

Sustainable E-marketing of Selected Tourism Subjects from the Mediterranean Through Active Online Reputation Management

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Abstract. The paper discusses the issue of sustainable e-marketing of the selected tourism subjects from Mediterranean through active online reputation management, more specifically it presents the available ways and methods of measuring the phenomenon of online reputation of selected entities operating in the tourism sector on selected market. A thorough multifactor analysis of reputation in the virtual world of the Internet was conducted on a specific sample of entities - all hotels operating in a selected local Mediterranean destination. Taking into account all the relevant factors - entities ratings on major internet sites such as Booking, TripAdvisor a Facebook, these ratings are normalized and then compared against the widespread sentiment analysis. Using a careful statistical testing, relationships between factors are then examined in order to identify and describe basic facts affecting online reputation of selected entities in the hyper competitive market environment of the Internet.

Keywords: Sustainable e-marketing · Online reputation · Reputator · Internet · Destinations

1 Introduction

Reputation is a concept commonly used in marketing management and it generally means an overall presence on the market. From the point of view of Internet we can compare it to leaving footprints. All activities are interconnected and complement one another [1]. Each institution has a reputation or online reputation, whether they want it, or not; the reputation does exist [2]. If an entrepreneurs running their own businesses (or managing an institutions), they should not leave their reputation to chance. It is their ultimate responsibility. Company's reputation is considered to be very valuable asset. As George Washington once said "With a reputation you can do anything without one, nothing" [3]. However, if we consider corporate reputation, its definition is a bit

complicated [4]. Balmer and Greyser [5] characterize corporate reputation as such which is created over time based on what the organization did and how it behaved. Company's or corporate reputation only reflects relative standing of the company, both internally with its employees and externally with other stakeholders, in both its competitive and institutional environments. Highhouse defines corporate reputation as a global, stable over time, evaluative judgement about a company that is shared by multiple constituencies [6]. It is a pure reaction of customers, investors, employees and other stakeholders. It is a collective judgement of individual impressions [7].

1.1 The Issue of Reputation in the Context of Trust

Trust fulfils every organisation in a million of different ways. No institution can function without it. Trust is a strong belief that we can rely on someone [8]. Shaw offers alternative definition; he defines the concept of trust as a belief that those on whom we depend will meet our expectations of them [9]. These expectations depend on our critical judgement of other person's responsibility to meet our needs. Generally accepted definition of trust is still missing despite comprehensive studies of philosophers, sociologists and psychologists [10]. It is easier to identify individual features of trust than to determine exactly what it means. We agree, that trust (or symmetrically, distrust) is a particular level of the subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents will perform a particular action, both before he can monitor such action (or independently of his capacity ever to be able to monitor it) and in a context in which it affects his own action [11]. An agent is generally an individual or a thing (entity) which affects the environment or other agents and has characteristic and its own targets which it strives to achieve. The contextuality of trust means that the trust of entity "A" towards entity "B" is always dependent on certain context "C". We'd like to point out the work of Jøsang et al. [12] who deals with "the issue of trust" (in terms of creating trust, establishing credibility and making decisions on the basis of credibility). Trust is an oriented relationship between two parties called the subject and the object. The term oriented is used in the sense of clear distinction of resources (subject) and goals (object) of the relationship. The authors further define two types of trust: Context-independent (reliability trust) - where trust is the subjective probability by which an individual "A" expects that another individual "B" performs a given action on which its welfare depends; and Context-dependent (decision-trust) - Trust is the extent to which one party is willing to depend on something or somebody in a given situation with a feeling of relative security, even though negative consequences are possible.

1.2 Classification of Models Based on Trust and Reputation

Sabater and Sierra in their work Review on Computational Trust and Reputation Models [13] have specified classifications which focus on major models and try to find common features based on which individual classification methods and their categories are designed. Basic classification criterion is the so called model type.

Model type means whether the model works with trust or a reputation.

