7	0,039	

\*: 95% p value < 0.001

The non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was utilised as a supplementary measure due to the

characteristics of the ordinal polytomous variables for the 16 offers, as advised by Leung et al. (2016), Chen and Schwartz (2008), and Molinillo et al. (2016). For the four stimulus or perception enquiries concerning the tourism offer, with an asymptotic significance of 0.000, there exists a disparity in the medians of at least one group among the 16 assessed in the offer design for each variable.

#### 3.2. Web User Profile

All respondents (100%) are web users, comprising 46% men and 54% women. Of these, 79% are aged between 18 and 35, indicating a predominantly young audience. Regarding travel habits, respondents take an average of two trips. The population is active on three social media platforms and spends an average of four hours per week online.

Age does not influence the probability of booking (p-value = 0.060), but the time spent online (p-value = 0.021) and the number of linked social networks (p-value = 0.044) do. To conduct a detailed analysis of web usage, based on ten Likert-scale (5-point, ranging from "Never" to "Very Frequently") questions about web use, it was necessary to establish a model for classifying, characterizing, and validating different groups of respondents.

For this purpose, the hierarchical cluster analysis method was employed, generating a dendrogram with a Euclidean distance cut and Ward's method, resulting in three clusters. Validation was achieved using ANOVA, which produced a significance value of 0.000, confirming the creation of clusters with significant differences among them.

To create the chart, principal component analysis (PCA) was utilised to reduce the number of factors, using the KMO test for two factors. This yielded a variance percentage exceeding 60%, making the results suitable for administrative and market studies.

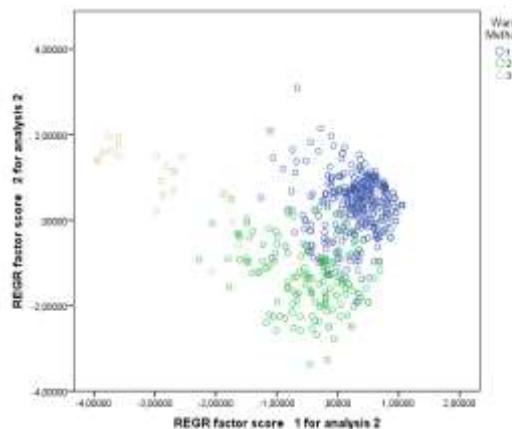


Figure 3: Typology of Users According to Website Use.

Factor 1 (x-axis) was named "Web Task-Oriented Users," while Factor 2 was labeled "Web Entertainment-Oriented Users."

**Based on these factors, users were classified into three clusters as follows:**

**Cluster 1** This group, with few members, consists of individuals with a low level of web use for task-related activities, such as transactions, training, work-related support, or reading news, but a high level of web use for entertainment purposes. This aligns with the age range of the majority of respondents.

**Cluster 2** This group strikes a balance between the two factors but leans more toward web use for task-related support activities, with a lower level of web use for entertainment purposes.

**Cluster 3** This cluster includes users who combine the two factors proportionally. It is the largest cluster,

characterized by high levels of web use for both task support and entertainment purposes.

The behaviour of the described phenomenon is reflected in FIGURE 3.

### 3.3. Main Effects of the Independent Variables

Reviews presented on tourism sites significantly influence the information they generate, user interest, and the likelihood of booking the site, but they do not impact the attention of tourists. This pattern is also observed with third-party ratings.

In contrast, scarcity (number of available rooms) and popularity (number of room bookings in the last 24 hours) stimulate tourists' attention, the required information, their interest, and significantly affect the probability of booking. The statistical validation of the described results is presented in TABLE 4.

**Table 4: ANOVA Results from the Experimental Design of the Impact Degree of Reviews, Ratings, Popularity, and Scarcity, their Interaction, and the Influence of Susceptibility on the dependent Variables of the Study.**