- models of trust – work only with trust,
- models of reputation – work only with reputation,
- hybrid models – work both with trust and reputation.

According to these authors, models can be classified on the basis of determining the origin of information (knowledge) which is used for the evaluation of reputation, as well as confidence. These include: direct experience, hearsay information, sociological knowledge and prejudice.

1.3 From the Image to the Reputation

Companies and organizations in common have invested large amounts of financial resources and hired agencies and marketing professionals to prepare communication campaigns to support such brand image that would create an incentive for the customers to make purchases [14]. Companies prefer to focus primarily on the image and leave the reputation behind [15]. Image is not a guarantee of positive comments and recommendations. These will only be achieved due to good reputation [14]. In other words, the foundation of modern marketing is not the image which the organization strives to create, but the reputation which it has actually established. As regards the image and reputation, Bennet and Kottasz point out time dimension (time of creation) as the main characteristics which distinguish these two constructs. In other words, organization's image can be created in a short time. Reputation is generated in a longer time frame, and therefore cannot be changed or redirected as quickly as the image [15]. Such an approach is also supported by Jackson [16] who argue that the time of establishment or creation is one of the main differences between the image (short time of creation) and reputation (long time of creation). Fill [17] perceives reputation as wider set of images. He is also of the opinion that changing reputation is more time consuming and difficult while image can be influenced much faster. Therefore, it may be said that reputation and image are not synonymous, as some authors point out, yet they are closely related and interdependent elements. Reputation of any organisation is composed of three forms, i.e. primary, secondary and cyclic. Fombrun and Foss [18] defined reputation as collective assessment of the organization's ability to provide valuable product, service or other value to a group of customers. They have developed a scale that measures corporate reputation, which they call corporate reputation quotient (RQ). RQ is a complex method of measuring corporate reputation [19]. The building of corporate reputation has been primarily attributed to the area of marketing and communication. Nowadays the corporate reputation has been integrated into human resource management and corporate strategy. Reputation is communicated to the public by the organisation's managers [20]. It is generally accepted that reputation begins from the inside out. It is good if the organisation takes care of its reputation, and they emphasized the following factors [18]:

- The Principle of Distinctiveness - Strong reputations result when organizations own a distinctive position in the minds of customers.

- The Principle of Focus - Strong reputations result when organizations focus their actions and communications around a single core theme.
- The Principle of Consistency - Strong reputations result when organizations are consistent in their actions and communications with internal, as well as external environment.
- The Principle of Identity - Strong reputations result when organizations act in ways that are consistent with espoused principles of identity. The main task is that the organizations are perceived as real by its customers and the public.
- The Principle of Transparency - Strong reputations result when organizations are transparent in the way they conduct their affairs. In particular, organizations should be perceived as open and honest in their business activities. Transparency requires communication - a lot of it.

1.4 Reputation in Online Environment

Walsh and Beatty argues that reputation in life and business is everything [19]. It means that reputation is very fragile and one mistake may sometimes cause irreversible damage. This is especially true in the digital world, where radical transparency and demanding customers have the greatest power. If the Internet offers consumers a new way to share information about companies and brands, then it also allows the companies to control information about them [1]. Consumers are able to obtain information on potential suppliers and products, but they can also create new content on the Internet which may affect the perception of other consumers and stakeholders of the respective organization. Negative comments on the Internet can quickly and seriously damage the image and reputation of the brand [21]. eWOM (electronic word of mouth) is an important part of online reputation - this form of communication may be defined as any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or organization via the Internet [22]. Loayza [23] presents basic principles of online reputation management which he divides into various segments such as Quick Fix, Long-Lasting, Content Driven and Relationship Driven.

2 Aims and Methods

The paper presents partial results of a complex research of the issue of online reputation, more specifically the ways and methods of its measurements in selected entities operating in the tourism sector. The main objective of the paper is to present options for measuring online reputation of selected entities operating in the tourism sector with an aim to increase their competitiveness through a better understanding of the basic determinants of effective management of online reputation. Based on the current state of the issue theoretical knowledge and bases were accumulated, that provide knowledge base for the subsequent empirical research.

A thorough multifactor analysis of reputation in the virtual world of the Internet was conducted on a specific sample of entities – All hotels operating in a selected local destination (overall 31 hotels). Taking into account all the relevant factors - entities

ratings on major internet sites such as Booking, TripAdvisor a Facebook, these ratings are normalized (recalculated to percentages) and then compared against the advanced sentiment analysis (ASA), which provides a relevant perspective on a selected entity through the eyes of a model customer - Internet user. For the purposes of better understanding of relations affecting the reputation of selected entities on the Internet from the perspective of their potential, as well as existing customers, methodology of advanced sentiment analysis is presented as default. In essence, it is a thorough analysis of positions and nature of individual search results of a given entity according to its usual name mediated by the Google search engine. Based on the position in the search these results are awarded points in accordance with a preset matrix (Table 1):

Table 1. Sentiment individual results/position of results [24].

Sentiment/Position of the result	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Positive sentiment (+)	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11
Custom web site of the organization (x)	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Neutral sentiment (±)	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Negative sentiment (-)	-20	-19	-18	-17	-16	-15	-14	-13	-12	-11

A summary of all the results and the positions represents the score of online reputation of the particular entity/subject. As a part of advanced sentiment analysis usual subject name is parallelly testes using the same methodology, where the name is supplemented by the first and most important keyword, in this case “accommodation” and then by the second keyword - “services”. The scores are then added up. Compared to the theoretically highest achievable score the total strength of entity’s online reputation by advanced sentiment analysis - ASA score is calculated and provided in percentage.¹

Relations among factors (online reputation score based on the advanced sentiment analysis compared to the indices of reputation offered by the main Internet players, such as Booking, TripAdvisor a Facebook provide as a part of their ratings) were then examined in thorough statistical testing using non-parametrical methods, such as Kendall rank coefficient, or Kruskal–Wallis one-way analysis of variance, in order to identify and describe basic facts affecting online reputation of selected entities in the hypercompetitive market environment of the Internet.

¹ For better clarity the methodology is supplemented by the parameter of percentage evaluation of the score relative to the maximum possible number of points obtained within the advanced analysis of sentiment (maximum possible number of points = 465, 1p = 0.215 %).

3 Results and Discussion

Each of the set of selected entities, in this case, all the hotels in the Mediterranean destination of Opatija (located 10 km west from Rijeka, in the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County), try to shape their reputation both within real and virtual world through their management. For the purposes of our research, we focused on the virtual world of the Internet.

3.1 Overview Table of Partial Score

Using the advanced sentiment analysis (ASA), we calculated partial score presenting the power of online reputation of entities based on the nature of the first 10 Google search results. Google and its search results are, however, only one of many ways in which potential customers can access relevant information.

Considering the previous research in the field of tourism, we identified the following other determinants of online reputation (reputators) of tourism entities, in particular:

- ratings from [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com),
- ratings from Facebook,
- ratings from Google,
- a ratings from Trip Advisor.

Each of these reputators has its own system which determines the overall score. Booking rates subjects on a scale of 1–10, Google, Facebook and Trip Advisor on a scale of 1–5. For the purposes of further analysis scores of partial reputators were unified and converted into a percentage. Before we analyse the results of statistical testing, based on which we compiled a general formula to calculate total (overall) online reputation of a tourism entity (TOR), it is necessary to expound the specific values and partial score for the analysed subjects through the overview table.

The following table presents partial results - measured values of individual determinants/score of partial reputators of online reputation/as well as score of total (overall) online reputation (Table 2):

Table 2. Overall (total) online reputation.