Variables Independientes	Variables Dependientes			
	Atencion	Informacion	Interes	Probabilidad
Resenas	F=2,15	F=27,55	F=19,37	F=47,41
(A)	p-value=0,115	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001
Calificaciones	F=0,45	F=21,90	F=95,75	F=128,13
(B)	p-value=0,504	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001
Escaser	F=1744	F=27,15	F=0,37	F=5,16
(C)	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001	p-value=0,543	p-value=0,023
Popularidad	F=5,80	F=18,20	F=20,4	F=47,59
(D)	p-value=0,016	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001
Interaccion	F=3,85	F=4,20	F=7,51	F=4,43
2 vias	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001
A*B	F=0,01	F=5,49	F=7,48	F=5,61
	p-value=0,930	p-value=0,015	p-value=0,005	p-value=0,018
A*C	F=0,43	F=1,05	F=0,05	F=0,03
	p-value=0,512	p-value=0,306	p-value=0,821	p-value=0,860
A*D	F=0,03	F=0,00	F=31,51s	F=8,83
	p-value=0,854	p-value=0,971	p-value<0,001	p-value=0,003
B*C	F=0,89	F=14,47	F=0,65	F=3,29
	p-value=0,345	p-value<0,001	p-value=0,0421	p-value=0,07
B*D	F=3,64	F=0,29	F=1,42	F=0,64
	p-value=0,057	p-value=0,591	p-value=0,234	p-value=0,423
C*D	F=18,08	F=3,32	F=3,96	F=8,22
	p-value<0,001	p-value=0,069	p-value=0,047	p-value=0,002
3 vias	F=1,01	F=10,07	F=17,13	F=14,37
	p-value=0,400	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001
A*B*C	F=0,76	F=1,52	F=30,18	F=8,48
	p-value=0,384	p-value=0,218	p-value<0,001	p-value=0,004
A*B*D	F=2,2	F=2,98	F=5,06	F=0,99
	p-value=0,139	p-value=0,085	p-value=0,025	p-value=0,319
A*C*D	F=0,25	F=14,51	F=15,49	F=16,27
	p-value=0,617	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001
B*C*D	F=0,89	F=21,84	F=19,20	F=32,62
	p-value=0,346	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001
4 vias	F=3,49	F=1,38	F=6,13	F=0,09
	p-value=0,046	p-value=0,241	p-value=0,014	p-value=0,764
A*B*C*D	F=3,49	F=1,38	F=6,13	F=0,09
	p-value=0,046	p-value=0,241	p-value=0,014	p-value=0,764
Covariate	F=0,08	F=2,02	F=18,31	F=20,68
susceptibilidad	p-value=0,789	p-value<0,155	p-value<0,001	p-value<0,001

It is presented that there is a greater effect of the reviews when requesting information by the tourist, as there is a larger range in the result of the averages (few and many) for this dependent variable. The probability of booking is mostly influenced by the Rating given by third parties to the site, over other variables such as the Number of reviews, scarcity, or popularity. Regarding the site information (usefulness, reliability), popularity, whether high or low, is the most influential variable. By way of example, the behaviour of the probability variable is shown in FIGURE 5.

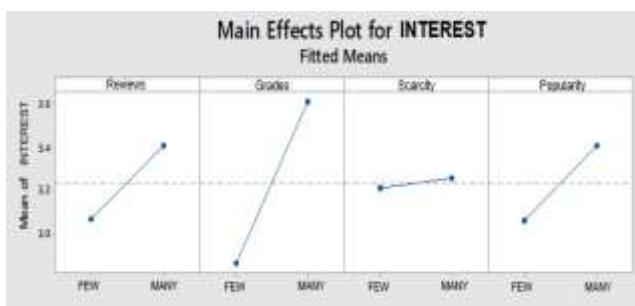


Figure 4: Main Effects Chart of the Independent Variables on the Interest Variable.

Now, if the goal is to spark interest in the site, the recommendation is to pay attention to the results of extreme ratings, as observed in FIGURE 4. On the other hand, it is better to have tourist sites that feature high scarcity in their advertising, which grabs attention strongly (few rooms available), as this, on average, yields better results than the other independent variables separately.

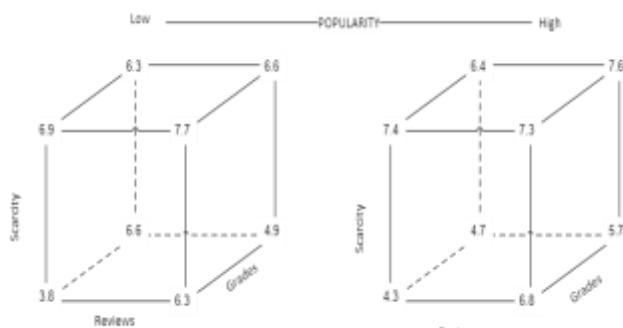


Figure 5: Experiment Data for the Booking Probability Variable Based on the 4 Independent Variables.

### 3.4. Effects of Interaction of Independent Variables

The suggested model included six two-way interaction terms, four three-way interaction terms, and one four-way interaction term, as indicated in TABLE 4. Concerning the allure generated by the attention the site attracts. In the two-way analysis,

only the interaction between scarcity and popularity was significant, but in the four-way interaction, the combination of reviews, ratings, scarcity, and popularity was significant. If the variable of interest is Site Information, the binary interactions of ratings and scarcity, as well as reviews and ratings, are pertinent. The three-way interactions that produce an effect for this variable are ratings, scarcity, and popularity.