Rank	Common name of an entity	ASA score (%)	Booking rating (%)	Facebook rating (%)	Google rating (%)	Trip Advisor rating (%)	Number of pages indexed by Google*	TOR** (%)
1.	Hotel Navis	92.5	91	100	0	100	14300	95.9
2.	Hotel Miramar	83.0	0	98	0	100	2340000	93.7
3.	Hotel Royal	82.8	94	100	0	90	13500000	91.7
4.	Hotel Villa Kapetanovic	84.5	89	92	94	90	34200	89.9
5.	Hotel Bevanda	76.1	95	92	0	90	48700	88.3
6.	Hotel Bristol	89.2	88	90	92	80	5 870 000	87.8

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

Rank	Common name of an entity	ASA score (%)	Booking rating (%)	Facebook rating (%)	Google rating (%)	Trip Advisor rating (%)	Number of pages indexed by Google*	TOR** (%)
7.	Remisens Premium Hotel Ambasador	84.9	91	92	88	80	69200	87.2
8.	Design Hotel Astoria	91.4	87	88	0	80	187000	86.6
9.	Hotel W.A. Mozart	93.5	82	0	90	80	19800	86.4
10.	Hotel Villa Ariston	80.6	88	0	0	90	60200	86.2
11.	Remisens Premium Villa Ambasador	89.2	89	0	0	80	29900	86.1
12.	Remisens Premium Hotel Kvarner	82.8	91	100	0	70	47200	86.0
13.	Hotel Milenij	80.6	91	90	0	80	88100	85.4
14.	Hotel Agava	80.6	88	92	0	80	62000	85.2
15.	Hotel Continental	78.5	86	100	80	80	4850000	84.9
16.	Hotel Savoy	89.2	88	82	0	80	2780000	84.8
17.	Hotel Sveti Jakov	78.5	90	80	0	90	13100	84.6
18.	Grand Hotel Opatijska Cvijeta	80.6	86	90	80	80	28100	83.3
19.	Hotel Galeb	87.0	83	80	0	80	39400	82.5
20.	Villa Palme	82.8	82	84	0	80	36900	82.2
21.	Remisens Premium Villa Amalia	87.0	87	0	0	70	22600	81.3
22.	Remisens Hotel Admiral	87.0	82	86	78	70	39200	80.6
23.	Grand Hotel Adriatic	76.3	78	86	86	70	213000	79.3
24.	Smart Selection Hotel Imperial	89.0	78	80	0	70	10700	79.3
25.	Smart Selection Hotel Palace Bellevue	85.1	78	0	82	70	15400	78.8
26.	Remisens Hotel Kristal	78.7	80	82	82	70	46300	78.5
27.	Smart Selection Hotel Belvedere	88.4	73	80	0	60	11300	75.4
28.	Hotel Opatija	81.3	71	80	74	60	149000	73.3
29.	Smart Selection Hotel Residenz	82.1	71	0	0	60	4830	71.0
30.	Smart Selection Hotel Istra	77.2	68	0	72	60	13100	69.3
31.	Villa Dubrava	73.7	0	0	0	50	20000	61.9

* Absolute number of Google Indexed Pages containing a commonly used name of the given entity as a keyword; for greater relevance, quotation marks were added around the commonly used name before search.

**Total online reputation (TOR) calculation methodology is presented in the following subchapter.

3.2 Calculation Methodology of Overall Score of Online Reputation

Partial scores of entities from individual reputators were statistically tested in order to determine whether on the chosen significance level there is a statistically significant correlation between scores of entities achieved with various reputators and score

achieved through advanced sentiment analysis. Last but not least variables such as the score achieved through the advanced sentiment analysis and the absolute number of pages indexed by Google containing a generally used the name of an entity as the key word were statistically tested. Regarding the link between scores of entities achieved through different reputators and scores achieved through advanced sentiment analysis, statistical testing did not confirm any link between variables on the significance level we selected (Tables 3, 4 and 5).

Table 3. Link between ASA and Booking.

Variables	Kendall tau, level of significance: $p < 0.05$			
	No.	Kendall tau	Z	p-value
ASA and Booking	29	0.031009	0.236155	0.813312

Table 4. Link between ASA and Facebook.

Variables	Kendall tau, level of significance: $p < 0.05$			
	No.	Kendall tau	Z	p-value
ASA and Facebook	23	-0.072394	-0.483722	0.628583

Table 5. Link between ASA and trip advisor.

Variables	Kendall tau, level of significance: $p < 0.05$			
	No.	Kendall tau	Z	p-value
ASA and Trip	31	0.114257	0.903008	0.366522

Regarding the link between scores achieved by means of an extended sentiment analysis and the absolute number of pages indexed by Google, statistical testing did not confirm any link between variables on the significance level we selected (Table 6).

Table 6. Link between ASA and Google Index.

Variables	Kendall tau, level of significance: $p < 0.05$			
	No.	Kendall tau	Z	p-value
ASA and Google index	31	-0.070108	-0.554087	0.579519

On the selected significance level of 5 % the p value is much higher than 0.05. Statistically significant link between the number of pages indexed by Google and the ASA score was not confirmed. Absolute number of pages indexed by Google which

include usual name of the given entity as a keyword does not have any statistically significant impact on the level of online reputation ASA score of that entity. The proven argument for the necessity of quality over quantity applies here as well.

For better interpretation we used Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric test of variance analysis for further testing. By using this test we basically test the influence of levels of a selected factor on the variability of values of analysed variable. In our case, the influence of ASA score on partial scores of Booking, Facebook, Trip Advisor was tested. Since the p value is much higher than 0.05, there is no statistically significant link between ASA and other reputators. Graphic interpretation of tested variables (Fig. 1):

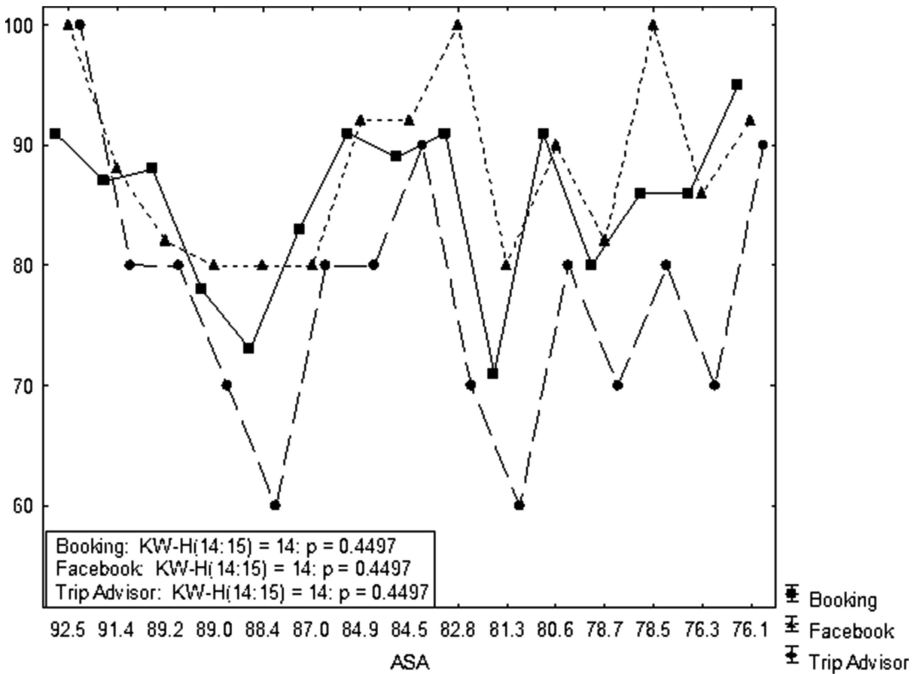


Fig. 1. Graph of dependencies.