The influence of reviews is substantial in generating tourist interest when the ratings are elevated. The impact of numerous evaluations is substantial when coupled with great popularity, as is the combination of scarcity and popularity, which has considerable consequences. All independent variables exhibit interactions in both three-way and four-way contexts.

The two-way interaction must integrate reviews and ratings, together with reviews and popularity, to influence booking probability, aligning with the social effect. Equally, the integration of scarcity and popularity is crucial. The three-way interaction among reviews, ratings, and popularity exhibits no effect, nor does the four-way interaction.

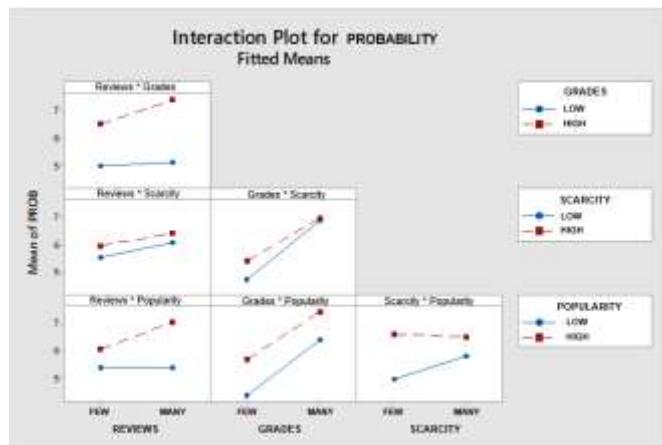


Figure 6: Interaction Graph of the Independent Variables on the Reserve Probability Variable.

The optimal environment for a tourist site to enhance engagement, provide necessary information, generate interest, and increase booking likelihood is characterised by a combination of numerous reviews, high ratings, significant scarcity, and elevated popularity (FIGURE 6). All independent variables are significant to the investigation, and based on the statistical results, it is impractical to eliminate any of them to streamline the experiment.

### 3.5. Effect of the Susceptibility Covariate

To derive a result for this covariate, 10 questions

employing a 7-point Likert scale were utilised, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.922. The scale developed by Bearden et al. (1989) was employed to assess the extent of vulnerability to third-party influence on individual decision-making.

Individuals pursue information from proximate and trustworthy sources, while also enhancing their sense of identity and belonging to a social group, alongside the opportunity to learn from the experiences of others and how these shape their own decisions (Park and Lessig, 1977), thereby influencing consumer behaviour.

It was established that susceptibility considerably influences tourists' interest in the site and the likelihood of booking ( $p$  value  $< 0.001$ ), although it does not alter the attention tourists give or the information the site may elicit.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to assess the extent to which the variables Reviews, Ratings, Scarcity, and Popularity affect Attention, Information, Interest, and the Booking Probability of tourists for a tourist location, mediated by the covariate Susceptibility, utilising a  $2^4$  experimental design. The characterisation of web users aids in comprehending the utilisation of the medium facilitating interactions between individual perceptions and those of third parties regarding tourist destinations. Whether utilised for professional tasks or leisure, the web offers insight into users' engagement with the instrument, which serves as the foundation for the study. Online hotel reservations have become a common habit among potential travellers, with user-generated content (UGC), such as online customer reviews, significantly influencing hotel room sales (Baka, 2016; Chan et al., 2017; Yachin, 2018).

At present, online reputation is a vital element for hotel enterprises, owing to the heightened sensitivity and considerable impact of consumer electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) activities on operational success (Diéguez-Soto et al., 2017). Wen et al. (2020) assert that booking intentions rise with positive evaluations but decline markedly with unfavourable reviews. Similarly, the increase in online review activity has led to the problem of counterfeit or deceptive reviews (Yoo and Gretzel, 2009). These misleading tactics are often utilised to either enhance or detract from tourism enterprises using a method referred to as "digital deception" (Choi et al., 2016). Deceptive reviews mislead consumers and may consequently affect the brand image or reputation of hotels, utilising methods such as artificial intelligence, virtual assistants, or online public

relations specialists (Wu et al., 2020).

The study's findings indicate that an increase in the number of reviews, ratings, scarcity, and popularity correlates with heightened consumer interest, a greater intention to seek information, and an elevated likelihood of booking. The attention garnered by the tourist site is unaffected by the quantity of reviews or external evaluations, yet it is influenced when scarcity and popularity are simultaneously elevated. Conversely, interest in the site increases when ratings and scarcity are elevated, or when scarcity is coupled with high popularity. Notably, with only seven evaluations, the average for low popularity (one room booked in the past 24 hours) exceeds that of high popularity (fifty rooms booked in the last 24 hours). The mean of low popularity diminishes when the site accumulates numerous reviews. The intention to reserve the hotel is optimised when all independent factors are elevated. Indeed, ratings are important in influencing their behaviour, regardless of whether they are elevated or diminished. The likelihood of a hotel reaching full occupancy influences its booking tendency (Schwartz, 2012). The three-way interaction indicates that reviews, ratings, and scarcity affect booking probability, alongside the interplay of reviews, ratings, and popularity on the site's generated interest. Reviews, popularity, and scarcity influence information, interest, and the likelihood of booking. The four-way interaction influences the factors of attention and interest. The findings of Pan et al. (2024), Wang et al. (2022), Anggita et al. (2022), Park et al. (2017), Camilleri and Filieri (2023), and Alshammare et al. (2022) substantiate the assertion that reviews and ratings are pertinent in the decision-making process regarding accommodations.