The scale of assessments of individual entities based on the ASA score is located the x axis, percentage assessment of entities is located on the y axis. Since we have not confirmed any links between variables, we can proceed to the calculation of the total online reputation of a particular entity.

We shall start from the basic relationship we have drawn:

$$TOR = \frac{W_{ASA} \times R_{ASA} + \sum_{i=1}^n [W_i \times R_i]}{W_{ASA} + \sum_{i=1}^n W_i} \tag{1}$$

TOR - Total online reputation (%),
 R_i - Reputator (% score based on a given i -th determinant of online reputation),
 R_{ASA} - Reputator ASA (% score based on the advanced sentiment analysis),
 W_{ASA} - ASA reputator weight,
 W_i - i -th reputator weight.

The equation includes specific determinants of online reputation, which we named reputators, and, of course, their weight as variables. The basic reputator is the percentage ASA score, and the equation enables to include any number of other reputators in the calculation.

A reputator can be any determinant which can objectively affect the perceived online reputation of a given entity and at the same time, its value in percentage can be quantified. In our case the scores from [Booking.com](#), Facebook, Google ratings and Trip Advisor ratings were taken into consideration as determinants. For the actual calculation weights of individual reputators need to be determined, which are, by default, determined based on a given entity and a target market. Based on the selected entities and previous research conducted in the field of tourism each of the weights of individual reputators was given the value 1. In this case, the formula for the calculation of the overall online reputation which we set up, can be simplified as follows:

$$TOR = \frac{R_{ASA} + \sum_{i=1}^n R_i}{n + 1} \quad (2)$$

TOR - Total online reputation (%),
 R_i - Reputator (% score based on a given i -th determinant of online reputation),
 R_{ASA} - Reputator ASA (% score based on the advanced sentiment analysis),
 n - number of indicators.

In this case, the value of the overall online reputation of an entity is the arithmetic mean of individual indicators (partial scores of individual reputators).

4 Conclusion

Independent position of the online reputation index ASA based on the advanced analysis of the sentiment, that represents users' views of the model Internet user searching for information through the Google search engine comparing to reputation indices that are provided by the main Internet players, such as Booking, TripAdvisor and Facebook as a part of their ratings, is one of the major finding of the conducted analyses. This only encourages the need for continuing efforts towards building online reputation, not only on the pages of the main players operating directly in the tourism sector, but also towards the main players such as Internet editions of mainstream newspapers, Wikipedia, catalogues, Internet discussions, or notable bloggers. These players will help eliminate neutral, or even negative reputation on the Internet and will thus directly contribute to an increase in competitiveness of active entities, as opposed to their passive competitors.

In general, it might seem at first that the best model of e-marketing of a selected tourism entity consists mainly of active management of its own profiles on two key platforms: Trip Advisor and Booking (of the first five subjects arranged according to TOR score, only one made full use of all four major platforms). From the perspective of spending resources (mainly in the form of time) the possibility of managing a limited number of profiles on selected platforms (and alleged benefiting from the absence of “other profiles” providing the possibility of entity assessment) appears to be optimal. From the perspective of sustainability of this form of e-marketing, however, it was a very short-sighted action. Due to the relatively open nature of the Internet, it is only a matter of time when the missing profiles on the remaining platforms (notably Google and Facebook) will be created by entities outside the scope of that entity. In such a case, the given tourism entity loses its direct influence over the active administration of a given profile and authenticity of presented content, thereby exposing itself to the increased risk of getting under unwanted pressure of competition on the increasingly fierce market environment, or even more unwanted pressure potential or actual customers seeking to ensure additional profit from the position of power. It is therefore essentially a necessity to deal with using e-marketing tools. Only a comprehensive approach can result in a sustainability of active e-marketing in a highly competitive tourism (not only) market.

The findings identified by the analysis conducted on the local market (in this case, used as a model example), can be effectively used in any market for the purpose of increasing competitiveness of selected tourism entities. Patterns and variables affecting virtual reputation of these entities are relatively invariable across the global Internet market.

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