The findings indicate that excluding any independent variables is impractical; rather, they enhance the research model, demonstrating that all variables contribute to influencing attention, the necessary information, produced curiosity, and the likelihood of site booking.

Susceptibility, as a covariate indicating the extent of third-party influence on individual purchase intentions, significantly impacts user interest in the website and the likelihood of booking; however, it does not influence the variables of attention and site information. This aligns with the findings of Lee and Cranage (2010) and Chinedu (2024), who, utilising social influence theory, established that individuals are more inclined to trust the perspectives of fellow customers on websites.

Huang et al. (2020) similarly determined that online social support elucidates customers' intents in

social commerce. User trust in hotels and confidence in third-party booking websites positively affect their desire to persist in utilising these channels for reservations (Khoa et al., 2022).

This study employs a complex factorial  $2^4$  experimental design model, incorporating the covariate of susceptibility, in contrast to other studies that focus on a limited number of independent variables such as reviews, ratings, and popularity (Xiang and Gretzel, 2010b; Tsao et al., 2015; Ali et al., 2022; K. Park et al., 2017; Gao and Guan, 2020; Sayfuddin and Chen, 2021). It examines the outcomes of the primary effects of each independent variable, in addition to the two-way, three-way, and four-way interactions, incorporating the susceptibility covariate, which enhances the study's robustness.

This study uniquely identifies the extent to which independent variables influence four outcome variables—attention, information, interest, and booking probability—with within the tourism business. Moreover, the utilisation of a primary information source comprising over 600 surveys, each featuring 40 instruments per offer design, enhances the reliability of the statistical outcomes.

The findings of this study offer a significant basis for decision-makers in the corporate sector, tourism associations or clusters, and the hotel industry. This research is distinguished by its provision of useful insights into how independent variables, through main effects or interactions, influence tourists' perceptions of information presentation on a website. Consequently, measures might be implemented to enhance websites, in accordance with the research findings.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The study concludes that reviews, ratings, scarcity, and popularity significantly influence the information that piques tourists' interest in a site, their engagement, and the likelihood of booking; however, these factors do not capture their attention, which pertains to attraction and design specifics. Reviews exert the most substantial influence on the information elicited, ratings considerably affect interest and booking likelihood, scarcity attracts travellers' attention, and popularity is more closely aligned with the necessary information. Providing hotel websites with numerous reviews, elevated ratings, and significant popularity is likely to draw

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new consumers through the allure of curiosity. The quality of the information is crucial when showcasing the site, as it enhances booking likelihood and fosters confidence among potential clients.

To enhance the likelihood of bookings, it is advisable to develop a website that concurrently showcases numerous reviews, as well as elements of scarcity and popularity. The interplay between ratings and scarcity yields negligible consequences. The results are evident in the two-way interaction, which does not influence all four dependent variables; the three-way interaction impacts all combinations and the booking probability, except when it includes reviews, ratings, and popularity, aligning with the four-way interaction. When susceptibility is seen as a covariate, its influence on the created interest and the likelihood of booking becomes apparent. There is no impact on attention or the necessary knowledge.

The conclusions are robust about the multiple model specifications and provide valuable implications for hotels to manage reviews, ratings, popularity, and scarcity on the platform in a cohesive manner. Injecting financial resources into initiatives that enhance the volume of favourable comments, elevate ratings, and increase popularity, so creating site scarcity, is advantageous for the hotel. The herd effect also initiates a snowball effect regarding third-party perceptions. Notwithstanding the substantial contributions of the study, there exist limitations pertaining to: The hypothetical setting of the scenarios, while beneficial for this type of research, may yield different results if the experimental design is used in real-world situations. The potential for extrapolating results through inferential methods exists; however, although the sample size is substantial, it is confined to a certain domain, necessitating more diversified samples and varied methodologies for inferential processes. The independent variables, while more numerous than in prior studies, omit essential factors such as price and quality; these variables, because of their significant variability, remain uncontrolled and are constrained in this sort of research. The quantity of evaluations, whether many or sparse, does not take into account their content and mood. These elements may provide substantial and varied impacts on the statistical outcomes.

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